



Iowa Department of Human Services

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Iowa Workers Get Free Tax Preparation Assistance Sites available throughout the state

(Des Moines, Iowa) - The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) reminds low to moderate income Iowans, the elderly and those with disabilities that they can get free tax preparation services at sites throughout the state.

Funding for this initiative comes from a three-year grant through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Grant Program. VITA is an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) initiative designed to promote and support free tax preparation service for the underserved, in both urban and non-urban locations.

Iowa DHS contracts with the Iowa Center for Economic Success to promote and deliver the tax preparation services through the coalition partners across the state. You can find locations and times here: <http://theiowacenter.org/taxes/> or at <http://irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep/>.

DHS is promoting the free tax preparation services in advance of Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Awareness Day on January 27. Last year, 206,000 Iowa workers received more than \$470 million in EITC refunds, with the average refund of \$2,279. If an Iowan worked last year and had income of less than \$53,505, they should check their eligibility for EITC.

"We want to get the word out to those who are eligible to file a tax return, even if they don't owe any tax, they can claim the EITC," said Wendy Rickman, head of DHS's Adult, Children and Family Services which administers the VITA Grant Program in Iowa. "It's money Iowa workers can use for groceries, rent, utilities and other bills."

EITC eligibility can be complex, and varies by income, family size and filing status. By visiting a VITA site, Iowans can access IRS-trained and certified volunteers who can help them determine if they qualify for the EITC and other refundable tax credits such as the Child Tax Credit or education credits. Volunteers at these sites also prepare and e-file (electronically file) tax returns at no cost. More than 697 volunteers prepared over 19,400 returns during last year's filing season.

"Our community volunteers prepare accurate returns to ensure Iowans receive the credits and refunds they are eligible for. Our focus remains on preparing accurate returns at no cost for Iowans who meet criteria for the program." said Michelle Bartusek with Iowa Center for

Economic Success. “This is money Iowa families can save or use to pay off bills, buy a car to get to work, or make a down payment on a home.”

Below are the number of federal returns prepared through the program.

Tax Year	Federal Returns Prepared
2015	20,002
2014	19,189
2013	14,579
2012	12,660
2011	11,700
2010	11,628

*Source: TaxWise Reports/Year-end Report Data from coalition partners to The Iowa Center

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More details on Free Tax Preparation: <http://theiowacenter.org/taxes/>