



Best Practices for 403(b) Plans Information Sharing October 29, 2008

CODING “PIPE DELIMITED” DATA

A PIPE (|) is used to delineate where a data field ends and where the next data field begins.

On a record which begins with a data field which is not required, two situations can be encountered

- 1) If there is a value for Field 1, the record begins with the data value itself (without a leading PIPE) and the first data value is then followed by a PIPE to signify the end of the first data field and the beginning of the second.
- 2) If the first data field is optional or conditional and no value is to be reported, the record layout begins with a single PIPE to signify that the first data field is NULL and the second data field is beginning

There is no PIPE at the end of the last data field on the record if the last data field has a value, since no additional data field follows, if however the last data field is NULL, then there is a single PIPE at the end.

Field 1 – Optional data field, say Employer EIN

In Example 1 the value “AL-1234567” is reported, in Example 2 NULL is reported (no value)

Field 2 – Required data field, say Vendor EIN; the value “CT-0012345” is reported in both Examples

Field 3 – Optional data field, Employee ID, is not available (i.e. NULL) in both examples

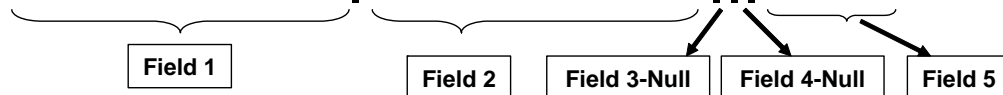
Field 4 – Optional data field, Latest Hardship Distribution Date...no hardship has ever been taken, so NULL is reported in both examples

Field 5 – Optional data field, Latest Hardship Distribution Amount requires that “0.00” be reported if no value.

This is the last data field on this particular record in both examples

Example 1: Values reported for Fields 1,2, and 5 but NULLs reported for Fields 3,4

AL-1234567|CT-0012345|||0.00



Example 2: Values reported for Fields 2 and 5 only but NULLs reported for Fields 1,3,4

|CT-0012345|||0.00

