

from debtors and comply with other FCCS provisions applicable to the administrative collection of debts. See 31 CFR part 901.

**§ 19.5 How will Commerce entities add interest, penalty charges, and administrative costs to a Commerce debt?**

(a) *Assessment and notice.* Commerce entities shall assess interest, penalties and administrative costs on Commerce debts in accordance with the provisions of 31 U.S.C. 3717 and 31 CFR 901.9. Interest shall be charged in accordance with the requirements of 31 U.S.C. 3717(a). Penalties shall accrue at a rate of not more than 6% per year or such other higher rate as authorized by law. Administrative costs, that is, the costs of processing and handling a delinquent debt, shall be determined by the Commerce entity collecting the debt, as directed by the Office of the Deputy Chief Financial Officer. Commerce entities may have additional policies regarding how interest, penalties, and administrative costs are assessed on particular types of debts, subject to the approval of the Deputy Chief Financial Officer. Commerce entities are required to explain in the notice to the debtor described in § 19.4 of this Part how interest, penalties, costs, and other charges are assessed, unless the requirements are included in a contract or other legally binding agreement.

(b) *Waiver of interest, penalties, and administrative costs.* Unless otherwise required by law or contract, Commerce entities may not charge interest if the amount due on the Commerce debt is paid within 30 days after the date from which the interest accrues. See 31 U.S.C. 3717(d). Commerce entities may waive interest, penalties, and administrative costs, or any portion thereof, when it would be against equity and good conscience or not in the United States' best interest to collect such charges, in accordance with Commerce guidelines for such waivers. Legal counsel approval to waive such charges is required. See Department of Commerce Credit and Debt Management Operating Standards and Procedures Handbook (currently at <http://www.osec.doc.gov/ofm/credit/cover.htm>).

(c) *Accrual during suspension of debt collection.* In most cases, interest, penalties and administrative costs will continue to accrue during any period when collection has been suspended for any reason (for example, when the debtor has requested a hearing). Commerce entities may suspend accrual of any or all of these charges when accrual would be against equity and good conscience or not in the United States' best interest, in accordance with Commerce guidelines for such waivers. See Department of Commerce Credit and Debt Management Operating Standards and Procedures Handbook (currently at <http://www.osec.doc.gov/ofm/credit/cover.htm>).

**§ 19.6 When will Commerce entities allow a debtor to pay a Commerce debt in installments instead of one lump sum?**

If a debtor is financially unable to pay the Commerce debt in one lump sum, a Commerce entity may accept payment of a Commerce debt in regular installments, in accordance with the provisions of 31 CFR 901.8 and the Commerce entity's policies and procedures.

**§ 19.7 When will Commerce entities compromise a Commerce debt?**

If a Commerce entity cannot collect the full amount of a Commerce debt, the Commerce entity may compromise the Commerce debt in accordance with the provisions of 31 CFR part 902 and the Commerce entity's policies and procedures. Legal counsel approval to compromise a Commerce debt is required as described in Department of Commerce Credit and Debt Management Operating Standards and Procedures Handbook (currently at <http://www.osec.doc.gov/ofm/credit/cover.htm>).

**§ 19.8 When will Commerce entities suspend or terminate debt collection on a Commerce debt?**

If, after pursuing all appropriate means of collection, a Commerce entity determines that a Commerce debt is uncollectible, the Commerce entity may suspend or terminate debt collection activity in accordance with the provisions of 31 CFR part 903 and the

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Commerce entity's policies and procedures. Legal counsel approval to suspend or terminate collection on a Commerce debt is required as described in Department of Commerce Credit and Debt Management Operating Standards and Procedures Handbook (currently at <http://www.osec.doc.gov/ofm/credit/cover.htm>). Termination of debt collection activity by a Commerce entity does not discharge the indebtedness.

### **§ 19.9 When will Commerce entities transfer a Commerce debt to the Treasury Department's Financial Management Service for collection?**

(a) Commerce entities will transfer any Commerce debt that is more than 180 days delinquent to the Financial Management Service for debt collection services, a process known as "cross-servicing." See 31 U.S.C. 3711(g) and 31 CFR 285.12. Commerce entities may transfer Commerce debts delinquent 180 days or less to the Financial Management Service in accordance with the procedures described in 31 CFR 285.12. The Financial Management Service takes appropriate action to collect or compromise the transferred Commerce debt, or to suspend or terminate collection action thereon, in accordance with the statutory and regulatory requirements and authorities applicable to the Commerce debt and the collection action to be taken. See 31 CFR 285.12(b) and 285.12(c)(2). Appropriate action can include, but is not limited to, contact with the debtor, referral of the Commerce debt to the Treasury Offset Program, private collection agencies or the Department of Justice, reporting of the Commerce debt to credit bureaus, and administrative wage garnishment.

(b) At least sixty (60) days prior to transferring a Commerce debt to the Financial Management Service, Commerce entities will send notice to the debtor as required by § 19.4 of this Part. Commerce entities will certify to the Financial Management Service, in writing, that the Commerce debt is valid, delinquent, legally enforceable, and that there are no legal bars to collection. In addition, Commerce entities will certify their compliance with all applicable due process and other requirements as described in this Part

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and other Federal laws. See 31 CFR 285.12(i) regarding the certification requirement.

(c) As part of its debt collection process, the Financial Management Service uses the Treasury Offset Program to collect Commerce debts by administrative and tax refund offset. See 31 CFR 285.12(g). The Treasury Offset Program is a centralized offset program administered by the Financial Management Service to collect delinquent debts owed to Federal agencies and states (including past-due child support). Under the Treasury Offset Program, before a Federal payment is disbursed, the Financial Management Service compares the name and taxpayer identification number (TIN) of the payee with the names and TINs of debtors that have been submitted by Federal agencies and states to the Treasury Offset Program database. If there is a match, the Financial Management Service (or, in some cases, another Federal disbursing agency) offsets all or a portion of the Federal payment, disburses any remaining payment to the payee, and pays the offset amount to the creditor agency. Federal payments eligible for offset include, but are not limited to, income tax refunds, salary, travel advances and reimbursements, retirement and vendor payments, and Social Security and other benefit payments.

### **§ 19.10 How will Commerce entities use administrative offset (offset of non-tax Federal payments) to collect a Commerce debt?**

(a) *Centralized administrative offset through the Treasury Offset Program.* (1) In most cases, the Financial Management Service uses the Treasury Offset Program to collect Commerce debts by the offset of Federal payments. See § 19.9(c) of this Part. If not already transferred to the Financial Management Service under § 19.9 of this Part, Commerce entities will refer Commerce debt over 180 days delinquent to the Treasury Offset Program for collection by centralized administrative offset. See 31 U.S.C. 3716(c)(6); 31 CFR part 285, subpart A; and 31 CFR 901.3(b). Commerce entities may refer to the Treasury Offset Program for offset any