



Working with schools offers many opportunities to reach families that may qualify for the tax credits. Schools are usually viewed as trustworthy institutions and families pay attention to information children bring home from school. School administrators are often willing to help with tax credit outreach efforts since they know that a secure home environment promotes school achievement. Many have recognized the value of the EIC and the CTC in contributing to family stability.



For five years,
Baltimore County
Public Schools' (BCPS)

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) program in Maryland has informed families about the EIC and CTC. BCPS HIPPY reaches out to families who have children enrolled in Title I schools to recruit participants for HIPPY, a national parent involvement and school readiness program for parents with children ages 3 to 5. During weekly home visits, HIPPY staff teaches parents how to conduct age-appropriate activities with their children and also notifies families about additional resources that can support the development of their children. Beginning in November, parents get information about the EIC and CTC. Staff provides reminders about the tax credits in December and distributes tax credit flyers in English, Spanish and Korean in January. During the 2009 - 2010 school year, over 100 families from 44 Title I schools will participate in the program.

Contact: Nancy Dillon Tobias, BCPS, (410) 887-3037 or ntobias@bcps.org.

Strategies

- Ask school officials to share tax credit information with families who are likely to qualify. Focus on schools in which many students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, or Title I schools, which serve elementary school children in low-income communities. Your state Department of Education can tell you which school districts have these programs. Enlist school superintendents or individual principals to distribute information along with notices of eligibility for school meals or with other materials such as school newsletters, report cards and lunch menus.
- Recommend that your state PTA provide information on the EIC and the CTC to all local PTA presidents and encourage them to share the information with families through mailings and community assemblies. Offer to arrange for a speaker to talk about tax credits for working families at an upcoming PTA meeting.
- Make sure school counselors know about the EIC and the CTC and where families can get free tax assistance. These school employees frequently come into contact with families in financial crisis.
- Ask administrators to provide tax credit information to General Education Diploma (GED) classes and to send information with GED certificates.
- Engage community colleges and technical schools in outreach. Students who have returned to school to improve their job skills and are working part-time or at low wages may be eligible for the EIC and the CTC. Others who are taking non-credit courses to learn about personal finance issues, such as homeownership, also may be eligible.

- Involve students in conducting outreach in the community. Many schools have incorporated community service activities into the curriculum. Students can help publicize the EIC and the CTC and assist at VITA sites. Fraternities and sororities, as well as other student associations, can take on tax credit outreach projects.

The New American Opportunity Tax Credit is worth \$2,500 and can be used for tuition and course materials needed to pursue an undergraduate degree. Up to \$1,000 of this credit can be claimed even if no income tax is owed.

Glad You Asked That!

Q:

Can a working family claim a child for the EIC if she is a college student living at school?

A:

Full-time students up to 24 years of age can be qualifying children for the EIC. If the student lives away from home to attend school, it is considered a “temporary absence” and the student still can count as a qualifying child.

Q:

If a student gets financial aid, can his family still get the EIC or the CTC?

A:

Non-taxable scholarships and grants are not considered income in determining eligibility for the EIC and the CTC; taxable grants and scholarships also are not considered “earned income,” but are included in determining “adjusted gross income,” which may affect eligibility for the EIC and the CTC. Check with IRS at 1-800-829-1040 to find out which scholarships and grants are taxable or non-taxable.

Q:

If a family gets the tax credits, will it mean the student won’t qualify for financial aid?

A:

The EIC is counted as family income in determining financial aid eligibility, but CTC refunds are not. However, that doesn’t mean the EIC will prevent the student from getting financial aid since adding the amount of the credit to other income often will not cause the family to exceed the income limit for financial aid.



Find It On the Web www.cbpp.org/eic2010

More Outreach Strategies and Examples

More Questions and Answers on Tax Credits and Student Financial Aid

Fact Sheet on the American Opportunity Tax Credit