



Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration Office of Audit

SURVEYS OF TAXPAYERS WITH TAX ACCOUNT ISSUES INDICATE THEY ARE SATISFIED WITH THE SERVICE THEY RECEIVED AT TAXPAYER ASSISTANCE CENTERS

Issued on August 17, 2010

Highlights

Highlights of Report Number: 2010-40-100 to the Internal Revenue Service Commissioner for the Wage and Investment Division.

IMPACT ON TAXPAYERS

One of the primary goals of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is to improve customer service to make voluntary compliance easier. One method the IRS uses to provide customer service and taxpayer assistance is by providing local IRS walk-in offices, called Taxpayer Assistance Centers, which allow taxpayers to obtain assistance with tax matters.

WHY TIGTA DID THE AUDIT

Taxpayer account services are a significant part of the Taxpayer Assistance Center Program. This audit evaluated the customer service IRS employees provided to taxpayers who visited Taxpayer Assistance Centers for tax account information.

WHAT TIGTA FOUND

Taxpayers who visited Taxpayer Assistance Centers with tax account issues were satisfied with the overall customer service they received during their visits. They generally believed they received prompt service and that assistors who helped them were courteous, listened to their concerns, and had the knowledge to assist them properly.

A small percentage of taxpayers were dissatisfied. These taxpayers' experiences differed from the average Taxpayer Assistance Center visitor in that they:

- Experienced longer wait times than average.
- Spent more time with assistors.
- Traveled farther to get to Taxpayer Assistance Centers.
- Perceived a lack of genuine concern and knowledge on the part of the assistor.

Still, most taxpayers who visited Taxpayer Assistance Centers for tax account issues have little or no desire to

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contact the IRS using other methods, such as using a toll-free telephone service or secure Internet web sites.

Approximately one million taxpayers each year visit Taxpayer Assistance Centers to make payments despite there being more convenient methods. The other methods are also less expensive for the IRS because the IRS estimates that it costs approximately \$29 per Taxpayer Assistance Center contact.

Taxpayers who visit Taxpayer Assistance Centers for tax account issues have some common attributes. Typically, they are:

- Over the age of 50.
- Have a lower than average income.
- Less likely to file electronically or use a paid preparer.

WHAT TIGTA RECOMMENDED

The Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, should identify reasons certain taxpayers prefer to make payments at Taxpayer Assistance Centers instead of using more convenient methods and take appropriate actions in an attempt to reduce the number of taxpayers who visit Taxpayer Assistance Centers to make payments.

The IRS agreed with the recommendation and plans to conduct a study to determine why taxpayers prefer to make payments at Taxpayer Assistance Centers instead of using alternative methods. Based on the results of the study, the IRS plans to examine opportunities to influence the behavior of taxpayers and determine the feasibility of attempting to reduce the number of taxpayers who visit Taxpayer Assistance Centers to make payments.

READ THE FULL REPORT

To view the report, including the scope, methodology, and full IRS response, go to:

<http://www.treas.gov/tigta/auditreports/2010reports/201040100fr.pdf>.

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