



Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration Office of Audit

THE TAXPAYER ADVOCATE SERVICE'S ASK-TAS1 TOLL-FREE LINE HAS EVOLVED OVER TIME, BUT ADDITIONAL STEPS ARE NECESSARY TO EVALUATE ITS IMPACT

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Highlights

Highlights of Report Number: 2012-10-052 to the Internal Revenue Service National Taxpayer Advocate.

IMPACT ON TAXPAYERS

Millions of taxpayers contact the IRS each year by calling the various toll-free telephone assistance lines to seek help in understanding tax laws and meeting their tax obligations. Taxpayers specifically requesting Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) assistance have several telephone options, including the ASK-TAS1 toll-free line staffed by TAS personnel. Additional documentation and analysis is necessary to evaluate the impact of the ASK-TAS1 toll-free line and ensure that proposed changes to the line provide the expected benefits without adversely affecting taxpayers.

WHY TIGTA DID THE AUDIT

This audit was initiated to evaluate the IRS's use of two TAS toll-free telephone lines, including service provided to taxpayers and costs associated with the lines, to determine whether opportunities exist to reduce duplication and achieve cost savings. This review is included in our Fiscal Year 2012 Annual Audit Plan and addresses the major management challenge of Providing Quality Taxpayer Service Operations.

WHAT TIGTA FOUND

The TAS does not have a formalized process to track or analyze the calls received by the ASK-TAS1 toll-free line to assess the effectiveness of its outreach efforts in generating cases meeting TAS case criteria.

In addition, TAS management is planning a new process involving both the National Taxpayer Advocate (NTA) and the ASK-TAS1 toll-free lines. The new process will require Wage and Investment Division customer service representatives answering the NTA toll-free line to transfer calls to the ASK-TAS1 toll-free line if they determine a call meets TAS case criteria. While this approach could have merit, it would involve additional technological features, additional or reallocated resources, and new procedures for both Wage and Investment Division and TAS employees involved with

the toll-free telephone calls. TAS management had not prepared detailed documentation that clearly outlines their methodology, such as how many TAS personnel will be required to answer the transferred calls and how TAS management would evaluate the costs and expected benefits of handling the increased call volume from the NTA toll-free line when implemented.

WHAT TIGTA RECOMMENDED

TIGTA recommended that the NTA develop a formalized process to track and analyze the impact of any targeted outreach that results in calls received by the ASK-TAS1 toll-free line. The NTA should also prepare detailed documentation that clearly summarizes how the ASK-TAS1 toll-free line will be used in the future and should periodically analyze the call statistics for the new process to determine whether TAS personnel are answering calls in an efficient manner.

TAS management agreed with all three recommendations. Management's plans include tracking and analyzing calls to the ASK-TAS1 toll-free line, documenting the future vision of the ASK-TAS1 toll-free line, and using statistical information to monitor the transfer of calls to the ASK-TAS1 toll-free line.

READ THE FULL REPORT

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

<http://www.treas.gov/tigta/auditreports/2012reports/201210052fr.pdf>.

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