

# Tax Time Thursday with National Network for Youth

## *Outreach Reference Guide*

*Presented by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' Get It Back Campaign*

March 17, 2022

### **Presenter Contact Information**

Darla Bardine, Executive Director

National Network for Youth

[Darla.bardine@nn4youth.org](mailto:Darla.bardine@nn4youth.org)

### **EITC For Homeless and Foster Youth**

- **Our mission:**

- National Network for Youth's mission is to transform systems so that no young person in America experiences homelessness.
- They have a 300-youth homelessness service provider network across the US
- Partner with over 40 young people with lived experiences of homelessness that informs all aspects of work and programming

- **EITC for Homeless and Foster Youth**

- Homeless and foster youth without children are now eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) - up to \$1,502 based on income.
- Qualified homeless and foster youth can receive the EITC, even if they are full time students. This a departure from previous tax years, and of special importance to vulnerable youth who are still in high school or pursuing higher education.
  - To indicate you are homeless/former foster youth, you can check the box on line 27 on their 2021 tax returns.
  - No documents are needed, just check the box!

- **Qualified Homeless Youth**

- Individuals who certify that they are an unaccompanied youth who is homeless, or who is at risk of homelessness, and who is self-supporting

- **Qualified Foster Youth**

- Individuals who, between the ages of 14 and 17, were in foster care and who provide consent for the entity or entities who administered the foster care program to disclose information related to their status as a former foster youth.

- Individuals must be at least 18 years old: been born after 1/1/1998 and before 1/2/2004

- **Homeless and Foster youth faces many barriers to accessing tax benefits**

- Don't know they qualify for [tax benefits](#)
  - Don't know how to [file](#) taxes
  - Don't have a bank account
  - Don't have an address
  - Parents claim them on their taxes

- Many young people experiencing homelessness don't believe this money is real.  
"It sounds too good to be true"
- **Solutions:** Share information to ensure that young people know they qualify for tax benefits
  - Tips:
    - Use communication methods relevant to young people (TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram)
    - Emphasize that this is not a scam or a loan
    - Advertise information in places youth experiencing homelessness and foster youth frequent:
      - Drop-in centers
      - Employment centers
      - Schools
- **Solution:** Help youth file their taxes and share free tax filing resources
  - Tips:
    - VITA programs may offer free tax preparation assistance
    - Low-income taxpayer clinics (LITCs) may offer free representation
    - Taxpayer Advocate service (TAS) may assist taxpayers facing hardship
    - FreeFile is a free online tax filing tool
    - [www.getyourrefund.org](http://www.getyourrefund.org)
    - Many young people may need computer access and an adult to walk them through the free services available
- **Solution:** Help youth open a bank account or provide an address where a check can be mailed
  - Tips:
    - Young people may need assistance opening a bank account, which does make receiving a tax benefit quicker. If this isn't possible, then allowing a young person to use your organization's address to receive a check is also an option.
    - Emphasize that youth only need to attest that they qualify by checking the box on line 27 on Form 1040 when they file their tax returns. No documents are needed.
    - The following types of programs often allow people to use their address for employment/tax purposes:
      - Drop-in centers
      - Housing program
      - Community Action Agencies
- **Solution: Explain process for receiving tax benefits if parent/legal guardian claims them on tax filing**
  - Tips:
    - The IRS will not accept a return from a youth who has already been claimed as a dependent on another tax return. Youths whose returns are

- declined because they have been claimed as a dependent will need to file taxes by mail
- Youth may apply for an [Identity Protection Personal Identification Number](#) (IP PIN) to protect their ability to file on their own behalf

**Questions:**

- **When you say, "no documents required", what about the W-2 to prove earned income? Please clarify.**
  - If they have a W-2, then definitely use that. There are no documents required to prove homelessness or foster care status.
  - We pushed hard not to require any type of third-party verification or documentation.
- **VITA requirements from IRS are that tax filers provide government-issued photo ID and social security card. Those must be challenges for youth experiencing homelessness. Can you address how to deal with that?**
  - In terms of a government issued [ID](#), these are bigger challenges for minors experiencing homelessness. It is very difficult to get an ID without a parental signature.
  - If they are 18 or older, they can request a copy of their Social Security card.
  - When it comes to a valid government ID, you need to show a birth certificate and proof of residency. We do have youth homelessness service providers to allow young people to use their address.
  - tool to help on their website on how to get a government ID state by state and are partnering with Baker McKenzie law firm later this year to launch a hotline to access for vital docs.
- **Do you have any experience assisting youth with getting a reloadable debit card or an alternative to the bank accounts by using something like Venmo or Cash App?**
  - I do not have experience, but some other providers have done this.
- **Can you explain the IP PIN?**
  - A lot of young people experiencing these situations, they have terrible credit scores and reports, etc. because their parents have used their names to open cards or continue to claim them as a beneficiary for tax purposes. Young people need to protect their identity.
- **If you help a minor homeless youth open a bank account, does that person have a responsibility for the account?**
  - Most banks don't allow minors to open a bank account. I don't know what the legal responsibility is of the adult. I'm not sure how much liability that is.
- **Has anyone had success with working with school homeless liaisons or any state agencies?**
  - We have a lot of homeless liaisons. We recommend that homeless liaisons advertise and let the unaccompanied homeless youth know they are eligible for new tax benefits. Let them know about the resources in their community.

- **Can you say more about how to connect with homeless and foster youth, especially if an organization doesn't typically work with this population. In addition to drop-in centers, where are important places for people to reach out?**
  - Community centers, afterschool programs, YMCAs, any places where young people are seeking services. Through social media because young people have their phones and try to stay connected

*Outreach Ideas from participants:*

- *I sent a flyer to print and post to each homeless liaison about this subject. There was a suggestion about cinema advertising, which was a good idea. Definitely through social media.*
- *I've been sending emails with this information to my students, and I was able to meet with one of them who is filing for his taxes. He is 18 and his younger sister is 17. They've been trying not to lose their housing. The tax preparer was completely lost when I was talking about this credit, and I had a printout with the ad. The tax preparer went to get her supervisor, at the end they filed him as head of household. They were able to receive the tax credits*
- *There are a lot of great [tax prep](#) resources for young adults on Schoolhouse Connection's website. There is an FAQ which really targets youths experiencing homelessness and there's a screening tool. It's a nice one stop for a lot of the things mentioned today.*