

News Release

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Attention: Teens and young people – if you do your taxes you might get money back

Tax season is here and there may be good reasons to file a tax return even for people who aren't required to file, which is the case for many young people.

Young people who work often don't end up filing a tax return. They may not meet the income threshold requiring them to file a return. Or they be under the misconception that their parents file for them because they are a dependent. Also, they may find tax forms confusing and worry about making a mistake.

In most cases, young people should file a return to report their income and get any excess withholding refunded.

Through an ODHS pilot program last year at seven urban, rural and suburban high schools in Oregon, students met after school and prepared their own tax returns using IRS-approved software. A teacher-facilitator helped them access the software on the IRS website and answered their questions about forms and terms. Students in the pilot received refunds of their state and federal tax withholding between \$95 and \$1,246.

“The high school pilot really opened our eyes as to the need for this help. Many students didn't even know they could file. They thought their parents did it for them. And once they logged into the software, they worked through it easily. Some of the refund amounts – over \$1000 in several cases – really surprised me,” Meg Reinhold, J.D., ODHS Senior Data and Performance Analyst, Tax Infrastructure Program Coordinator, said. Learn more about the Infrastructure Program below.

No matter how old someone is, finding ways to file a tax return for free is easy. The Oregon Department of Revenue's website lists many ways to file for free or to get free help: <https://www.oregon.gov/dor/programs/individuals/Pages/get-free-tax-help.aspx>.

And it isn't too late to file returns from prior years to get withholding back from those years too. Many software programs now help individuals prepare and file their tax returns from previous years.

Where to get free help filing taxes

- 211Info: Call 2-1-1 or email help@211info.org for a list free tax filing help.
- CASH Oregon: info@Cashoregon.org; 503-243-7765; Portland, Beaverton, Gresham
- Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO); TAX@irco.org; 971-427-3993; Portland, Ontario
- Centro de Servicios Para Campesinos; debbiec@Centrodspc.org; 503-982-0243; Woodburn
- Oregon State University; vita@oregonstate.edu; 541-737-3371; Corvallis, Bend
- Western Oregon University; wouvita@wou.edu; 503-751-4132; Monmouth, Independence
- Latino Community Association; info@latinocommunityassociation.org; 541-382-4366; Bend, Redmond
- Moneywise Oregon; dan@moneywiseoregon.org; 541-670-5054; Coos Bay, Roseburg

The Oregon Department of Human Services Tax Infrastructure Grant Program was created by HB 4117 (2022). The program is funded with \$8 million General Fund per biennium. Grants fund culturally relevant and culturally specific organizations, Tribal governments, and rural community organizations to support tax credit education and free tax return preparation for individuals with low incomes. Funding is also used to support and increase the number of certified tax preparers in the state.

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