



## **NJ 2-1-1 Partnership**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**February 2, 2017**

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# **NJ 2-1-1 Supports Struggling New Jerseyans**

## ***Connects Low-to-Moderate Income Earners to Tax Assistance Sites***

East Hanover, NJ - Every year at this time, NJ 2-1-1 staff is helping to ensure that the refund is not left “on the table” by answering calls for information on locations where free tax filing assistance is available. Hundreds of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) locations are listed on the organization’s [website](http://www.nj211.org/nj-vita-centers), [www.nj211.org/nj-vita-centers](http://www.nj211.org/nj-vita-centers). “There isn’t a day that goes by that we are not sharing this information with our callers and web visitors,” says call center director, Janice Kaniewski. With the help of many community partners, including the United Ways of New Jersey, NJ 2-1-1 starts to identify these locations as early as December. “We put such effort into compiling this comprehensive listing of VITA sites, because VITA connects people with an important tax credit that they might otherwise miss out on,” continues Ms. Kaniewski.

The refund to which she is referring is the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and for years it has been putting real money back into the hands of hard working citizens throughout the country. Workers who file what is known as a simple tax return to state and federal government could receive refunds from both.

The EITC is available to those who worked full- or part-time or were self-employed in 2016. Depending upon one’s income and family size, federal credits range from \$506 to \$6,269 and state refunds may amount to anywhere from \$178 to \$2,195. To qualify, you must file a tax return even if you do not owe any tax or are not required to file and you must meet income eligibility requirements which can be found on the organization’s [website](https://www.nj211.org/tax-assistance) [<https://www.nj211.org/tax-assistance>].

Gina Plotino, NJ2-1-1 board president cautions, those eligible for free tax preparation may be induced to select a for-profit tax preparer who offers refund advances. “I urge eligible earners to understand the terms. Typically, such advances are actually loans for which interest is charged in addition to cost of preparation. NJ 2-1-1 strongly encourages families to seek out IRS-certified free tax sites in their communities through NJ 2-1-1, to ensure you realize your full benefit.”

In addition to providing information on VITA locations, the NJ 2-1-1 website, [www.nj211.org](http://www.nj211.org), provides visitors with full access to the 2-1-1 resource database of over 10,000 programs and services from approximately 3,000 organizations. Web visitors will also find informative pages that provide comprehensive information like application links, eligibility guidelines and critical dates. Special sections of the site are devoted to such topics as Emergency Preparedness, Family Services, Home Energy Assistance, Utility Assistance, and Resources for the Unemployed among others.

2-1-1 is the free, user-friendly phone number that serves people throughout the U.S., connecting millions each year to critical resources, information and services. In New Jersey, more than 363,000 people turned to NJ 2-1-1 for help last year. Services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and are free, confidential and multilingual.

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#### **About NJ 2-1-1**

The statewide information and referral service began in 2002 when the United Ways of New Jersey spearheaded efforts to give people-in-need a central location to call when looking for health and human services. The Board of Public Utilities designated the NJ 2-1-1 Partnership as the sole administrator of the three digit dialing code. Statewide coverage began in 2005. **In 2016 alone, the NJ 2-1-1 Partnership provided resource assistance to over 363,000 people who called 2-1-1 or visited our website.** With roughly 3,000 agencies in the organization's resource database and over 10,000 programs and services listed, NJ 2-1-1 provides the public with front door access to non-profit, government and faith-based services, as well as disaster response information. Follow us on Twitter @NJ211 and FB <https://www.facebook.com/nj211partnership/>.