

MASEA Safety Net for Our Society (SOS) Program 2019 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Purpose:

The Massachusetts Society of Enrolled Agents has put together a program designed to protect the value of our individual practices during periods of incapacity or death. This program is meant to be a short-term solution to provide support to an ailing MASEA colleague.

How will this be done?

Those who participate or a responsible family member or staff member or designated colleague will call a member of the MASEA SOS Committee during periods of incapacity. The committee will organize volunteer MASEA members to do what they can to protect the practice during this short-term period of crisis.

What will the SOS program do?

The SOS committee will be made up of ‘regional’ coordinators that will handle any crisis in their geographical region. Helpers will be asked by those regional coordinators to donate time to save the practice of fellow members. If the incapacity happens during tax season, participants may be asked to clear their calendar on certain days to work for the distressed member. This will be difficult for participants, but when compared to the value of a saved practice, we believe it is worth the sacrifice. The volunteer work may include meeting with the clients of the incapacitated colleague to prepare extensions, tax returns, or what is deemed necessary to maintain the practice’s value. The volunteer work may extend to facilitate the sale for the benefit of a survivor. The volunteer work may also include other types of work on an as-needed basis.

What is the time commitment expected to participate as a helper in this program?

During the tax season, a minimum of four hours per week commitment is expected for a period of at least four weeks. And, outside of the tax season, a minimum of four hours per week commitment is expected for a period of at least eight weeks. Additional arrangements can be made to spend more time on this as agreed to by the helper and the ailing colleague. This time commitment is only required if you are called upon to be a helper for an ailing colleague. Next paragraph explains the commitment which is considered volunteer time.

What about compensation for the ‘Volunteer’ Work?

Out of pocket costs for the volunteer work including mileage at the federal rate, postage, etc., will be fully reimbursed. We are asking each volunteer to truly volunteer their time and donate four completed returns or at least 10 hours (whichever is less) to the ailing colleague. After this amount of returns or time, helpers will be compensated 20% of the distressed practice fees unless there is another agreed upon arrangement in place (e.g., helpers could decide not to take any payment for services provided.). However, Audit Representation and Collection Case work will be compensated 100% to the helper that

handles this type of work. Note that the requested commitment time is greater than the expected volunteer time.

What services will be provided during the tax season?

Extensions and basic individual tax return preparation will be the focus of supporting ailing colleagues during the tax season. Correspondence will be handled in order of urgency with the focus on delaying required responses until the ailing colleague can address it themselves.

What services will be provided outside of the tax season?

Outside of the tax season, helpers will work on all tax related issues including tax return preparation, audit representation, collection case work, and correspondence.

What services are not included in this program?

The SOS program is not set up to handle non-tax related activities that the ailing colleague may be involved in including investments, financial planning, and insurance selling. Also, bookkeeping and payroll work is outside the scope of this program. Other arrangements will need to be made outside of this program to deal with these types of issues.

Am I in danger of losing my clients to the ‘helpers’?

We have built in some safeguards to protect the distressed practice. Participants in the program will sign the contract that contains a non-competition clause. And, if a client discovers that he prefers to work with the helper preparer, and hires that helper for future tax work, the helper will be required to pay the distressed practice for that client. No MASEA member shall retain a client as his or her own without first reaching an agreement as to adequate compensation to be paid to the affected MASEA member or the family representative. It is suggested that the minimum sales price be what was charged by the distressed practice for the most recent tax return. That amount could be payable over a 12-month period. It would be the responsibility of the distressed practice to notify the helper to arrange payment.

What prevents an incapacitated member from staying home?

We believe that the compensation arrangement for the helpers will deter an overlong stay at home. And, the fact that extensions and simpler individual tax return preparation are the primary focus during the tax season should be an incentive for the conscientious, ailing colleague to get back to his/her practice as soon as possible and fully service their clients.

Who will be working with my clients?

This SOS program is open to all MASEA members. We believe in the high level of competence we have in our Society. However, members can specify that they only want Enrolled Agents to work with their clients. Making such a decision may limit the amount of resources available to help you.

Who can be a participant?

All members of MASEA in good standing are eligible to participate. Being a participant signs you up to help other colleagues as well as receive assistance from your colleagues.

I am an Employee EA. Why should I participate?

By participating, you might save the practice for which you work and may, indirectly, save your job.

Does my Privacy Policy need to change to cover colleagues that work on my clients' returns?

You will need to have a sentence in your Privacy Policy that says something like, "This privacy policy also applies to anyone that works on your return on behalf of my business/firm."

When will this program be effective?

The SOS program will start on January 1 of each year for all participants who return the Contract and the 'Contact and Information List' by the specified time as communicated by the SOS program committee.

How do I sign up?

In order to be covered for the **2019 calendar year**, review the Contract, sign it, and send it along with the completed Contact and Information List **no later than January 9, 2019** to:

Cynthia Goldman
Goldman Tax Services
15 Beaver Pond Road
Bellingham MA 02019
goldmantax@outlook.com
Phone: 508-966-4020
Fax: 508-966-4021

You are also required to fill out the 'Location of Business Items and Information' spreadsheet. HOWEVER, we are not asking you to provide us this information when you sign up. Keep this filled out spreadsheet in a safe place and let your responsible family member and/or your responsible staff member or colleague know of its existence and location. In the event you are not available, the SOS committee will ask for the spreadsheet at that time to allow the committee to render assistance as needed.

Do I need to sign up every year?

Yes. We are asking that you sign up every year so that your information is up to date in order to best support you in case you need it. Each year you will need to sign the Contract and fill out the 'Contact and Information List' and send these two documents to the address in the previous question. Also, you will need to review the Location of Business Items and Information and update it as needed. Enrollment for the calendar year ends December 31st. To sign up for 2019, you need to sign up by January 9, 2019.

We believe that this SOS program will strengthen and protect the Tax Practice of each participating MASEA member. We hope that each of you will desire to participate.

Sincerely,

Your MaSEA SOS Program Committee Members