

Community Legal Aid

A non-profit law firm serving the legal needs of low-income individuals and families in central northeast Ohio



www.communitylegalaid.org

Tax Season Tips: Credits, Warnings and Freebies

With tax season around the corner, Community Legal Aid offers tips on tax credits, where to go to file for free (for those who qualify), and what to avoid.

- Thanks to the Combat-Injured Veterans Tax Fairness Act of 2016, eligible military veterans are due refunds for taxes paid on their disability severance payments. “Combat-injured veterans only have one year to apply for this refund and it is very important that we get the information out to eligible veterans to see if they qualify for the refund,” says Legal Aid Veterans Legal Advocate Kim Adams. The refunds, Adams says, could range anywhere from \$1,750 to more than \$3,000.
- While the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) has been around for a while, Legal Aid tax expert Attorney Dana Goldstein says too many miss out on this sizable refund, which can exceed \$6,000. Why? Goldstein says they may be unaware of the credit altogether, or file their taxes incorrectly or not at all. Or, they might feel they’ve been beat to the punch by a former partner who already claimed the EITC. No matter, says Goldstein. She points out that a taxpayer eligible for EITC will receive the refund but needs to go through a paperwork process with which Legal Aid can assist.
- Beware of car dealerships and other businesses that offer to file taxes and provide a refund on the spot to apply toward a down payment. “They’re basically offering a high-priced loan,” says Goldstein. She describes a predatory lending practice that comes with a hidden price tag. “They could charge exorbitant fees because loan-lending laws don’t usually apply in these situations.”

Tax preparation is available free to those who qualify. People with modest to low incomes often qualify to have their taxes prepared without charge through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. For details, contact the following by county:

Columbiana - VITA/TCE at 330-540-1947

Mahoning – VITA/TCE at 330-540-1947

Medina - United Way at 211

Portage - United Way at 211

Summit – Akron Summit Community Action at 866-861-6401

Stark – United Way at 330-994-8482

Trumbull – United Way at 211

Wayne – United Way at 211

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