

SS-8 Determination—Determination for Public Inspection

Occupation 02OFF.218 Receptionist	Determination: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor
UILC	Third Party Communication: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Yes

Facts of Case

The firm is in business as an optometric practice. As the owner of the practice, you engaged the worker as a receptionist to perform pre-testing services, file insurance claims, and other related tasks. You reported the worker's remuneration on Forms 1099-MISC for 2014 and 2015.

Information from the parties supports that you trained the worker. You provided her with her work assignments and the methods by which to perform them. If problems or complaints occurred, the worker contacted you for resolution. The worker followed the schedule that you set. She performed her services on your premises. She was required to perform her services personally. If additional personnel were needed, you were responsible for hiring and compensating them.

You provided the office equipment and the property. The worker did not lease space or equipment, or incur expenses in the performance of her services. You paid the worker at an hourly rate. You did not cover her under workers' compensation. Customers paid your practice directly at prices that you established. Neither party indicated an investment by the worker in your practice or a related business, or the risk of the worker incurring a financial loss beyond the normal loss of compensation.

You did not make benefits available to the worker. The worker did not advertise her services or provide similar services for others during the same time period. She performed her services under the your practice's name. Both parties reserved the right to terminate the work relationship without incurring a penalty or liability, and in fact, the worker terminated the work relationship.

Analysis

Section 31.3121(d)-1(a)(3) of the regulations provides that if the relationship of an employer and employee exists, the designation or description of the parties as anything other than that of employer and employee is immaterial. Thus, if an employer-employee relationship exists, any contractual designation of the employee as a partner, coadventurer, agent, or independent contractor must be disregarded. Therefore, your statement that the worker was an independent contractor pursuant to an agreement is without merit. For federal employment tax purposes, it is the actual working relationship that is controlling and not the terms of the contract (oral or written) between the parties.

Factors that illustrate whether there was a right to control how a worker performed a task include training and instructions. In this case, you trained the worker. You retained the right to change the worker's methods and to direct the worker to the extent necessary to protect your financial investment. Training a worker indicates that the person or persons for whom the services are performed want the services performed in a particular method or manner. The worker followed the schedule that you set. She performed her services on your premises. A worker who is required to comply with another person's instructions about when, where, and how he or she is to work is ordinarily an employee. The worker was required to perform her services personally, meaning she could not engage and pay others to perform services for you on her behalf. If the services must be rendered personally, presumably the person or persons for whom the services are performed are interested in the methods used to accomplish the work as well as in the results. These facts show that you retained behavioral control over the services of the worker.

Factors that illustrate whether there was a right to direct and control the financial aspects of the worker's activities include significant investment, unreimbursed expenses, the methods of payment, and the opportunity for profit or loss. In this case, the worker did not invest capital or assume business risks, and therefore, did not have the opportunity to realize a profit or incur a loss as a result of the services provided. "Profit or loss" implies the use of capital by a person in an independent business of his or her own. Lack of significant investment by a person in facilities or equipment used in performing services for another indicates dependence on the employer and, accordingly, the existence of an employer-employee relationship. You paid the worker at an hourly rate. Payment by the hour generally points to an employer-employee relationship. These facts show that you retained control over the financial aspects of the worker's services.

Factors that illustrate how the parties perceived their relationship include the intent of the parties as expressed in written contracts; the provision of, or lack of employee benefits; the right of the parties to terminate the relationship; the permanency of the relationship; and whether the services performed were part of the service recipient's regular business activities. In this case, the worker performed her services on a continuing basis. She performed her services under your practice's name. The worker was not engaged in an independent enterprise, but rather the services performed by the worker as a receptionist/technician were a necessary and integral part of your optometric business. Integration of the worker's services into the business operations generally shows that the worker is subject to direction and control. When the success or continuation of a business depends to an appreciable degree upon the performance of certain services, the workers who perform those services must necessarily be subject to a certain amount of control by the owner of the business. Although you did not provide benefits to the worker, the worker terminated the work relationship without incurring a liability. If the worker has the right to end his or her relationship with the person for whom the services are performed at any time he or she wishes without incurring liability, that factor indicates an employer-employee relationship. These facts show that you retained control over the work relationship and services of the worker.

Based on the above analysis, we conclude that you had the right to exercise direction and control over the worker to the degree necessary to establish that the worker was a common law employee, and not an independent contractor operating a trade or business.