



United Way of King County

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United Way of King County seeking volunteers to help working families with tax preparation

SEATTLE – United Way of King County will offer free tax preparation in early 2020 to low- and middle-income, working families with the assistance of IRS-certified volunteers who will help filers claim all the tax credits and refunds they're entitled to, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit ("EITC").

According to the [IRS](#), 20 percent of taxpayers in 2019 failed to claim the EITC, which is widely seen as a powerful tool to help people get out of poverty, because they might not understand eligibility requirements.

In 2019, United Way's [Free Tax Prep Program](#) trained more than 1,000 volunteers who helped secure \$30 million in federal tax refunds for nearly 22,000 filers in the area, and the organization hopes to repeat the effort by [signing up](#) at least 1,000 volunteers to help prepare taxes for working families during the upcoming filing season.

Lauren McGowan, senior director for Ending Homelessness and Poverty at United Way of King County, said volunteers can help low- and middle-income families secure a significant refund, which the families might not get without help from a trained preparer.

"Nearly 41% of people who claim the EITC in King County are losing some of that income because they go to a paid preparer. Instead of paying high fees to get their refund, United Way volunteers provide high-quality, free tax preparation services," said McGowan. "This allows taxpayers to keep more of their hard-earned money and increase their families' financial stability."

Volunteers who are fluent in other languages are especially helpful because many filers have limited English-language skills. The tax service is offered in neighborhood locations, such as libraries and Goodwill stores.

The [Free Tax Prep Program](#) is sponsored by the City of Seattle, KeyBank, Seattle Credit Union, Foster School of Business, Fiserv and the Financial Empowerment Network.

In addition to tax-preparation assistance, volunteers also help filers with information about public benefits, financial counseling and other services. In 2020, they can also help filers fill out Census forms and ensure that everyone in the community is represented.

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United Way of King County is building a community where people have homes, students graduate and families are financially stable.