

## **Virginia Department of Social Services CTC/EITC Outreach Efforts**

For the past few years, Virginia has made it a state priority to share the benefits of the EITC and the importance of receiving it with its residents. They lead several outreach initiatives relating to the EITC and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) programs.

For the past ten years, they have conducted a communication campaign to VDSS clients that are eligible for EITC but didn't file to encourage free tax preparation to receive their credit. In the last three years, this effort has increased in scope. This year, the CSBG State Office has lead (and is still leading) four separate emails/text message campaigns. The first was a 6-month campaign to advertise the increases in EITC and Child Tax Credit, and the Advanced Child Tax Credit specifically, that culminated in November with email/text/social media messaging to VDSS clients that appeared eligible (through demographics/income) to ensure they were aware of [getyourctc.org](http://getyourctc.org). Clients were directed to the VDSS website, where specific information on Child Tax Credit and Free Tax preparation was available. The State Information System (211) was also used to share information with callers/website visitors on virtual assistance for receiving Advanced Child Tax Credit through GetYourCTC. Following that, the state sent two additional email/text campaigns (to nearly 600,000 recipients). In January, the state sent information to direct to our website, where we highlighted EITC/CTC, Free Tax Preparation resources, and the checklist of things needed to have taxes prepared. On February 1st, the state sent out the second email/text messaging to alert that Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites were opening (and to share EITC/CTC) info. And on March 1st, the state will be sending the final email/text campaign of this year, to again advertise the VITA resource and importance of EITC/CTC.

In addition, the state updates its website regularly from December to April to include vital information regarding the EITC and the VITA sites throughout their state and did so all throughout last year to highlight the changes around Child Tax Credit and virtual resources for accessing it.

The state also developed and leads a state and local working group specifically related to the EITC, where the state supplies outreach materials to multiple interagency offices (Family Services, Dept of Child Support Enforcement, Benefits Programs, TANF) and other partners (Community Action agencies, United Way, Local Departments of Social Services). The state is an active participant in VITA-related calls.

The CSBG state office acts as a pass-through entity that provides funding to its State Association for the Volunteer Income Tax Credit network (Virginia Cash Campaign). The state reviews the program's financials, end-of-year reviews, and application review/selection, and presents information at the program meetings. The program itself supports 23 tax coalitions, 13 of which are CAA-led, and one more that has strong support from a CAA.

For the past two years, the state has worked closely with the Code for America, a nonprofit that encourages virtual tax preparation (and developed GetYourCTC), regarding messaging and

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communication for VITA and EITC, and has conducted webinars with Code for America to encourage navigators in Virginia (to promote CTC uptake).

They recently worked with the American Public Health Human Services Association and the Code for America and participated in a webinar on ways states have provided EITC information to their residents.