VITA Partner
Onboarding Guide
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About the Pilot

See our external guide here.

Code for America is currently partnering with four local VITA organizations (in California, Colorado, Arizona, and Georgia) to pilot a digital VITA service for the 2020 tax season, with the hope that this model will allow VITA to make tax prep accessible to more clients.

The new service, GetYourRefund, provides a way to get connected with VITA services from anywhere in the country.

At the mobile-friendly site, taxpayers can answer simple questions about their household situation, securely upload their tax documents, and get connected to VITA to answer any questions. The VITA team will remotely prepare the tax return, speak with the taxpayer to review their return, and file the return with taxpayer consent. By piloting a new tax prep service that meets client needs, Code for America aims to support low-income families to access the tax credits that they deserve.

Overview of the process for VITA partners

Client Completes Digital Intake at GetYourRefund.org

- Client verifies identity with ID.me
- Consent to Service
- Answer 13614-C Questions
- Uploads Docs

VITA Intake Specialist Reviews

- Intake specialists review the client’s information
- Requests more info if needed
- Call client for intake interview
- Assign to prep hub

VITA Hub prepares the return

- Site coordinator assigns the return
- Volunteer prepares, second quality reviews
- Call client for quality review, request e-signature
- Client signs and return e-filed
Roles to Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Contact</strong></td>
<td>Interfaces with Code for America, responsible for ensuring all site staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are appropriately trained, and any issues are shared immediately with CfA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site Coordinator for Hub</strong></td>
<td>Coordinates tax prep at the hub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Client Support Specialist</strong></td>
<td>Assist with live chat and text support, typically answering only basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tax questions - VITA certification preferred but not required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intake Specialist</strong></td>
<td>Manage client flow, conduct or coordinate phone interviews, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>check to ensure clients are ready for prep - VITA certification required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VITA-certified volunteers</strong></td>
<td>Assist with intake interviews via phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VITA-certified tax preparers</strong></td>
<td>Prepare tax returns and engage with clients via text, email, and phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>as needed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Checklist for Primary Contact

- Get **SPEC approval** using the [GetYourRefund.org SPEC proposal](https://vimeo.com/398933965)
- **Staff** the above roles
- Provide Code for America with a list of users to get access to Zendesk, DocuSign, and Slack (for admins)
- Train your team on the process and Zendesk system outlined in this document
- Review security procedures with your team

Resources

A 1 hour training video with an overview of the process is available at [https://vimeo.com/398933965](https://vimeo.com/398933965). The password is: **CodeForAmerica**
GetYourRefund

Information for Volunteers

Online Security Checklist for Volunteers

- Use a [secure wifi connection](#)
- Keep your [browser updated](#) (we recommend Google Chrome)
- Don't open emails from unfamiliar sources, and [don't click on strange links](#).
- [Log off](#) at the end of your session, especially if on a public computer
- [Do not share any client personally identifiable information (PII)](#) via email or text message Ex. do not put bank numbers, social security numbers, or addresses in a message to a client
- When calling a client, have them [verify the last 4 digits of their social security number](#) before proceeding with the conversation
- At the end of your session, [delete any documents downloaded](#) to your computer
- [Don’t download free software](#) from a source that you cannot verify
- Stay on guard and [trust your instincts](#) if something doesn’t seem right
- Follow the [IRS Quality Site Guidelines](#)

Zendesk Quick Tips

- Use the “Views” page as your guide for viewing clients
- Public replies will send a message to the client in their preferred contact method
- Internal Notes will have a yellow background and will not be sent to the client
- You can get an email notification of a ticket update by [following the ticket](#)
Information for Customer Support Specialist

Tips for talking to clients

- **Be Personal.** Use names, emojis, make it your own! While some situations can be a bit grim, not all are. Lightening a situation can make it feel less like county jargon and more like speaking to a real human.

- **Be Concise.** Communicate with short but clear and simple language, sending paragraphs is not effective when having quick conversation. Saying what needs to be said in as little words as possible can be the best way to get a message across.

- **Be Secure.** Do not use any personally identifiable information like phone numbers, tax information, or social security numbers in your communications with clients.

- **Ask clarifying questions.** If this will help solve the issue, then ask more questions! Remember to never give out any personal information when clients reach out. Instead ask questions like, “can you verify your last name?” this is better suited for the client to confirm their information.

- **Provide next steps.** If any, make sure to give clients options on how to address their issues with any action items or letting them know there are no next steps. When clients know what to expect next, this helps reduce anxiety.

- **Closing.** After helping with a client’s problem or answering their question, always ask if there is anything else we can help with. If not, assure the client they can reach if anything comes up at any time.

Steps when working with clients

- **Step 1: Introduce yourself.** Let the client know that you are an intake specialist and you are here to help.

- **Step 2: Make the Client Feel Heard.** Truly hear the client’s problem or question - Don’t jump straight to solution - “Thank you for your question,” “I understand your frustration,” “I can’t imagine how frustrating that must be,” “I am so sorry to hear you are going through all of that”...

- **Step 3: Guide on next steps they can take.** Empower with appropriate & timely knowledge that is relevant to their particular case or situation. Knowledge is valuable and powerful, but can also be overwhelming if one is already overwhelmed. Use your best judgement.

- **Step 4: Insights & Elevation.** Is there a key learning here either for our process or county? Document any insights you gained from the experience. Let the supervisor know if you believe it to be important enough.
Daily Client Support Tasks

Follow up with clients asking questions
- Check the “Client Questions from Contact Us” view NEW and OPEN tickets
- When you respond, “Save as Pending”
- Check out macros using “Respond to customer” for example responses, or check FAQs

Log in to live chat
- Click this icon in the upper right hand corner of Zendesk to log in
- Respond to chats with “Hello, I’m ____, an intake specialist with GetYourRefund. How can I help you?”
- Don’t forget to sign out at the end!

Proactively reach out to clients stuck in intake
- Reach out to clients who are “Online Intake In Progress” and “Gathering Documents” if they have been there for >1 day
- Check the “Online Intake In Progress” and “Gathering Documents” views
- Use the “Proactive outreach” macros to ask how you can help the client and remind them they can log back in

Tag tickets with common themes
- Use the “tag” section of the ticket to tag themes you see (list is captured in FAQ doc)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) From Clients
Captured in this ongoing document which include FAQ’s and Zendesk tags
GetYourRefund

Information for Intake Specialists

Zendesk Views and Intake Process

[Diagram showing the process flow between Customer Support Specialist and Intake Specialist, including states such as Ready for Review, In Review, Waiting for More Info, and Complete (Assign to hub).]
GetYourRefund

Details

1. **Check Ready for Review**
   - Taxpayer has submitted their intake form and is ready to be reviewed
   - **ACTION:** When you start reviewing a client’s information, change the “Online Intake Status” to “In Review”

2. **Online Intake In Review**
   - An intake specialist is reviewing
   - Download and review the 13614-C and attached documents
   - Complete the “preparer” section of the PDF in a PDF editor and make 13614-C changes
   - **ACTION if no additional info/docs needed:** Attach in internal note and change digital intake status to “Ready for Intake Interview”
   - **ACTION if you need additional info/docs:** Use a public reply to request more info (see macros for “Request Follow up Documents” or “Request for More Information” or “Request for Spouse Identity Verification” and change the digital intake status to “Waiting for More Info”

3. **Ready for Intake Interview**
   - Review the list of taxpayers, start with taxpayers where the “requested date” is the oldest
   - Look at the calling preference time and call the taxpayer
   - Use the “Online Intake Interview Script” macro to guide the conversation
   - **ACTION if you need additional info/docs:** Same as above
   - **ACTION if client is ready for prep:** Change digital intake status to “Complete,” update the “Certification Level” needed, and assign to the correct hub by changing the “Assignee”
## Daily Intake Specialist Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>How</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review new submissions</td>
<td>- Check the “Ready for Review” view (new online intake submissions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mark as “ready for intake interview” if no additional info required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Request more information if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request more information from clients</td>
<td>- Use “public reply” functionality to send communication to clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Public Replies follow contact preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure all new digital intake submissions get an intake interview</td>
<td>- Check “Ready for interview” view (have been reviewed and are ready to be called)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within 3 business days of submission</td>
<td>- Coordinate interview schedules with available interviewers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct intake interviews</td>
<td>- Use the macro “Online intake interview script” for guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check if clients we requested information form have responded</td>
<td>- Check “Online Intake Waiting on More Info”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- See if there are any taxpayers in the “End User” section, open up and respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Check “Needs response” view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure online intake clients are making it through the process</td>
<td>- Check the “All Online intake” views for any tickets that are waiting on us (“end user” is the last updater) or have been in a status for &gt;3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag tickets with themes + FAQ's</td>
<td>- Tags are <a href="#">here</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Information for Hub Site Coordinators and Volunteers

Note: Additional details can be found in United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona’s Valet VITA toolkit

Tax Preparation at the Preparation Hub

1. Access new, Unopened tickets in Zendesk in the Unopened View
2. Assign clients your volunteers will be working on to your site with the “In Progress” macro
   a. This will change the return status to In Progress and change the Assignee to the group for your site

Tax Preparer (IRS-Certified Volunteer)

3. In Taxslayer:
   a. Prepare the return using the taxpayer’s scanned documents
   b. Once return preparation is complete, in E-File section, at the bottom of the screen, check box Ready for Review.
4. In Zendesk:
   a. Select the macro “Ready for Quality Review” to signal a quality review is needed
   b. This will send a notification to the taxpayer that their return is being internal reviewed and after that review someone will reach out to them for a quality review phone call.
5. Need more info from the client? Use a public reply to ask a question!

Quality Review

- Quality reviews should check the view “Ready for Quality Review” to see which taxpayers needs review
- Review the return and reach out to the taxpayer for a QR Call
- When you are ready for the client to sign their return and consent to e-file, change the return status to “Ready for Signature: e-file”
E-Signing the Return

- In DocuSign:
  - Send a secure, password-protected email to the client’s verified email address with one signature tag on Form 8879 and a fully copy of their federal and state return
    - If Married Filing Jointly, send a separate email to both spouses’ email addresses. Both must sign / give consent to transmit the return
  - Do this by clicking New → Send an Envelope
    - Upload Form 8879 and a copy of the federal and state return, click Next
    - Use the Sign Here functionality to mark where the client (and spouse, if applicable) needs to sign
    - Add the client (and spouse, if applicable) as a recipient
      - Click More → Add Access Authentication and add the last 4 digits of their SSN as a passcode
    - Add Email details
      - Subject: Please Sign E-File Consent Form and Copy of Tax Return
      - Email body: As discussed, please sign the attached Form 8879 in order to give us consent to e-file your return. We have also attached a copy of your state and federal returns for your records. Thank you!
  - Send the Document
- When Form 8879 is signed:
  - You will get a notification from DocuSign
  - Change the Return status to Completed Return and transmit the return in TaxSlayer
- If the return is accepted:
  - Use the “Return Accepted” macro to notify the client, close the ticket, and mark the “status after filing” as accepted
- If the return is rejected:
  - Mark the “Status after filing” as rejected and reach out the client to resolve any issues (use a public reply)
## Zendesk Status Cheat Sheets

### Important Status Options for Intake

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digital Intake Status</th>
<th>View</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Intake In Progress</td>
<td>[In Intake Form] In Progress</td>
<td>Client started the intake form but hasn’t gotten to the doc upload page yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering Docs</td>
<td>[In Intake Form] Gathering Documents</td>
<td>Client is still in the intake process and is at the doc upload pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready for Review</td>
<td>Ready for Review</td>
<td>Client submitted their information and are waiting for an intake specialist to review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Review</td>
<td>Intake Specialist is Reviewing</td>
<td>Intake form was submitted and intake specialist has started reviewing the submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready for Intake Interview</td>
<td>Ready for Intake Interview</td>
<td>Intake specialist has reviewed the client’s information, has everything that is needed to call the client, and is waiting to call based on contact preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting on More Info</td>
<td>Waiting on Online Intake Client for More Info or Docs</td>
<td>We asked for more info from the client and are waiting for them to get back to us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Unopened</td>
<td>Intake interview is complete, also remember to assign to the group that will prep the return</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Important Status Options for Preparation Hubs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Use the Macro...</th>
<th>To change the Zendesk Return Status to...</th>
<th>Which will notify the taxpayer...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When a site coordinator reviews the Unopened queue and selects a taxpayer to assign to their site</td>
<td>In Progress at [Your Site Name]</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td>No notification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the return has been prepared in TaxSlayer and you are ready to do a quality review internally.</td>
<td>Ready for Quality Review</td>
<td>Ready for Quality Review</td>
<td>No notification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the quality review is complete and you are ready to contact the taxpayer and discuss the results over the phone (and they have indicated they would like to E-sign)</td>
<td>Ready for E-Sign</td>
<td>Ready for Signature: E-Sign</td>
<td>That the internal review is complete and someone will be reaching out to review the results of their return over the phone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the taxpayer’s return has been filed after they have consented to e-filing</td>
<td>Return Filed</td>
<td>Ready for E-File</td>
<td>No notification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the taxpayer’s return has been accepted</td>
<td>Return Accepted</td>
<td>Return Completed</td>
<td>That the return has been accepted after filing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the taxpayer’s return has been rejected</td>
<td>Return Rejected</td>
<td>Return Completed</td>
<td>No notification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you need more information from the taxpayer in order to prepare their return</td>
<td>Need More Info</td>
<td>(Keeps status as is)</td>
<td>No notification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feedback and Getting Support

- Have a tax related question you want to clarify?
  - Ask the group in the “eitc-partners” Slack channel
  - Talk to your site coordinator

- Have an idea for improvements in the process or an FAQ from clients?
  - Email hello@getyourrefund.org

- Have a Zendesk or process question?
  - Ask your site coordinator or main contact. If they are unsure, they will reach out to Code for America with questions.