

K-State Research & Extension Riley County (KSRERC) partners with the Manhattan and Riley County Public School



Systems in Kansas to distribute information about the EIC, CTC, and its VITA site.

KSRERC arranged to send information in February 2011 to 450 families and faculty members in Riley County and 5,000 students in the Manhattan public schools by working with a public information officer, district superintendents, principals, and building secretaries.

KSRERC also promotes its VITA site through media outlets. On Facebook, it posts tax tips and VITA information. KSRERC staff conducted a 15-minute radio segment on the "In-Focus" talk show in mid-January 2011 to provide information about the tax sites and various tax tips. Additionally, KSRERC participated in a press conference organized by the county commission and had three news stories about the VITA site air on the radio during the tax season. In 2011, the KSRERC VITA site completed nearly 400 tax returns generating more than \$553,000 in federal refunds, including \$164,714 in EIC refunds.

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## Schools

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.

### 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

# 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:** EIC and CTC refunds are not counted as family income in determining financial aid eligibility.

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.
- Partner with high schools to provide free tax filing assistance. High school VITA sites deliver a needed service, especially in under-served communities. Contact the principal, superintendant or administrator of a local high school to discuss how a VITA site can benefit your community. *For strategies to organize a high school VITA site, see “High Schools: A Resource for Free Tax Preparation,” at [www.eitcoutreach.org](http://www.eitcoutreach.org).*

**The 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.**



## Find It On the Web

[www.eitcoutreach.org](http://www.eitcoutreach.org)

- More Outreach Strategies and Examples
- More Questions and Answers on Tax Credits and Student Financial Aid
- Fact Sheet on American Opportunity Tax Credit
- Fact Sheet on High Schools: A Resource for Free Tax Preparation