



[CLICK HERE to return to the home page](#)

Reg. Section 1.21-1

Expenses for household and dependent care services necessary for gainful employment

(a) In general.

(1) Section 21 allows a credit to a taxpayer against the tax imposed by chapter 1 for employment-related expenses for household services and care (as defined in paragraph (d) of this section) of a qualifying individual (as defined in paragraph (b) of this section). The purpose of the expenses must be to enable the taxpayer to be gainfully employed (as defined in paragraph (c) of this section). For taxable years beginning after December 31, 2004, a qualifying individual must have the same principal place of abode (as defined in paragraph (g) of this section) as the taxpayer for more than one-half of the taxable year. For taxable years beginning before January 1, 2005, the taxpayer must maintain a household (as defined in paragraph (h) of this section) that includes one or more qualifying individuals.

(2) The amount of the credit is equal to the applicable percentage of the employment-related expenses that may be taken into account by the taxpayer during the taxable year (but subject to the limits prescribed in §1.21-2). Applicable percentage means 35 percent reduced by 1 percentage point for each \$2,000 (or fraction thereof) by which the taxpayer's adjusted gross income for the taxable year exceeds \$15,000, but not less than 20 percent. For example, if a taxpayer's adjusted gross income is \$31,850, the applicable percentage is 26 percent.

(3) Expenses may be taken as a credit under section 21, regardless of the taxpayer's method of accounting, only in the taxable year the services are performed or the taxable year the expenses are paid, whichever is later.

(4) The requirements of section 21 and §§1.21-1 through 1.21-4 are applied at the time the services are performed, regardless of when the expenses are paid.

(5) Examples. The provisions of this paragraph (a) are illustrated by the following examples.

Example (1). In December 2007, B pays for the care of her child for January 2008. Under paragraph (a)(3) of this section, B may claim the credit in 2008, the later of the years in which the expenses are paid and the services are performed.

Example (2). The facts are the same as in Example 1, except that B's child turns 13 on February 1, 2008, and B pays for the care provided in January 2008 on February 3, 2008. Under paragraph (a)(4) of this section, the determination of whether the expenses are employment-related expenses is made when the services are performed. Assuming other requirements are met, the amount B pays will be an employment-related expense under

section 21, because B's child is a qualifying individual when the services are performed, even though the child is not a qualifying individual when B pays the expenses.

(b) Qualifying individual.

(1) In general. For taxable years beginning after December 31, 2004, a qualifying individual is-

(i) The taxpayer's dependent (who is a qualifying child within the meaning of section 152) who has not attained age 13;

(ii) The taxpayer's dependent (as defined in section 152, determined without regard to subsections (b)(1), (b)(2), and (d)(1)(B)) who is physically or mentally incapable of self-care and who has the same principal place of abode as the taxpayer for more than one-half of the taxable year; or

(iii) The taxpayer's spouse who is physically or mentally incapable of self-care and who has the same principal place of abode as the taxpayer for more than one-half of the taxable year.

(2) Taxable years beginning before January 1, 2005. For taxable years beginning before January 1, 2005, a qualifying individual is-

(i) The taxpayer's dependent for whom the taxpayer is entitled to a deduction for a personal exemption under section 151(c) and who is under age 13;

(ii) The taxpayer's dependent who is physically or mentally incapable of self-care; or

(iii) The taxpayer's spouse who is physically or mentally incapable of self-care.

(3) Qualification on a daily basis. The status of an individual as a qualifying individual is determined on a daily basis. An individual is not a qualifying individual on the day the status terminates.

(4) Physical or mental incapacity. An individual is physically or mentally incapable of self-care if, as a result of a physical or mental defect, the individual is incapable of caring for the individual's hygiene or nutritional needs, or requires full-time attention of another person for the individual's own safety or the safety of others. The inability of an individual to engage in any substantial gainful activity or to perform the normal household functions of a homemaker or care for minor children by reason of a physical or mental condition does not of itself establish that the individual is physically or mentally incapable of self-care.

(5) Special test for divorced or separated parents or parents living apart.

(i) Scope. This paragraph (b)(5) applies to a child (as defined in section 152(f)(1) for taxable years beginning after December 31, 2004, and in section 151(c)(3) for taxable years beginning before January 1, 2005) who-

(A) Is under age 13 or is physically or mentally incapable of self-care;

(B) Receives over one-half of his or her support during the calendar year from one or both parents who are divorced or legally separated under a

decree of divorce or separate maintenance, are separated under a written separation agreement, or live apart at all times during the last 6 months of the calendar year; and

(C) Is in the custody of one or both parents for more than one-half of the calendar year.

(ii) Custodial parent allowed the credit. A child to whom this paragraph (b)(5) applies is the qualifying individual of only one parent in any taxable year and is the qualifying child of the custodial parent even if the noncustodial parent may claim the dependency exemption for that child for that taxable year. See section 21(e)(5). The custodial parent is the parent having custody for the greater portion of the calendar year. See section 152(e)(4)(A).

(6)Example. The provisions of this paragraph (b) are illustrated by the following examples.

Example. C pays \$420 for the care of her child, a qualifying individual, to be provided from January 2 through January 31, 2008 (21 days of care). On January 20, 2008, C's child turns 13 years old. Under paragraph (b)(3) of this section, C's child is a qualifying individual from January 2 through January 19, 2008 (13 days of care). C may take into account \$260, the pro rata amount C pays for the care of her child for 13 days, under section 21. See §1.21-2(a)(4).

(c)Gainful employment.

(1)In general. Expenses are employment-related expenses only if they are for the purpose of enabling the taxpayer to be gainfully employed. The expenses must be for the care of a qualifying individual or household services performed during periods in which the taxpayer is gainfully employed or is in active search of gainful employment. Employment may consist of service within or outside the taxpayer's home and includes self-employment. An expense is not employment-related merely because it is paid or incurred while the taxpayer is gainfully employed. The purpose of the expense must be to enable the taxpayer to be gainfully employed. Whether the purpose of an expense is to enable the taxpayer to be gainfully employed depends on the facts and circumstances of the particular case. Work as a volunteer or for a nominal consideration is not gainful employment.

(2)Determination of period of employment on a daily basis.

(i) In general. Expenses paid for a period during only part of which the taxpayer is gainfully employed or in active search of gainful employment must be allocated on a daily basis.

(ii) Exception for short, temporary absences. A taxpayer who is gainfully employed is not required to allocate expenses during a short, temporary absence from work, such as for vacation or minor illness, provided that the care-giving arrangement requires the taxpayer to pay for care during the absence. An absence of 2 consecutive calendar weeks is a short, temporary absence. Whether an absence longer than 2 consecutive calendar weeks is a short, temporary absence is determined based on all the facts and circumstances.

(iii) Part-time employment. A taxpayer who is employed part-time generally must allocate expenses for dependent care between days worked and days not worked. However, if a taxpayer employed part-time is required to pay for dependent care on a periodic basis (such as weekly or monthly) that includes both days worked and days not worked, the taxpayer is not required to allocate the expenses. A day on which the taxpayer works at least 1 hour is a day of work.

(3) Examples. The provisions of this paragraph (c) are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). D works during the day and her husband, E, works at night and sleeps during the day. D and E pay for care for a qualifying individual during the hours when D is working and E is sleeping. Under paragraph (c)(1) of this section, the amount paid by D and E for care may be for the purpose of allowing D and E to be gainfully employed and may be an employment-related expense under section 21.

Example (2). F works at night and pays for care for a qualifying individual during the hours when F is working. Under paragraph (c)(1) of this section, the amount paid by F for care may be for the purpose of allowing F to be gainfully employed and may be an employment-related expense under section 21.

Example (3). G, the custodial parent of two children who are qualifying individuals, hires a housekeeper for a monthly salary to care for the children while G is gainfully employed. G becomes ill and as a result is absent from work for 4 months. G continues to pay the housekeeper to care for the children while G is absent from work. During this 4-month period, G performs no employment services, but receives payments under her employer's wage continuation plan. Although G may be considered to be gainfully employed during her absence from work, the absence is not a short, temporary absence within the meaning of paragraph (c)(2)(ii) of this section, and her payments for household and dependent care services during the period of illness are not for the purpose of enabling her to be gainfully employed. G's expenses are not employment-related expenses, and she may not take the expenses into account under section 21.

Example (4). To be gainfully employed, H sends his child to a dependent care center that complies with all state and local requirements. The dependent care center requires payment for days when a child is absent from the center. H takes 8 days off from work as vacation days. Because the absence is less than 2 consecutive calendar weeks, under paragraph (c)(2)(ii) of this section, H's absence is a short, temporary absence. H is not required to allocate expenses between days worked and days not worked. The entire fee for the period that includes the 8 vacation days may be an employment-related expense under section 21.

Example (5). J works 3 days per week and her child attends a dependent care center (that complies with all state and local requirements) to enable her to be gainfully employed. The dependent care center allows payment for any 3 days per week for \$150 or 5 days per week for \$250. J enrolls her child for 5 days per week, and her child attends the care center for 5 days per week. Under paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section, J must allocate her expenses for dependent care between days worked and days not worked. Three-fifths of the \$250, or \$150 per week, may be an employment-related expense under section 21.

Example (6). The facts are the same as in Example 5, except that the dependent care center does not offer a 3-day option. The entire \$250 weekly fee may be an employment-related expense under section 21.

(d) Care of qualifying individual and household services.

(1) In general. To qualify for the dependent care credit, expenses must be for the care of a qualifying individual. Expenses are for the care of a qualifying individual if the primary function is to assure the individual's well-being and protection. Not all expenses relating to a qualifying individual are for the individual's care. Amounts paid for food, lodging, clothing, or education are not for the care of a qualifying individual. If, however, the care is provided in such a manner that the expenses cover other goods or services that are incidental to and inseparably a part of the care, the full amount is for care.

(2) Allocation of expenses. If an expense is partly for household services or for the care of a qualifying individual and partly for other goods or services, a reasonable allocation must be made. Only so much of the expense that is allocable to the household services or care of a qualifying individual is an employment-related expense. An allocation must be made if a housekeeper or other domestic employee performs household duties and cares for the qualifying children of the taxpayer and also performs other services for the taxpayer. No allocation is required, however, if the expense for the other purpose is minimal or insignificant or if an expense is partly attributable to the care of a qualifying individual and partly to household services.

(3) Household services. Expenses for household services may be employment-related expenses if the services are performed in connection with the care of a qualifying individual. The household services must be the performance in and about the taxpayer's home of ordinary and usual services necessary to the maintenance of the household and attributable to the care of the qualifying individual. Services of a housekeeper are household services within the meaning of this paragraph (d)(3) if the services are provided, at least in part, to the qualifying individual. Such services as are performed by chauffeurs, bartenders, or gardeners are not household services.

(4) Manner of providing care. The manner of providing care need not be the least expensive alternative available to the taxpayer. The cost of a paid caregiver may be an expense for the care of a qualifying individual even if another caregiver is available at no cost.

(5) School or similar program. Expenses for a child in nursery school, pre-school, or similar programs for children below the level of kindergarten are for the care of a qualifying individual and may be employment-related expenses. Expenses for a child in kindergarten or a higher grade are not for the care of a qualifying individual. However, expenses for before- or after-school care of a child in kindergarten or a higher grade may be for the care of a qualifying individual.

(6) Overnight camps. Expenses for overnight camps are not employment-related expenses.

(7) Day camps.

(i) The cost of a day camp or similar program may be for the care of a qualifying individual and an employment-related expense, without allocation under paragraph (d)(2) of this section, even if the day camp specializes in a particular activity. Summer school and tutoring programs are not for the care of a qualifying individual and the costs are not employment-related expenses.

(ii) A day camp that meets the definition of dependent care center in section 21(b)(2)(D) and paragraph (e)(2) of this section must comply with the requirements of section 21(b)(2)(C) and paragraph (e)(2) of this section.

(8)Transportation. The cost of transportation by a dependent care provider of a qualifying individual to or from a place where care of that qualifying individual is provided may be for the care of the qualifying individual. The cost of transportation not provided by a dependent care provider is not for the care of the qualifying individual.

(9)Employment taxes. Taxes under sections 3111 (relating to the Federal Insurance Contributions Act) and 3301 (relating to the Federal Unemployment Tax Act) and similar state payroll taxes are employment-related expenses if paid in respect of wages that are employment-related expenses.

(10)Room and board. The additional cost of providing room and board for a caregiver over usual household expenditures may be an employment-related expense.

(11)Indirect expenses. Expenses that relate to, but are not directly for, the care of a qualifying individual, such as application fees, agency fees, and deposits, may be for the care of a qualifying individual and may be employment-related expenses if the taxpayer is required to pay the expenses to obtain the related care. However, forfeited deposits and other payments are not for the care of a qualifying individual if care is not provided.

(12)Examples. The provisions of this paragraph (d) are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). To be gainfully employed, K sends his 3-year old child to a pre-school. The pre-school provides lunch and snacks. Under paragraph (d)(1) of this section, K is not required to allocate expenses between care and the lunch and snacks, because the lunch and snacks are incidental to and inseparably a part of the care. Therefore, K may treat the full amount paid to the pre-school as for the care of his child.

Example (2). L, a member of the armed forces, is ordered to a combat zone. To be able to comply with the orders, L places her 10-year old child in boarding school. The school provides education, meals, and housing to L's child in addition to care. Under paragraph (d)(2) of this section, L must allocate the cost of the boarding school between expenses for care and expenses for education and other services not constituting care. Only the part of the cost of the boarding school that is for the care of L's child is an employment-related expense under section 21.

Example (3). To be gainfully employed, M employs a full-time housekeeper to care for M's two children, aged 9 and 13 years. The housekeeper regularly performs household services of cleaning and cooking and drives M to and from M's place of employment, a trip of 15 minutes each way. Under paragraph (d)(3) of this section, the chauffeur services are not household services. M is not required to allocate a portion of the expense of the housekeeper to the chauffeur services under paragraph (d)(2) of this section, however, because the chauffeur services are minimal and insignificant. Further, no allocation under paragraph (d)(2) of this section is required to determine the portion of the expenses attributable to the care of the 13-year old child (not a qualifying individual) because the household expenses are in part attributable to the care of the 9-year-old child. Accordingly, the entire expense of employing the housekeeper is an employment-related expense. The amount that M may take into account as an employment-related expense

under section 21, however, is limited to the amount allowable for one qualifying individual.

Example (4). To be gainfully employed, N sends her 9-year-old child to a summer day camp that offers computer activities and recreational activities such as swimming and arts and crafts. Under paragraph (d)(7)(i) of this section, the full cost of the summer day camp may be for care.

Example (5). To be gainfully employed, O sends her 9-year-old child to a math tutoring program for two hours per day during the summer. Under paragraph (d)(7)(i) of this section, the cost of the tutoring program is not for care.

Example (6). To be gainfully employed, P hires a full-time housekeeper to care for her 8-year old child. In order to accommodate the housekeeper, P moves from a 2-bedroom apartment to a 3-bedroom apartment that otherwise is comparable to the 2-bedroom apartment. Under paragraph (d)(10) of this section, the additional cost to rent the 3-bedroom apartment over the cost of the 2-bedroom apartment and any additional utilities attributable to the housekeeper's residence in the household may be employment-related expenses under section 21.

Example (7). Q pays a fee to an agency to obtain the services of an au pair to care for Q's children, qualifying individuals, to enable Q to be gainfully employed. An au pair from the agency subsequently provides care for Q's children. Under paragraph (d)(11) of this section, the fee may be an employment-related expense.

Example (8). R places a deposit with a pre-school to reserve a place for her child. R sends the child to a different pre-school and forfeits the deposit. Under paragraph (d)(11) of this section, the forfeited deposit is not an employment-related expense.

(e) Services outside the taxpayer's household.

(1) In general. The credit is allowable for expenses for services performed outside the taxpayer's household only if the care is for one or more qualifying individuals who are described in this section at-

(i) Paragraph (b)(1)(i) or (b)(2)(i); or

(ii) Paragraph (b)(1)(ii), (b)(2)(ii), (b)(1)(iii), or (b)(2)(iii) and regularly spend at least 8 hours each day in the taxpayer's household.

(2) Dependent care centers.

(i) In general. The credit is allowable for services performed by a dependent care center only if-

(A) The center complies with all applicable laws and regulations, if any, of a state or local government, such as state or local licensing requirements and building and fire code regulations; and

(B) The requirements provided in this paragraph (e) are met.

(ii) Definition. The term dependent care center means any facility that provides full-time or part-time care for more than six individuals (other than individuals who reside at the facility) on a regular basis during the taxpayer's taxable year, and receives a fee, payment, or grant for providing services for the individuals (regardless of whether the facility is operated for profit). For purposes of the preceding sentence, a facility is presumed to provide full-time or part-time care for six or fewer individuals on a regular basis during the taxpayer's taxable year if

the facility has six or fewer individuals (including the taxpayer's qualifying individual) enrolled for full-time or part-time care on the day the qualifying individual is enrolled in the facility (or on the first day of the taxable year the qualifying individual attends the facility if the qualifying individual was enrolled in the facility in the preceding taxable year) unless the Internal Revenue Service demonstrates that the facility provides full-time or part-time care for more than six individuals on a regular basis during the taxpayer's taxable year.

(f) Reimbursed expenses. Employment-related expenses for which the taxpayer is reimbursed (for example, under a dependent care assistance program) may not be taken into account for purposes of the credit.

(g) Principal place of abode. For purposes of this section, the term principal place of abode has the same meaning as in section 152.

(h) Maintenance of a household.

(1) In general. For taxable years beginning before January 1, 2005, the credit is available only to a taxpayer who maintains a household that includes one or more qualifying individuals. A taxpayer maintains a household for the taxable year (or lesser period) only if the taxpayer (and spouse, if applicable) occupies the household and furnishes over one-half of the cost for the taxable year (or lesser period) of maintaining the household. The household must be the principal place of abode for the taxable year of the taxpayer and the qualifying individual or individuals.

(2) Cost of maintaining a household.

(i) Except as provided in paragraph (h)(2)(ii) of this section, for purposes of this section, the term cost of maintaining a household has the same meaning as in § 1.2-2(d) without regard to the last sentence thereof.

(ii) The cost of maintaining a household does not include the value of services performed in the household by the taxpayer or by a qualifying individual described in paragraph (b) of this section or any expense paid or reimbursed by another person.

(3) Monthly proration of annual costs. In determining the cost of maintaining a household for a period of less than a taxable year, the cost for the entire taxable year must be prorated on the basis of the number of calendar months within that period. A period of less than a calendar month is treated as a full calendar month.

(4) Two or more families. If two or more families occupy living quarters in common, each of the families is treated as maintaining a separate household. A taxpayer is maintaining a household if the taxpayer provides more than one-half of the cost of maintaining the separate household. For example, if two unrelated taxpayers with their respective children occupy living quarters in common and each taxpayer pays more than one-half of the household costs for each respective family, each taxpayer is treated as maintaining a household.

(i) Reserved.

(j)Expenses qualifying as medical expenses.

(1)In general. A taxpayer may not take an amount into account as both an employment-related expense under section 21 and an expense for medical care under section 213.

(2)Examples. The provisions of this paragraph (j) are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). S has \$6,500 of employment-related expenses for the care of his child who is physically incapable of self-care. The expenses are for services performed in S's household that also qualify as expenses for medical care under section 213. Of the total expenses, S may take into account \$3,000 under section 21. S may deduct the balance of the expenses, or \$3,500, as expenses for medical care under section 213 to the extent the expenses exceed 7.5 percent of S's adjusted gross income.

Example (2). The facts are the same as in Example 1, however, S first takes into account the \$6,500 of expenses under section 213. S deducts \$500 as an expense for medical care, which is the amount by which the expenses exceed 7.5 percent of his adjusted gross income. S may not take into account the \$6,000 balance as employment-related expenses under section 21, because he has taken the full amount of the expenses into account in computing the amount deductible under section 213.

(k)Substantiation. A taxpayer claiming a credit for employment-related expenses must maintain adequate records or other sufficient evidence to substantiate the expenses in accordance with section 6001 and the regulations thereunder.

(l)Effective/applicability date. This section and §§1.21-2 through 1.21-4 apply to taxable years ending after August 14, 2007.