

Free Tax Preparation Initiative

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is the Free Tax Preparation Initiative?

The Free Tax Preparation Initiative provides free tax preparation assistance and education to residents of Herkimer and Oneida Counties who have a total household income of \$54,000 or less. A group of trained and certified volunteers will help qualified individuals prepare and electronically file their state and federal tax returns, for free!

What is the Mohawk Valley Asset Building Coalition?

The Free Tax Preparation Initiative is provided by the Mohawk Valley Asset Building Coalition (MVABC), which is developed in partnership with the Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL), as well as numerous community-based organizations and the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program, with the financial support of the United Way of the Valley & Greater Utica Area. The mission of MVABC is to increase awareness and utilization of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), financial literacy, asset development opportunities, and to provide free tax preparation services by IRS certified volunteer tax preparers for those with low to moderate income, individuals with disabilities, and elderly taxpayers.

Who provides this service?

The Free Tax Preparation Initiative would not be possible without our team of dedicated volunteers. A group of trained and certified volunteers will help qualified individuals prepare and electronically file their state and federal tax returns.

What is the need for volunteers? What are the different volunteer opportunities?

We are actively seeking volunteers to become Certified Tax Preparers for the 2017-2018 Tax Season.

Additional volunteer opportunities include:

- screeners,
- greeters,
- language interpreters,
- site coordinators, and
- quality reviewers.



What kind of experience is needed to become a volunteer?

No experience is required to be a volunteer. Volunteer tax preparers are required to complete training regarding tax law and tax preparation software (which is provided at no cost to volunteers). Site coordinators and quality reviewers are required to be certified in advanced tax and must take additional training.

How long is the training and when will it be available?

All Volunteer tax preparers must be certified in both “Link and Learn Taxes” and complete the IRS “TaxSlayer” software training. “Link and Learn Taxes” is available online at <http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Link-&-Learn-Taxes> or <https://www.linklearncertification.com/d/> and takes approximately 15 hours to complete the basic level of tax law certification. At the completion of the course Volunteers are required to pass an online test using the “TaxSlayer” software.

When do volunteers begin and how many hours do volunteers need to commit?

MVABC Free Tax Preparation sites are open from January 26, 2018 through April 17, 2018. Volunteers are asked to commit at least one shift per week (approximately 2-4 hours/week). However, volunteers are welcome to commit as many hours as desired.

What locations are volunteers needed for?

Volunteers are vitally needed at the Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL) Supersite, which is located at 1607 Genesee Street in Utica, NY. There are also possible volunteer opportunities at partner sites located in Oneida and Herkimer Counties. Days and hours of operation vary by site location.

What impact do volunteers have?

Volunteers assist low to moderate income families and individuals claim every tax benefit for which they qualify. These families are often one paycheck away from a financial crisis. The assistance our volunteers are able to provide can help boost a family’s income and financial stability and can also help ensure that they avoid predatory tax preparation companies.

In addition to helping individual families get all the tax credits they are eligible for so they can keep as much of their hard earned money as possible, our team of volunteers also make a difference in the local community. Last year our team of dedicated volunteers completed a total of 1,524 federal returns and 1,600 state returns, bringing a total of \$2.3 million in refunds back to the local community!



Who should I contact if I’m interested in volunteering?

Interested volunteers should contact the Free Tax Preparation Coordinator by calling (315) 272-1888 or emailing EITC@rcil.com.

