



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 Iowans with low to moderate income, Iowans who are elderly, and Iowans 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.

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

The DHS is promoting the free tax preparation services in advance of Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Awareness Day on January 26th. Last year 201,000 Iowa workers received more than \$459 million in EITC refunds; the average refund was \$2,282. If an Iowan worked last year and had income of less than \$53,930, 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, Division Administrator of DHS’ Adult, Children and Family Services which administers Iowa’s VITA Grant Program. “It’s money that 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 650 volunteers prepared nearly 20,000 returns during last year’s filing season.

"Our volunteers train and certify with the IRS to prepare tax returns for lowans and ensure they receive the credits and refunds for which they are eligible. Our focus remains on preparing accurate returns at no cost for lowans 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."

Number of federal returns prepared through the Iowa VITA program:

Tax Year	Federal Returns Prepared
2016	19,950
2015	20,002
2014	19,189
2013	14,579
2012	12,660
2011	11,700

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/>