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**EITC Awareness Day reminds taxpayers to look into valuable credit; Volunteers available to help**

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WASHINGTON — With today marking national EITC Awareness Day, the Internal Revenue Service wants to remind workers about the Earned Income Tax Credit and to correctly claim this important credit if they qualify.

The IRS and community partners nationwide holds EITC Awareness Day each year to alert the millions of workers who may be missing out on this valuable tax credit. Partners will be sharing information and holding events across the country today and in the days ahead.

“The Earned Income Tax Credit makes a big difference for working families across the country,” said IRS Commissioner Chuck Rettig. “We encourage people to carefully review the EITC instructions to see if they qualify for this important credit when they prepare their taxes. The IRS also appreciates the continued effort of our partners across the nation who share information and raise awareness about EITC for people who may qualify.”

Eligible families with three or more qualifying children could get a maximum credit of up to $6,431. EITC for people without children could mean up to $519 added to their tax refund.

The IRS recommends that all workers who earned around $54,000 or less learn about EITC eligibility and use the [EITC Assistant](https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/earned-income-tax-credit/use-the-eitc-assistant) to find out if they qualify. The tool will help them determine their filing status, if they have a qualifying child or children, if they qualify to receive the EITC and estimate the amount of the credit they could get. If an individual doesn’t qualify for EITC, the Assistant explains why. A summary of the results can be printed and kept with the worker’s tax papers.

In addition to the EITC, if you have children or other dependents, you may be eligible to claim the Child Tax Credit, the Additional Child Tax Credit, or the Credit for Other Dependents. See [Publication 972](https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-publication-972), Child Tax Credit, and [Publication 5307](https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p5307.pdf) for information to help individual taxpayers understand the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

Full details are available on the [EITC](https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/earned-income-tax-credit) page on [IRS.gov](http://irs.gov/). In addition, here are key things for taxpayers to keep in mind.

**Get free help**

Anyone who qualifies for the EITC also qualifies for free tax help from a trained community volunteer. Through VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) and TCE (Tax Counselling for the Elderly), volunteers prepare basic tax returns at more than 12,000 tax help sites nationwide.

Some sites offer help on a first-come-first-served basis, while others require an appointment. Most are open from early February to mid-April. To find the nearest location, visit the [Free Tax Return Preparation](https://www.irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-you-by-volunteers) site on [IRS.gov](http://irs.gov/), or call 800-906-9887.

**Other free options**

Another way to claim the EITC is to file a return electronically using [IRS Free File](https://www.irs.gov/filing/free-file-do-your-federal-taxes-for-free). Just use a smartphone or computer to visit [IRS.gov](http://irs.gov/) and click the Free File link. Through the Free File system, anyone who qualifies for the EITC also qualifies to use brand-name software to prepare and electronically file their return for free.

**Choose direct deposit**

Anyone with a savings, checking or brokerage account can choose to have their refund electronically deposited in that account. Direct deposit is available, regardless of whether a return is filed electronically or on paper.

Four out of five people who get refunds now choose the speed and convenience of direct deposit. People who choose direct deposit typically get their refunds sooner: Plus, they never need to worry about a lost, stolen or undelivered refund check. Anyone without a bank account may want to consider opening one, so they can quickly and easily receive tax refunds and other payments.

**Check “Where’s My Refund” for refund information**

 “Where's My Refund?” ‎on [IRS.gov](http://irs.gov/) and the IRS2Go mobile app remains the best way to check the status of a refund. “Where’s My Refund?” will be updated with projected deposit dates for most early EITC and ACTC refund filers by February 23, so those filers will not see a refund date on “Where's My Refund?” ‎or through their software packages until then.

The IRS expects the earliest EITC/ACTC related refunds to be available in taxpayer bank accounts or on debit cards starting on Feb. 27, 2019, if these taxpayers chose direct deposit and there are no other issues with their tax return.

**Catch up on prior-year returns**

For anyone who has overlooked filing returns for a few years, now is a good time to get caught up. Many non-filers, especially those eligible for the EITC, are surprised to discover that the government owes them money. Prior-year returns must be filed on paper--electronic filing is not available.

For those who file late, federal law generally sets a three-year time limit for claiming a refund. This means that a worker, eligible for the EITC, can still get it in full for tax-years 2015, 2016 and 2017, as well as for 2018.

**Avoid errors: Get it right**

Taxpayers are responsible for the accuracy of their tax return even if someone else prepares it for them. Since the EITC rules are complicated, the IRS urges taxpayers to seek help if they are not sure they are eligible, either at a free tax return preparation site, by using Free File software, or from a [paid tax professional](https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc254.html). Be sure to choose a [tax preparer](https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/choosing-a-tax-professional) wisely. Deliberate [errors](https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/earned-income-tax-credit/consequences-of-eitc-errors) can have lasting impact on future eligibility to claim EITC and leave taxpayers with a penalty.

Be sure to reply promptly to any letter from the IRS requesting additional information about EITC. If taxpayers need assistance or have questions, call the number on the IRS letter.

**Beware of scams**

Beware of scams that claim to increase the EITC refund. Scams that create fictitious qualifying children or inflate income levels to get the maximum EITC could leave taxpayers with a penalty.

Normally, if an EITC claim was reduced or denied in the past for any reason other than a mathematical or clerical error, taxpayers must file [Form 8862](https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8862.pdf), Information to Claim Earned Income Credit after Disallowance, with their next return to claim the credit.

[IRS.gov](http://irs.gov/) is a valuable first stop to help taxpayers get it right this filing season. Qualify for EITC? See what [other tax credit](https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/child-tax-credit-and-credit-for-other-dependents-at-a-glance)[s](https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals) are available such as the [Additional Child Tax Credit](https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/child-tax-credit-glance).

**Help spread the word**

Employers can help by making their employees aware of the credit and encouraging them to apply. They can also help by making it easy for employees to obtain or access their 2018 W-2 forms, as well as W-2s for prior years. For more information, check out the [outreach material](https://www.eitc.irs.gov/partner-toolkit/employers/employers), available on [IRS.gov](http://irs.gov/).

To learn more, visit the [EITC](https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/earned-income-tax-credit) page on [IRS.gov](http://irs.gov/).

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