

§ 34.4

legal holiday; in that case, the last day of the period is the next business day after the end of the period.

Debt or claim means any amount of money, funds, or property that an appropriate official of the Department has determined an individual owes to the United States under a program we administer.

Debtor means an individual who owes a delinquent nontax debt to the United States under a program we administer.

Disposable pay. This term—

(a)(1) Means that part of a debtor's compensation for personal services, whether or not denominated as wages, from an employer that remains after the deduction of health insurance premiums and any amounts required by law to be withheld.

(2) For purposes of this part, "amounts required by law to be withheld" include amounts for deductions such as social security taxes and withholding taxes, but do not include any amount withheld under a court order; and

(b) Includes, but is not limited to, salary, bonuses, commissions, or vacation pay.

Employer. This term—

(a) Means a person or entity that employs the services of another and that pays the latter's wages or salary;

(b) Includes, but is not limited to, State and local governments; and

(c) Does not include an agency of the Federal Government.

Financial hardship means an inability to meet basic living expenses for goods and services necessary for the survival of the debtor and his or her spouse and dependents.

Garnishment means the process of withholding amounts from an employee's disposable pay and paying those amounts to a creditor in satisfaction of a withholding order.

We means the United States Department of Education.

Withholding order. (a) This term means any order for withholding or garnishment of pay issued by this Department, another Federal agency, a State or private non-profit guaranty agency, or a judicial or administrative body.

(b) For purposes of this part, the terms "wage garnishment order" and

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"garnishment order" have the same meaning as "withholding order."

You means the debtor.

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3720D)

§ 34.4 Notice of proposed garnishment.

(a) We may start proceedings to garnish your wages whenever we determine that you are delinquent in paying a debt owed to the United States under a program we administer.

(b) We start garnishment proceedings by sending you a written notice of the proposed garnishment.

(c) At least 30 days before we start garnishment proceedings, we mail the notice by first class mail to your last known address.

(d)(1) We keep a copy of a certificate of service indicating the date of mailing of the notice.

(2) We may retain this certificate of service in electronic form.

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3720D)

§ 34.5 Contents of a notice of proposed garnishment.

In a notice of proposed garnishment, we inform you of—

(a) The nature and amount of the debt;

(b) Our intention to collect the debt through deductions from pay until the debt and all accumulated interest, penalties, and collection costs are paid in full; and

(c) An explanation of your rights, including those in §34.6, and the time frame within which you may exercise your rights.

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3720D)

§ 34.6 Rights in connection with garnishment.

Before starting garnishment, we provide you the opportunity—

(a) To inspect and copy our records related to the debt;

(b) To enter into a written repayment agreement with us to repay the debt under terms we consider acceptable;

(c) For a hearing in accordance with §34.8 concerning—

(1) The existence, amount, or current enforceability of the debt;