

THE IRS VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE (VITA)

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The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program has a rich history, spanning over 50 years, and has played a crucial role in providing free tax assistance to individuals who require help with preparing their tax returns. Here are the key details about the VITA program:

VITA Program Overview

Eligible Participants: VITA sites offer free tax help to several groups, including individuals who generally earn \$60,000 or less, persons with disabilities, and limited English-speaking taxpayers.

Specialized Program for Seniors: In addition to VITA, there is the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program, which focuses on providing free tax assistance to individuals who are 60 years of age and older. TCE specializes in addressing questions related to pensions and retirement issues unique to seniors.

Operated by Partners and Volunteers: While the IRS oversees the VITA and TCE programs, the actual VITA/TCE sites are operated by IRS partners, often nonprofit organizations. These sites are staffed by dedicated volunteers who are passionate about making a positive impact in their communities.

Certified Volunteers: The volunteers who provide tax counseling services through VITA/TCE are IRS-certified. These volunteers are frequently retirees associated with nonprofit organizations that receive grants from the IRS. They undergo comprehensive tax law training that meets or exceeds IRS standards to ensure they are well-equipped to assist taxpayers.

Privacy and Confidentiality: Maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of taxpayer information is a top priority. Volunteers are trained to uphold the highest standards of privacy and security when handling taxpayer data.

Quality Assurance: The IRS requires a quality review check for every tax return prepared at a VITA/TCE site before filing. This rigorous quality assurance process helps ensure the accuracy and integrity of tax returns prepared through the program.

Millions of Returns Prepared: Each filing season, the dedicated VITA/TCE volunteers prepare millions of federal and state tax returns. They also assist taxpayers with the preparation of thousands of Facilitated Self-Assistance returns, demonstrating the vast impact and importance of these programs.