

SS-8 Determination—Determination for Public Inspection

Occupation 06MPX Medical Practitioners	Determination: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor
UILC	Third Party Communication: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Yes

I have read Notice 441 and am requesting:

- Additional redactions based on categories listed in section entitled "Deletions We May Have Made to Your Original Determination Letter"
- Delay based on an on-going transaction
- 90 day delay

For IRS Use Only:

Facts of Case

The worker submitted a request for a determination of worker status in regard to services performed for the firm from June 2018 to December 2018 as a registered dental hygienist (RDH). The firm issued her Form 1099-MISC for the year in question. The worker filed Form SS-8 as she believes she erroneously received Form 1099-MISC. As a RDH, she worked under the license of the dentist. State law prohibits RDHs from practicing as independent contractors.

The firm's response states it is a dental practice. The worker performed the duties of a RDH. The worker was classified as an independent contractor as she was hired short-term with no expectation of becoming a permanent employee. She worked a total of nine days in 2018. There was no written agreement between the parties.

The firm stated it provided the worker orientation on her first work day to familiarize her with the equipment and other employees. Work assignments consisted of scheduled patients. The worker used her own judgment and training to determine the methods by which assignments were performed. If problems or complaints arose, other staff members and the owner (dentist) were contacted and assumed responsibility for problem resolution. The worker was required to make an entry in each patient's chart documenting the services performed. The worker's work-day routine consisted of 7:45 am to 5 pm, starting with a meeting to go over the schedule and patients scheduled for the day. No other meetings were required. Services were performed at the firm's office. The firm required the worker to personally perform services. Hiring and paying substitutes or helpers was not applicable. The worker stated the firm's office sent a text message when they had a need for her services on a particular day. The owner (dentist) determined the methods by which assignments were performed. The firm was responsible for hiring and paying substitutes or helpers.

The firm stated it provided dental instruments, sterilization equipment, and supplies needed. The worker provided any special instruments she liked to work with. The worker did not lease equipment, space, or a facility. The worker incurred the unreimbursed expense associated with travel to/from the work place, licensing, registration, and continuing education requirements. Customers paid the firm. The firm paid the worker an hourly rate of pay; a drawing account for advances was not allowed. The firm carried workers' compensation insurance on the worker. The worker did not establish the level of payment for the services provided. The level of payment was set by third-party providers such as insurance companies and the firm for those who were not covered by insurance. The worker stated everything was provided by the firm except for her scrubs and loupes. She did not incur expenses in the performance of services for the firm.

The firm stated benefits were not provided to the worker as she was only temporary. The work relationship could be terminated by either party without incurring liability or penalty. The worker performed similar services for others; the firm's approval was not required for her to do so. There was no agreement prohibiting competition between the parties. The worker did not advertise. The firm did not represent the worker to its patients or customers. Services were performed under the firm's business name. The work relationship ended when the worker's services were no longer needed.

Analysis

Generally, the relationship of employer and employee exists when the person for whom the services are performed has the right to control and direct the individual who performs the services, not only as to what is to be done, but also how it is to be done. It is not necessary that the employer actually direct or control the individual, it is sufficient if he or she has the right to do so.

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, a statement that a worker is an independent contractor pursuant to a written or verbal 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. Furthermore, whether there is an employment relationship is a question of fact and not subject to negotiation between the parties.

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. In this case, the firm required the worker to personally perform services. Furthermore, the services performed by the worker were integral to the firm's business operation. The firm provided work assignments by virtue of the patients served and ultimately assumed responsibility for problem resolution. These facts evidence the firm retained the right to direct and control the worker to the extent necessary to ensure satisfactory job performance in a manner acceptable to the firm. Based on the worker's education, past work experience, and work ethic the firm may not have needed to frequently exercise its right to direct and control the worker; however, the facts evidence the firm retained the right to do so if needed.

Payment by the hour, week, or month generally points to an employer-employee relationship, provided that this method of payment is not just a convenient way of paying a lump sum agreed upon as the cost of a job. In such instances, the firm assumes the hazard that the services of the worker will be proportionate to the regular payments. This action warrants the assumption that, to protect its investment, the firm has the right to direct and control the performance of the workers. Also, workers are assumed to be employees if they are guaranteed a minimum salary or are given a drawing account of a specified amount that need not be repaid when it exceeds earnings. In this case, the worker did not invest capital or assume business risks. The term "significant investment" does not include tools, instruments, and clothing commonly provided by employees in their trade; nor does it include education, experience, or training. Based on the hourly rate of pay arrangement the worker could not realize a profit or incur a loss.

Factors that illustrate how the parties perceive 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 are part of the service recipient's regular business activities. In this case, the worker was not engaged in an independent enterprise, but rather the services performed by the worker were a necessary and integral part of the firm's business. Both parties retained the right to terminate the work relationship at any time without incurring a liability. There is no evidence to suggest the worker performed similar services for others as an independent contractor or advertised business services to the general public during the term of this work relationship. The classification of a worker as an independent contractor should not be based primarily on the fact that a worker's services may be used on a temporary, part-time, or as-needed basis. As noted above, common law factors are considered when examining the worker classification issue.

Based on the above analysis, we conclude that the firm 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.

The firm can obtain additional information related to worker classification online at www.irs.gov; Publication 4341.