

§ 1.6695-2

26 CFR Ch. I (4-1-20 Edition)

and § 1.6060-1 and who fails to satisfy these requirements shall pay a penalty of \$50 for each such failure, with a maximum of \$25,000 per person imposed for each calendar year, unless such failure was due to reasonable cause and not due to willful neglect.

(f) *Negotiation of check.* (1) No person who is a tax return preparer as described in § 301.7701-15 of this chapter may endorse or otherwise negotiate, directly or through an agent, a check (including an electronic version of a check) for the refund of tax under the Code that is issued to a taxpayer other than the tax return preparer if the person was a tax return preparer of the return or claim for refund which gave rise to the refund check. A tax return preparer will not be considered to have endorsed or otherwise negotiated a check for purposes of this paragraph (f)(1) solely as a result of having affixed the taxpayer's name to a refund check for the purpose of depositing the check into an account in the name of the taxpayer or in the joint names of the taxpayer and one or more other persons (excluding the tax return preparer) if authorized by the taxpayer or the taxpayer's recognized representative.

(2) Section 6695(f) and paragraphs (f)(1) and (3) of this section do not apply to a tax return preparer-bank that—

(i) Cashes a refund check and remits all of the cash to the taxpayer or accepts a refund check for deposit in full to a taxpayer's account, so long as the bank does not initially endorse or negotiate the check (unless the bank has made a loan to the taxpayer on the basis of the anticipated refund); or

(ii) Endorses a refund check for deposit in full to a taxpayer's account pursuant to a written authorization of the taxpayer (unless the bank has made a loan to the taxpayer on the basis of the anticipated refund).

(3) A tax return preparer-bank may also subsequently endorse or negotiate a refund check as a part of the check-clearing process through the financial system after initial endorsement or negotiation.

(4) The tax return preparer shall be subject to a penalty of \$500 for each endorsement or negotiation of a check

prohibited under section 6695(f) and paragraph (f)(1) of this section.

(g) *Effective/applicability date.* This section is applicable to returns and claims for refund filed after December 31, 2008.

[T.D. 9436, 73 FR 78447, Dec. 22, 2008, as amended at 74 FR 5104, Jan. 29, 2009]

§ 1.6695-2 Tax return preparer due diligence requirements for certain tax returns and claims.

(a) *Penalty for failure to meet due diligence requirements—(1) In general.* A person who is a tax return preparer (as defined in section 7701(a)(36)) of a tax return or claim for refund under the Internal Revenue Code who determines the taxpayer's eligibility to file as head of household under section 2(b), or who determines the taxpayer's eligibility for, or the amount of, the child tax credit (CTC)/additional child tax credit (ACTC) under section 24, the American opportunity tax credit (AOTC) under section 25A(i), or the earned income credit (EIC) under section 32, and who fails to satisfy the due diligence requirements of paragraph (b) of this section will be subject to a penalty as prescribed in section 6695(g) (indexed for inflation under section 6695(h)) for each failure. A separate penalty applies to a tax return preparer with respect to the head of household filing status determination and to each applicable credit claimed on a return or claim for refund for which the due diligence requirements of this section are not satisfied and for which the exception to penalty provided by paragraph (d) of this section does not apply.

(2) *Examples.* The provisions of paragraph (a)(1) of this section are illustrated by the following examples:

(i) *Example 1.* Preparer A prepares a federal income tax return for a taxpayer claiming the CTC and the AOTC. Preparer A did not meet the due diligence requirements under this section with respect to the CTC or the AOTC claimed on the taxpayer's return. Unless the exception to penalty provided by paragraph (d) of this section applies, Preparer A is subject to two penalties under section 6695(g): One for failure to meet the due diligence requirements for the CTC and a second penalty for

failure to meet the due diligence requirements for the AOTC.

(ii) *Example 2.* Preparer B prepares a federal income tax return for a taxpayer claiming the CTC and the AOTC. Preparer B did not meet the due diligence requirements under this section with respect to the CTC claimed on the taxpayer's return, but Preparer B did meet the due diligence requirements under this section with respect to the AOTC claimed on the taxpayer's return. Unless the exception to penalty provided by paragraph (d) of this section applies, Preparer B is subject to one penalty under section 6695(g) for the failure to meet the due diligence requirements for the CTC. Preparer B is not subject to a penalty under section 6695(g) for failure to meet the due diligence requirements for the AOTC.

(iii) *Example 3.* Preparer C prepares a federal income tax return for a taxpayer using the head of household filing status and claiming the CTC and the AOTC. Preparer C did not meet the due diligence requirements under this section with respect to the head of household filing status and the CTC claimed on the taxpayer's return. Preparer C did meet the due diligence requirements under this section with respect to the AOTC claimed on the taxpayer's return. Unless the exception to penalty provided by paragraph (d) of this section applies, Preparer C is subject to two penalties under section 6695(g) for the failure to meet the due diligence requirements: One for the head of household filing status and one for the CTC. Preparer C is not subject to a penalty under section 6695(g) for failure to meet the due diligence requirements for the AOTC.

(b) *Due diligence requirements.* A preparer must satisfy the following due diligence requirements:

(1) *Completion and submission of Form 8867*—(i) The tax return preparer must complete Form 8867, "Paid Preparer's Due Diligence Checklist," or complete such other form and provide such other information as may be prescribed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and—

(A) In the case of a signing tax return preparer electronically filing the tax return or claim for refund, must electronically file the completed Form 8867

(or successor form) with the tax return or claim for refund;

(B) In the case of a signing tax return preparer not electronically filing the tax return or claim for refund, must provide the taxpayer with the completed Form 8867 (or successor form) for inclusion with the filed tax return or claim for refund; or

(C) In the case of a nonsigning tax return preparer, must provide the signing tax return preparer with the completed Form 8867 (or successor form), in either electronic or non-electronic format, for inclusion with the filed tax return or claim for refund.

(ii) The tax return preparer's completion of Form 8867 must be based on information provided by the taxpayer to the tax return preparer or otherwise reasonably obtained or known by the tax return preparer.

(2) *Computation of credit or credits.* (i) When computing the amount of a credit or credits described in paragraph (a) of this section to be claimed on a return or claim for refund, the tax return preparer must either—

(A) Complete the worksheet in the Form 1040, 1040A, 1040EZ, and/or Form 8863 instructions or such other form including such other information as may be prescribed by the IRS applicable to each credit described in paragraph (a) of this section claimed on the return or claim for refund; or

(B) Otherwise record in one or more documents in the tax return preparer's paper or electronic files the tax return preparer's computation of the credit or credits claimed on the return or claim for refund, including the method and information used to make the computations.

(ii) The tax return preparer's completion of an applicable worksheet described in paragraph (b)(2)(i)(A) of this section (or other record of the tax return preparer's computation of the credit or credits permitted under paragraph (b)(2)(i)(B) of this section) must be based on information provided by the taxpayer to the tax return preparer or otherwise reasonably obtained or known by the tax return preparer.

(3) *Knowledge*—(i) *In general.* The tax return preparer must not know, or have reason to know, that any information used by the tax return preparer

in determining the taxpayer's eligibility to file as head of household or in determining the taxpayer's eligibility for, or the amount of, any credit described in paragraph (a) of this section and claimed on the return or claim for refund is incorrect. The tax return preparer may not ignore the implications of information furnished to, or known by, the tax return preparer, and must make reasonable inquiries if a reasonable and well-informed tax return preparer knowledgeable in the law would conclude that the information furnished to the tax return preparer appears to be incorrect, inconsistent, or incomplete. The tax return preparer must also contemporaneously document in the preparer's paper or electronic files any inquiries made and the responses to those inquiries.

(ii) *Examples.* The provisions of paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section are illustrated by the following examples:

(A) *Example 1.* In 2018, Q, a 22-year-old taxpayer, engages Preparer C to prepare Q's 2017 federal income tax return. Q completes Preparer C's standard intake questionnaire and states that Q has never been married and has two sons, ages 10 and 11. Based on the intake sheet and other information that Q provides, including information that shows that the boys lived with Q throughout 2017, Preparer C believes that Q may be eligible to claim each boy as a qualifying child for purposes of the EIC and the CTC. However, Q provides no information to Preparer C, and Preparer C does not have any information from other sources, to verify the relationship between Q and the boys. To meet the knowledge requirement in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, Preparer C must make reasonable inquiries to determine whether each boy is a qualifying child of Q for purposes of the EIC and the CTC, including reasonable inquiries to verify Q's relationship to the boys, and Preparer C must contemporaneously document these inquiries and the responses.

(B) *Example 2.* Assume the same facts as in *Example 1* of paragraph (b)(3)(ii)(A) of this section. In addition, as part of preparing Q's 2017 federal income tax return, Preparer C made sufficient reasonable inquiries to verify that the boys were Q's legally adopted

children. In 2019, Q engages Preparer C to prepare Q's 2018 federal income tax return. When preparing Q's 2018 federal income tax return, Preparer C is not required to make additional inquiries to determine each boy's relationship to Q for purposes of the knowledge requirement in paragraph (b)(3) of this section.

(C) *Example 3.* In 2018, R, an 18-year-old taxpayer, engages Preparer D to prepare R's 2017 federal income tax return. R completes Preparer D's standard intake questionnaire and states that R has never been married, has one child, an infant, and that R and R's infant lived with R's parents during part of the 2017 tax year. R also provides Preparer D with a Form W-2 showing that R earned \$10,000 during 2017. R provides no other documents or information showing that R earned any other income during the tax year. Based on the intake sheet and other information that R provides, Preparer D believes that R may be eligible to claim the infant as a qualifying child for the EIC and the CTC. To meet the knowledge requirement in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, Preparer D must make reasonable inquiries to determine whether R is eligible to claim these credits, including reasonable inquiries to verify that R is not a qualifying child of R's parents (which would make R ineligible to claim the EIC) or a dependent of R's parents (which would make R ineligible to claim the CTC), and Preparer D must contemporaneously document these inquiries and the responses.

(D) *Example 4.* Assume the same facts as the facts in *Example 3* of paragraph (b)(3)(ii)(C) of this section. In addition, Preparer D previously prepared the 2017 joint federal income tax return for R's parents. Based on information provided by R's parents, Preparer D has determined that R is not eligible to be claimed as a dependent or as a qualifying child for purposes of the EIC or the CTC on R's parents' return. Therefore, for purposes of the knowledge requirement in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, Preparer D is not required to make additional inquiries to determine that R is not R's parents' qualifying child or dependent.

(E) *Example 5.* In 2019, S engages Preparer E to prepare S's 2018 federal income tax return. During Preparer E's standard intake interview, S states that S has never been married and that S's niece and nephew lived with S for part of the 2018 tax year. Preparer E believes S may be eligible to file as head of household and claim each of these children as a qualifying child for purposes of the EIC and the CTC, but the information furnished to Preparer E is incomplete. To meet the knowledge requirement in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, Preparer E must make reasonable inquiries to determine whether S is eligible to file as head of household and whether each child is a qualifying child for purposes of the EIC and the CTC, including reasonable inquiries about the children's residency, S's relationship to the children, the children's income, the sources of support for the children, and S's contribution to the payment of costs related to operating the household, and Preparer E must contemporaneously document these inquiries and the responses.

(F) *Example 6.* Assume the same facts as the facts in *Example 5* of paragraph (b)(3)(i)(E) of this section. In addition, Preparer E knows from prior social interactions with S that the children resided with S for more than one-half of the 2018 tax year and that the children did not provide over one-half of their own support for the 2018 tax year. To meet the knowledge requirement in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, Preparer E must make the same reasonable inquiries to determine whether S is eligible to file as head of household and whether each child is a qualifying child for purposes of the EIC and the CTC as discussed in *Example 5* of this section, and Preparer E must contemporaneously document these inquiries and the responses.

(G) *Example 7.* W engages Preparer F to prepare W's federal income tax return. During Preparer F's standard intake interview, W states that W is 50 years old, has never been married, and has no children. W further states to Preparer F that during the tax year W was self-employed, earned \$10,000 from W's business, and had no business expenses or other income. Preparer F believes W may be eligible for the EIC.

To meet the knowledge requirement in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, Preparer F must make reasonable inquiries to determine whether W is eligible for the EIC, including reasonable inquiries to determine whether W's business income and expenses are correct, and Preparer F must contemporaneously document these inquiries and the responses.

(H) *Example 8.* Y, who is 32 years old, engages Preparer G to prepare Y's federal income tax return. Y completes Preparer G's standard intake questionnaire and states that Y has never been married. As part of Preparer G's client intake process, Y provides Preparer G with a copy of the Form 1098-T Y received showing that University M billed \$4,000 of qualified tuition and related expenses for Y's enrollment or attendance at the university and that Y was at least a half-time undergraduate student. Preparer G believes that Y may be eligible for the AOTC. To meet the knowledge requirement in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, Preparer G must make reasonable inquiries to determine whether Y is eligible for the AOTC, as Form 1098-T does not contain all the information needed to determine eligibility for the AOTC or to calculate the amount of the credit if Y is eligible, and contemporaneously document these inquiries and the responses.

(4) *Retention of records*—(i) The tax return preparer must retain—

(A) A copy of the completed Form 8867 (or successor form);

(B) A copy of each completed worksheet required under paragraph (b)(2)(i)(A) of this section (or other record of the tax return preparer's computation permitted under paragraph (b)(2)(i)(B) of this section); and

(C) A record of how and when the information used to complete Form 8867 and the applicable worksheets required under paragraph (b)(2)(i)(A) of this section (or other record of the tax return preparer's computation permitted under paragraph (b)(2)(i)(B) of this section) was obtained by the tax return preparer, including the identity of any person furnishing the information, as well as a copy of any document that was provided by the taxpayer and on which the tax return preparer relied to

complete Form 8867 and/or an applicable worksheet required under paragraph (b)(2)(i)(A) of this section (or other record of the tax return preparer's computation permitted under paragraph (b)(2)(i)(B) of this section).

(ii) The items in paragraph (b)(4)(i) of this section must be retained for three years from the latest of the following dates, as applicable:

(A) The due date of the tax return (determined without regard to any extension of time for filing);

(B) In the case of a signing tax return preparer electronically filing the tax return or claim for refund, the date the tax return or claim for refund was filed;

(C) In the case of a signing tax return preparer not electronically filing the tax return or claim for refund, the date the tax return or claim for refund was presented to the taxpayer for signature; or

(D) In the case of a nonsigning tax return preparer, the date the nonsigning tax return preparer submitted to the signing tax return preparer that portion of the tax return or claim for refund for which the nonsigning tax return preparer was responsible.

(iii) The items in paragraph (b)(4)(i) of this section may be retained on paper or electronically in the manner prescribed in applicable regulations, revenue rulings, revenue procedures, or other appropriate guidance (see § 601.601(d)(2) of this chapter).

(c) *Special rule for firms.* A firm that employs a tax return preparer subject to a penalty under section 6695(g) is also subject to penalty if, and only if—

(1) One or more members of the principal management (or principal officers) of the firm or a branch office participated in or, prior to the time the return was filed, knew of the failure to comply with the due diligence requirements of this section;

(2) The firm failed to establish reasonable and appropriate procedures to ensure compliance with the due diligence requirements of this section; or

(3) The firm disregarded its reasonable and appropriate compliance procedures through willfulness, recklessness, or gross indifference (including ignoring facts that would lead a person of reasonable prudence and competence to

investigate) in the preparation of the tax return or claim for refund with respect to which the penalty is imposed.

(d) *Exception to penalty.* The section 6695(g) penalty will not be applied with respect to a particular tax return or claim for refund if the tax return preparer can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the IRS that, considering all the facts and circumstances, the tax return preparer's normal office procedures are reasonably designed and routinely followed to ensure compliance with the due diligence requirements of paragraph (b) of this section, and the failure to meet the due diligence requirements of paragraph (b) of this section with respect to the particular tax return or claim for refund was isolated and inadvertent. The preceding sentence does not apply to a firm that is subject to the penalty as a result of paragraph (c) of this section.

(e) *Applicability date.* The rules of this section apply to tax returns and claims for refund for tax years beginning after December 31, 2015, that are prepared on or after December 5, 2016. However, the rules relating to the determination of a taxpayer's eligibility to file as head of household under section 2(b) apply to tax returns and claims for refund for tax years beginning after December 31, 2017, that are prepared on or after November 7, 2018.

[T.D. 8905, 65 FR 61269, Oct. 17, 2000, as amended by T.D. 9436, 73 FR 78448, Dec. 22, 2008; T.D. 9570, 76 FR 78819, Dec. 20, 2011; T.D. 9799, 81 FR 87446, Dec. 5, 2016; T.D. 9842, 83 FR 55635, Nov. 7, 2018; 83 FR 64459, Dec. 17, 2018]

§ 1.6696-1 Claims for credit or refund by tax return preparers or appraisers.

(a) *Notice and demand.* (1) The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) shall issue to each tax return preparer or appraiser one or more statements of notice and demand for payment for all penalties assessed against the tax return preparer or appraiser under section 6694 and § 1.6694-1, under section 6695 and § 1.6695-1, or under section 6695A (and any subsequently issued regulations).

(2) For the definition of the term "tax return preparer", see section 7701(a)(36) and § 301.7701-15 of this chapter. A person who prepares a claim for