

FREE TAX FILING

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT

IRS data indicate more than half of EITC recipients pay someone to prepare their tax returns. Paid tax preparation fees average about \$300. People with lower-wage need every penny of their tax refunds and may not realize that they do not have to pay fees that drain money away from their refunds.

FREE TAX FILING PROGRAMS

Due to COVID-19, many programs are modifying how they deliver free tax preparation. People should make sure they understand the process and expectations before scheduling appointments.

VITA

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) is a free alternative to paid tax preparation. The IRS sponsors the VITA program which community-based organizations coordinate locally. VITA sites generally assist people who make under around \$57,000, people with disabilities, and limited-English speaking taxpayers, though income limits vary from site to site. VITA volunteers are trained according to IRS guidelines to fill out basic tax forms, including the ones needed to claim the EITC and the CTC. Volunteers must pass an annual exam to prepare tax returns. All tax returns undergo a quality review before VITA sites submit them to the IRS. To identify site locations, visit irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep.

TCE/AARP Tax-Aide

The Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program is sponsored by the IRS, often in conjunction with AARP Tax-Aide. Although its main purpose is to assist seniors, TCE also can help lower-income people of all ages file tax returns. Tax-Aide sites have similar income guidelines as the VITA program and volunteers must complete training and annual certification. To identify site locations, visit www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide.

GetYourRefund.org

Code for America, in partnership with VITA, has created a fully virtual process for free tax assistance. Visitors can get help from an IRS-certified volunteer to file their taxes after uploading documents online. Visit www.GetYourRefund.org. This site is also available in Spanish.

MyFreeTaxes.com

People who are comfortable using computers can file both federal and state tax returns for free. While there isn't an income limit to use this program, people cannot use it if they have self-employment income. The website uses H&R Block software and provides free guidance through email or online chat. Visit MyFreeTaxes.com.



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