



Since 2005, Gallaudet University (GU) in Washington, D.C., has coordinated a free tax preparation site. As one of the nation's largest undergraduate universities for the deaf and hard of hearing, GU utilizes tax preparers who are fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) and who can also assist hearing taxpayers.

In 2011, GU partnered with the D.C. EITC Campaign (DEC) and Capital Area Asset Builders — a Real Economic Impact Tour participant — to expand the availability of free tax filing services for deaf taxpayers in the D.C.-metro area during a one-day education and outreach event. The event was held at a local library and utilized its Adaptive Services Center, which provides resources for people with disabilities. An IRS representative who is deaf conducted two tax information and Q&A sessions in ASL for deaf taxpayers. GU volunteers were also available to assist attendees who wanted to file their own tax returns through the mobile MyFreeTaxes.com VITA van. Since the library hosts one of DEC's VITA sites, other taxpayers who wanted a tax preparer to file their returns could also file their taxes as part of the event.

In addition, DEC provided sensitivity training for volunteers at its other VITA sites to help make the sites more welcoming to taxpayers with disabilities.

For the 2010 tax year, DEC filed 883 tax returns for taxpayers with disabilities.

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Workers with Disabilities and Families Raising Children with Disabilities

Low-wage workers with disabilities and families that are raising children with disabilities face profound challenges. Finding transportation to and from the job may be costly and difficult to arrange. Out-of-pocket health care expenses may be higher than for other families. Securing child or adult day care for a family member with special needs may pose a financial burden. For these reasons, the income boost that the EIC and the CTC provide can be vital. Outreach efforts can inform families that special rules may help them qualify if they work and have a severe disability or are raising a child with a severe disability. Such efforts also can allay fears that claiming the credits will jeopardize the public benefits that people with disabilities depend on.

The 2009 IRS Benchmark Study found that 54 percent of taxpayers with disabilities earn less than \$20,000. Only 36 percent of taxpayers with disabilities are aware of free tax preparation services, and just six percent reported using them. Many families and individuals may not know about the tax credits.

STRATEGIES

- Enlist groups that advocate for people with disabilities. The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) is a coalition of approximately 100 national disability organizations. CCD members include organizations such as Easter Seals, Family Voices, the Arc of the United States, United Cerebral Palsy, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill and others that have members throughout the country. *To contact CCD members, visit www.c-c-d.org. You also may find potential partners by contacting the National Council on Independent Living. For more information, visit www.ncil.org.*
- Encourage "Disability Program Navigators" (DPNs) to incorporate tax credit outreach into their routine discussions with people seeking employment. The Disability Navigator Initiative is a joint project of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the Social Security Administration which aims to help people

Glad You Asked That!

Q: Can a person who receives disability benefits get the EIC and the CTC?

A: To be eligible for the EIC, individuals must have earned income. Most disability-related benefits are not considered earned income, but a person who received long-term, employer-paid disability benefits and is under minimum retirement age can qualify for the EIC, even if he or she did not work during the tax year. Such disability benefits are considered earned income. Social Security Disability Insurance, SSI and military disability pensions are not counted as earned income.

Q: Can children with disabilities be claimed for the tax credits?

A: A person of any age with total and permanent disabilities may be claimed as a “qualifying child” for the EIC. A child claimed for the CTC, including a child with disabilities, must be under age 17 at the end of the year.

with disabilities better understand work support programs and other services available through DOL One-Stop Career Centers. Provide DPNs and One-Stops with tax credit outreach materials. *For more information, visit www.doleta.gov/disability/new_dpn_grants.cfm. To locate DOL One-Stop Career Centers in your state, visit www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/onestop/onestopmap.cfm.*

- Reach out to your state’s Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Project, formerly known as the Benefits Planning, Assistance and Outreach (BPAO) Program. The Social Security Administration (SSA) funds community-based organizations in every state to help SSA beneficiaries with disabilities make informed choices about work. Ensure that WIPA Community Incentive Coordinators have the information they need to alert people to the tax credits and how to claim them. *For a directory of WIPA Projects across the country, visit <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/oesp/providers.nsf/bystate>.*
- Encourage state agencies that provide services to people with disabilities (such as agencies for vocational rehabilitation, supported employment, supported living, mental health, mental retardation or developmental disabilities) to share information about the EIC and the CTC with program participants and their families.
- Take steps to ensure that free tax assistance sites are accessible to people with disabilities. Until existing sites can be modified, a mobile tax assistance site or home visiting program may be good alternatives.

The Real Economic Impact Tour operates in more than 100 cities and focuses on ensuring that people with disabilities know they may qualify for the tax credits and can claim them. For more information, visit www.reitour.org.



Find It On the Web

www.eitcoutreach.org

- More Outreach Strategies and Examples
- Fact Sheet on the Tax Credits and People with Disabilities
- More Questions and Answers on the Tax Credits for People with Disabilities