

## What to do if a Refund is Delayed?

Although the IRS releases most taxpayer refunds according to its normal processing schedule, there are cases where the IRS will hold or delay payment of a taxpayer refund. In cases where the IRS has delayed payment of a taxpayer's refund, the IRS website and hotline is the best gauge as to if and when the refund may be released. Taxpayers should visit the IRS website in these cases, as the IRS website can provide specific reasons and updates for each taxpayer through the "Where's My Refund" link found at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

Remember: The only way to learn the exact reason why a refund is delayed, is for the taxpayer to call the IRS at 800-829-1040, or use the IRS "Where's My Refund" link at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

Taxpayers whose refund is delayed by the IRS will generally be delayed due to either a debt offset or some other processing issue at the IRS. If the delay is due to a Debt Offset, the taxpayer should call FMS Offset Center at 800-304-3107 to learn more. The FMS Offset Center can give the taxpayer more information, including specific information on the type and amount of the offset. If the delay is due to something other than a Debt Offset, the best advice is for the taxpayer to continue monitoring the status of their refund through the "Where's My Refund" link at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov), or call the IRS at 800-829-1040.

## More Information on Refund Delays Due to Debt Offset

In some cases, the taxpayer may have a financial obligation that is greater than the total amount of the refund. In these cases, the Department of the Treasury's Financial Management Service, which issues IRS tax refunds, can use the entire federal tax refund to repay the taxpayer's unpaid debt. When this occurs, the taxpayer will not receive a refund, but instead, will receive a letter from the IRS explaining what has occurred.

**NOTE:** If the taxpayer's refund amount exceeds the amount of the unpaid debt, the IRS will withhold only part of the refund amount, with the balance being released to the taxpayer.

If a taxpayer's refund was offset, the taxpayer should call the FMS Offset Hotline at 800-304-3107 to get more specific information about the debt that triggered the offset.

The types of debts that may be offset by the IRS include:

- Past-Due Child Support
- Past-Due Student Loan Debt

- Federal or State Income Tax Obligations / Tax Liens

## More Information on Other Types of IRS Delays

The IRS notes that its estimated refund dates are estimates based on a best-case scenario. While the vast majority of taxpayers will see their refunds released by the IRS under normal processing time, this may not be true for all taxpayers.

There are factors that can affect the IRS's processing of a taxpayer's return that may change the estimated date the refund will be issued. Some of these factors are listed below:

- The IRS reviews tax returns before refunds are released to prevent fraudulent and erroneous refunds. These reviews performed by the IRS may increase the length of time it may take the IRS to process and release a refund, even for some legitimate returns.
- Refund timeframes can also be affected by such factors as bankruptcy, an open audit or a balance due on a related account such as a different tax year. Taxpayers who have open audit issues on a prior year, or who recently filed bankruptcy, may find that their refund is delayed by the IRS.
- Historically, the IRS has periodically adjusted its technology systems during the filing season, which can also factor into short refund delays at the IRS.

Remember: In cases where the IRS has delayed payment of a taxpayers refund, the IRS website and hotline is the best gauge as to when the refund will be released. We ask that EROs refer your clients to the IRS website in these cases, as the IRS website will provide a specific estimated date for when a refund will be released. When delays occur, the taxpayer should visit the "Where's My Refund" link found at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov), or call the IRS at 800-829-1040 to obtain the estimated date for their refund.