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*Citi Education Series*  
*on Family Economic Security*



# **Tax Credits Outreach: Tips and Tools for Service Providers and Advocates**

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# Speakers for this Session



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## Tax credits can help put money back in families' pockets.

- The federal **Earned Income Tax Credit** can be worth up to **\$4,716** in 2007.
- The federal **Child Tax Credit** can be worth up to **\$1,000** per child.
- The federal **Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit** can be worth up to **\$2,100**.
- Many states also offer tax credits to working families.



## **But only if families know that they can claim the credits on their tax returns!**

- Billions of dollars in tax credits go unclaimed each year.
- For example, an estimated 20-25% of eligible individuals and families fail to claim the EITC each year.



**Tax credits outreach is another way to help working families make ends meet.**



**And you can probably build on  
the outreach you're already  
doing!**



## **Service providers and advocates are uniquely positioned to inform families about tax credits.**

- Families look to you for information.
- You work with partners on a wide range of issues.
- You already know effective ways to reach low-income families.



# You can take three easy steps to help inform families about tax credits.

- Get the facts.
- Spread the word.
- Make the information available to families.



# Get the facts – about tax credits.

- Free materials on tax credits are available.
  - Visit [www.nwlc.org/loweryourtaxes](http://www.nwlc.org/loweryourtaxes) to download free state-specific fliers, envelope stuffers, and other materials.
  - Visit [www.cbpp.org/eic2007](http://www.cbpp.org/eic2007) for materials on the federal EITC and the Child Tax Credit.
  - The IRS also offers materials on the EITC. Visit <http://www.irs-eitc.info/SPEC/>.





# Get the facts – about free tax preparation help.

- The IRS-sponsored VITA Program offers free tax help to low- to moderate-income (generally, \$39,000 and below) people who cannot prepare their own tax returns.
- The IRS also coordinates with AARP to offer tax help to people of low-to-middle income, with special attention to those age 60 and older, through a program called Tax-Aide.



## Information about free tax preparation services is available. . .

- To locate a VITA site near you, call the IRS' free hotline at **1-800-829-1040**.
- To locate a Tax-Aide site near you, call **1-888-227-7669** or visit <http://www.aarp.org/money/taxaide/>.



# Spread the word.

- Work with coalitions.
- Use the media.



# John Wancheck

## Center on Budget and Policy Priorities



The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities is a nonprofit organization that conducts research and policy analysis on issues that have an impact on low- and moderate-income Americans. The Center has spearheaded a national public education campaign on the EITC each year since 1989 and distributes a widely-used community outreach kit.

John Wancheck has been the Center's EITC Campaign Coordinator since 1994 and assists local community groups to organize outreach efforts for the EITC and other tax benefits.



# Tax Credit Coalitions

Over 300 local coalitions nationwide:

- Conduct tax credit outreach campaigns
- Organize free tax assistance services
- Link to financial services and asset-building programs
- Help assess eligibility for other public benefits



# Coalitions are “Grassroots”

- Organized by local community groups serving lower-income families.
- They are not government programs.
- Often include the mayor, or other public official, and local business leaders



# What Coalitions Do

- Choose strategy, themes and materials for tax season outreach campaigns
- Find partners to host Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites
- Recruit VITA volunteers as preparers
- Organize training for volunteers
- Get campaign information out to workers!



# The Value of More Partners

- Outreach coalitions divide campaign tasks; takes advantage of partners' special capabilities and avoids duplication
- Some partners are experienced reaching some parts of the community:  
Ex. -- ethnic communities and businesses, family day care providers, people with disabilities



# Coalitions Partner with the IRS

- IRS staff don't run VITA sites
- IRS staff help sites get started, ensure quality of preparation
- VITA sites use IRS training materials and free tax software
- IRS provides trouble-shooting help during the filing season



# Connecting with a Coalition

- There may be one in your hometown!
- Directory of local partnerships, by state:  
The National EITC Partnership website:  
[www.cbpp.org/eitc-partnership](http://www.cbpp.org/eitc-partnership)
  1. Spreadsheet with coalition members,  
chairperson to contact
  2. Goals and activities of coalition



# Your Town Isn't Listed?

More at National EITC Partner's website:

- List of IRS Territory Managers who work with organizations in the state
- Contact people for national organizations
  - Your United Way or Goodwill may be active
- Descriptions of national organization involvement in tax credit outreach



# More Connections for You

- The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has a contact list of 7,000 organizations who request the Center's annual Tax Credit Community Outreach Kit —  
Call CBPP: **202-408-1080**
- National Community Tax Coalition website:  
[www.tax-coalition.org/programs.cfm](http://www.tax-coalition.org/programs.cfm).



# Donna Hercules-Hackshaw

## New York State Child Care Coordinating Council



The New York State Child Care Coordinating Council (NYSCCCC) has been working to make quality, affordable child care available to New York's families since 1975. Rooted in a statewide network of child care resource and referral agencies, the membership of NYSCCCC includes wide representation from child care providers, parents, businesses, community organizations, and other individuals.

Donna Hercules-Hackshaw is NYSCCCC's Special Projects Coordinator. She has directed NYSCCCC's tax credits outreach campaign since 2003.



# You can spread the word by using the media.

- Organize a press conference with state and local government officials.
- Draft op-eds and guest columns by local service providers during tax time and pitch to local papers.
- When you hear about an individual success story, ask if you can share their story with the press.



## **PSAs are an effective tool for informing families about tax credits.**

- For the 2005 tax filing season, the New York State Child Care Coordinating Council worked with Senator Hillary Clinton to produce a 60-second Public Service Announcement for statewide distribution.
- In 2006 and 2007, NYSCCCC, together with their local coalitions, launched a PSA campaign through the New York State Broadcasters' Association.



## It takes planning and resources, but a PSA campaign is worth the effort!

- During an eight-week period in early 2007, 41 radio stations participated with a total of 1,771 spot announcements.
- The coalition received over **\$309,925.00** worth of radio advertising for \$12,200.00 for a successful 8-week campaign.



# Make tax credits information available to families.

- Get materials to your members, your partner organizations, and government agencies or businesses.
- Distribute materials to families at your offices, at meetings or trainings, or at community events.
- Use the Internet.



## Give your members and partners tax credits materials to distribute.

- NYSCCCC has a network of community-based organizations that provide child care resource and referral (R&R) services to families. NYSCCCC gives tax credits outreach materials to these organizations.
- The organizations in NYSCCCC's network then pass the materials along to:
  - Day care providers (over 24,000)
  - Local government offices (departments of social services, departments of labor, food stamp offices, WIC centers)
  - Parents coming to R&R offices to apply for child care subsidies
  - Other local partners (libraries, adult learning centers, community centers)
  - Local businesses (grocery store chains, hotels or other large employers)



## Think about opportunities to give these materials directly to families.

- Put materials in offices where families come for services (child care providers, public benefits offices, utility companies)
- Distribute materials at parent meetings, conferences, or community fairs
- Encourage local businesses to give information to their employees as well as their customers



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If you work and have children, you may be able to get  
**THOUSANDS** of dollars  
for your family when you file your taxes!

*Whether you owe income taxes or not, you could qualify for the:*

federal Child and Dependent Care Credit, Earned Income Credit, and the Child Tax Credit.

To find out more today, call the Internal Revenue Service at (800) TAX-1040 or (800) 829-1040.





# Use the Internet.

- Put tax credit information on your website.
  - Link to [www.nwlc.org/loweryourtaxes](http://www.nwlc.org/loweryourtaxes).
  - Give information about local free tax preparation services.
- Put tax credit information in your email alerts and online newsletters.



# Sample newsletter article. . . .

No one likes to think about taxes—but federal and New Mexico state tax credits can put thousands of dollars in the pockets of working families with children this coming tax-filing season.

You and the families you serve may be eligible for one or more of the following:

- Federal Earned Income Credit worth up to \$4,716;
- Federal Credit for Child and Dependent Care Expenses worth up to \$2,100; and
- Federal Child Tax Credit worth up to \$1,000 per child.

In addition, New Mexico also offers:

- New Mexico Child Day Care Credit worth up to \$1,200;
- New Mexico Working Families Tax Credit worth up to \$377; and
- New Mexico Low-Income Comprehensive Tax Rebate worth up to \$450.

Even if you don't owe income taxes you may be eligible for a refund check simply by claiming these credits on your federal and state tax returns!

For more information, contact New Mexico Voices for Children or the National Women's Law Center.



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**Now you're ready to participate  
in tax credits outreach and give  
families another resource to  
help make ends meet.**



## For more tips and tools about tax credits outreach techniques:

- Download NWLC's Toolkit for Advocates at <http://www.nwlc.org/pdf/TCOCToolkitTY08.pdf>.
- Download CBPP's Earned Income Tax Credit outreach kit at [www.cbpp.org/eic2007](http://www.cbpp.org/eic2007).



# Feedback Survey

We hope this webinar has been useful for you.  
Please let us know what you thought by  
answering the next few slides.

- Please email me at [amatsui@nwlc.org](mailto:amatsui@nwlc.org) if there are topics related to tax credits outreach that you would like to see in a future webinar.



**Join us on November 13 to learn about helping families find free tax preparation help so that they can get the credit they deserve!**

- To register for the third in our series of free webinars on tax credits outreach, visit <http://action.nwlc.org/webinar>.