

# Tax season: Credits, warnings and where to go for free tax prep

With tax season around the corner, Community Legal Aid advocates are gearing up to offer residents tips on tax credits, where to go to file for free (for those who qualify), and potential pitfalls to avoid.

While the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) has been around for a while, Legal Aid attorney Dana Goldstein says too many miss out on this sizable refund, which can exceed \$6,000.

“They may be unaware of the credit altogether, or file their taxes incorrectly or not at all,” Goldstein said. “Or, they might feel they’ve been beat to the punch by a former partner who already claimed the EITC.”

“These scenarios shouldn’t stop someone from filing for the EITC”, Goldstein explained, sharing that Legal Aid can help taxpayers who are eligible for the EITC file for the credit.

Goldstein also warned of a common mistake people make -- allowing an unqualified individual, including friends, to prepare their returns.

“You can be fined for submitting an inaccurate return, and those fines can incur interest,” Goldstein explained. “There are plenty of qualified tax preparers who will offer their services free of charge to qualified households, and you’ll get your return just as quickly as you would had you paid someone to do it.”

People with modest to low incomes often qualify to have their taxes prepared without charge through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. Anyone can check to see if they may qualify for this program by visiting [www.benefits.gov](http://www.benefits.gov). For additional details about services throughout central northeast Ohio, contact the following:

**Columbiana - VITA/TCE at 330-540-1947**

**Mahoning – VITA/TCE at 330-540-1947**

**Medina - Community Action Wayne/Medina - 330-723-2229**

**Portage - United Way at 211**

**Summit – Akron Summit Community Action at 866-861-6401 or United Way at 1-866-861-6401**

**Stark – United Way at 330-994-8482**

**Trumbull – United Way at 211**

**Wayne – Community Action Wayne/Medina - 330-264-8677**

Last updated on January 30, 2020.

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