

NEW VITA SITE COORDINATOR TRAINING

November 17, 2016

WHAT IS EARN IT! KEEP IT! SAVE IT!?

EKS is a coalition of over 200 organizations including community organizations, local government agencies, businesses, churches and many others

The EKS Coalition provides free tax preparation services to low-to-moderate income households in 8 Bay Area counties

For the 2016 Tax Season, 3,500 volunteers at 250 locations prepared 80,970 returns, which brought back \$83 million in refunds

WHO LEADS EARN IT! KEEP IT! SAVE IT!?

United Way Bay Area leads the regional Earn It! Keep It! Save It! coalition and supports all the counties in various ways.

United Way Staff County Leads:

Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo: Vanessa Muniz – vmuniz@uwba.org

Marin, Napa, Solano, San Francisco: Kelly Batson, Kat Russo – kbatson@uwba.org
and krusso@uwba.org

Santa Clara: Gezche Graves, Benson Lai – ggraves@uwba.org and blai@uwba.org

WHO PROVIDES TAX PREPARATION?

Most free tax sites in the EKS coalition operate **VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)** sites

- ❖ VITA is a national IRS program where trained volunteers prepare tax returns for low income families according to IRS guidelines, been around for over 45 years

Free tax help is also provided by AARP Tax-Aide sites, including **Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE)**

Tax-Aid: volunteers staff Saturday sites at locations across the Bay Area

WHY?

The Earned Income Tax Credit is a credit for working people that can provide a large income support to a family's annual income (this can be a credit up to \$6,269 for a married couple with 3 children). Helps a family meet their basic needs!

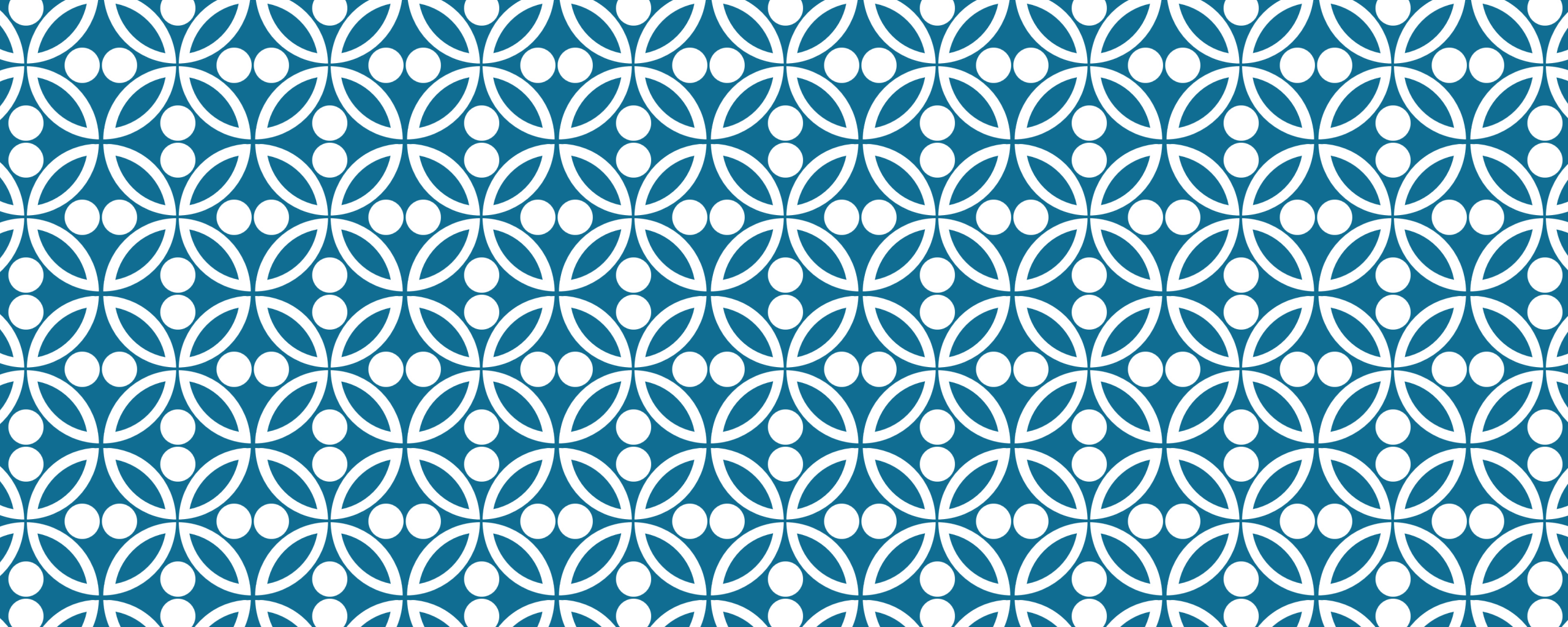
Free tax preparation is a gateway to other income support or asset building services a family may need.

Eligible families are paying to file their taxes with commercial preparers (preparation fees and loan costs are estimated at \$320) when they can get quality prep free

GLOSSARY

We will cover most terms by the end of today.

Use this as your checklist to see what you have learned.



ROLES AT THE VITA SITE

SITE COORDINATORS

- Ensure site operations follow established procedures to insure quality and accuracy of return preparation
- Ensure all volunteers are trained and certified for their role at the site
- Ensure all required reference materials are available at the site
- Troubleshoot when questions arise

VOLUNTEER TAX PREPARERS

- Take and pass all required training for their role at the site and sign Volunteer Agreement
- Prepare a complete and accurate tax return using tax law knowledge and reference materials
- Follow volunteer Standards of Conduct and Quality Site Requirements

QUALITY REVIEWERS

- Conduct a thorough review of completed tax returns with the taxpayer to ensure accuracy
- Explain to clients their responsibility for the information on the tax return
- Provide guidance to volunteer return preparers about identified errors and required corrections

OTHER POSITIONS AT THE TAX SITE

Savings Coach – a volunteer who is dedicated to talking to taxpayers about their refund savings options

Benefits Specialist – a volunteer who assists taxpayers with other benefit applications like CalFresh and PG&E Care

Asset Specialist – this volunteer may assist taxpayers with a variety of other financial services such as a prepaid debit card or financial education, etc.

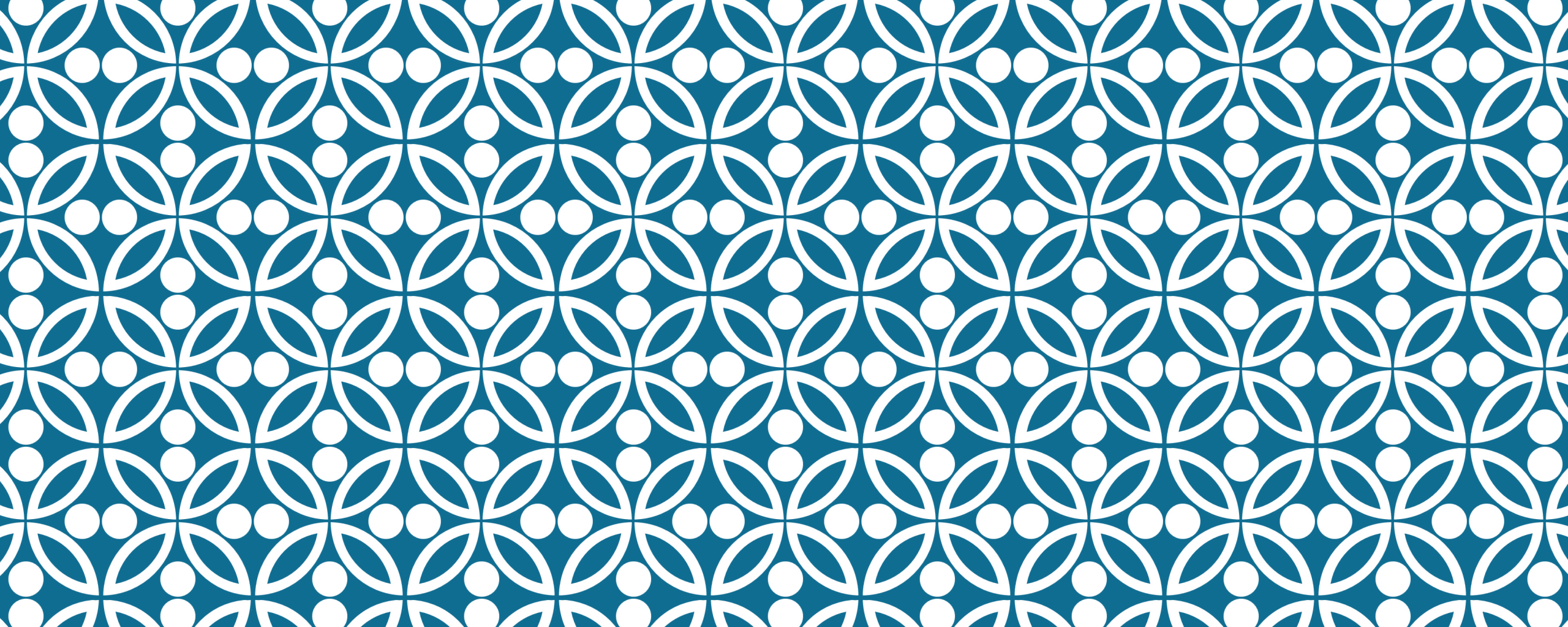
See Pub. 1084 page 62 - 63



VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

Recruitment time is here.

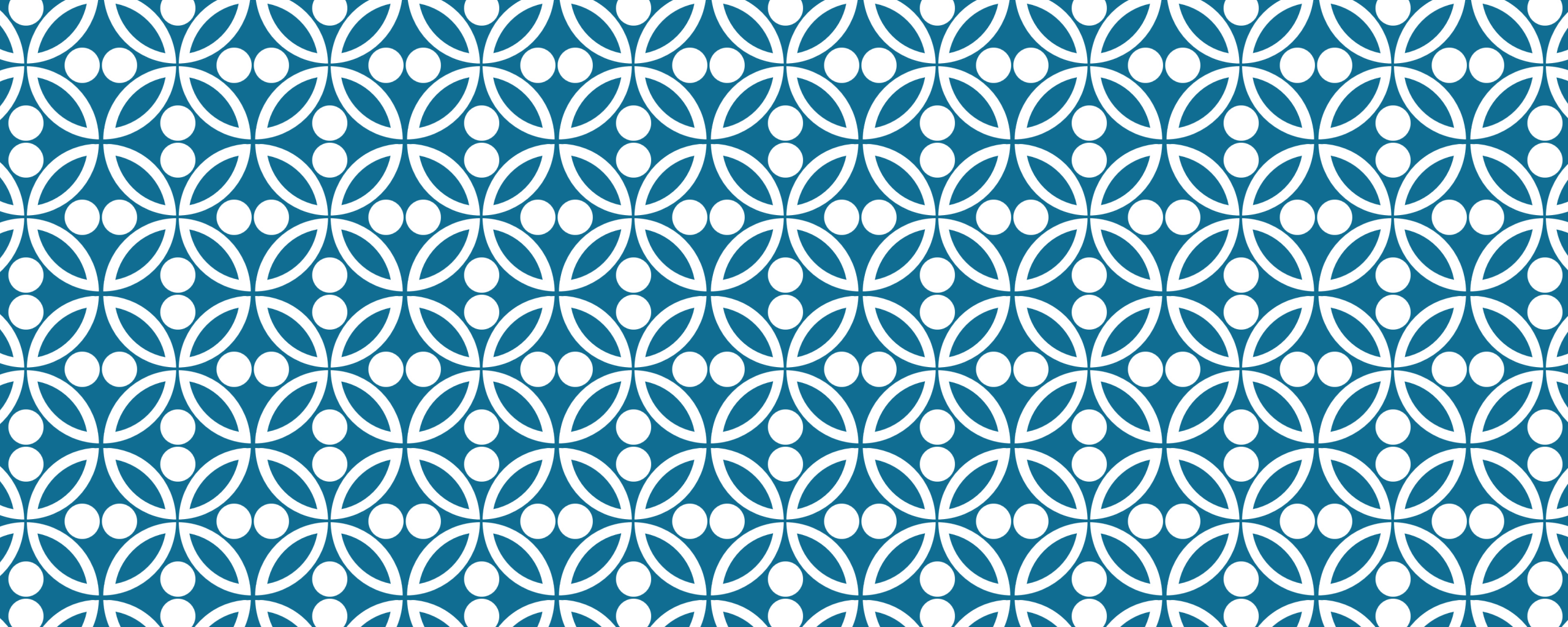
Review the questions on your planning guide.



TRAINING & CERTIFICATION

TRAINING & CERTIFICATION – QSR 1

- Based on volunteer roles and responsibilities
- EVERYONE takes Standards of Conduct training
- NEW volunteers take Intake/Interview and Quality Review Training; RETURNING volunteers must pass the Intake/Interview test
- New Circular 230 Test for tax professionals
- Link and Learn training online or classroom
- See Pub. 1084, pages 21 – 25, 64 - 67



STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

VOLUNTEER STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

- Six standards established to ensure ethical behavior and quality tax preparation by volunteers
- Listed on Form 13615, Standards of Conduct Agreement
- Protect volunteers, site, and partners from possible sanctions including suspension from VITA program
- See Pub. 1084, pages 44 - 56

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT – QSR 5

- EVERYONE must sign Form 13615, Volunteer Standards of Conduct Agreement before working at site
- Coordinator must verify volunteer's identity with photo ID and confirm completion of required training
- Coordinator must certify (sign/date) each form after volunteer signature
- Agreement forms must be on file at site or partner level
- See Pub. 1084, pages 34 - 36

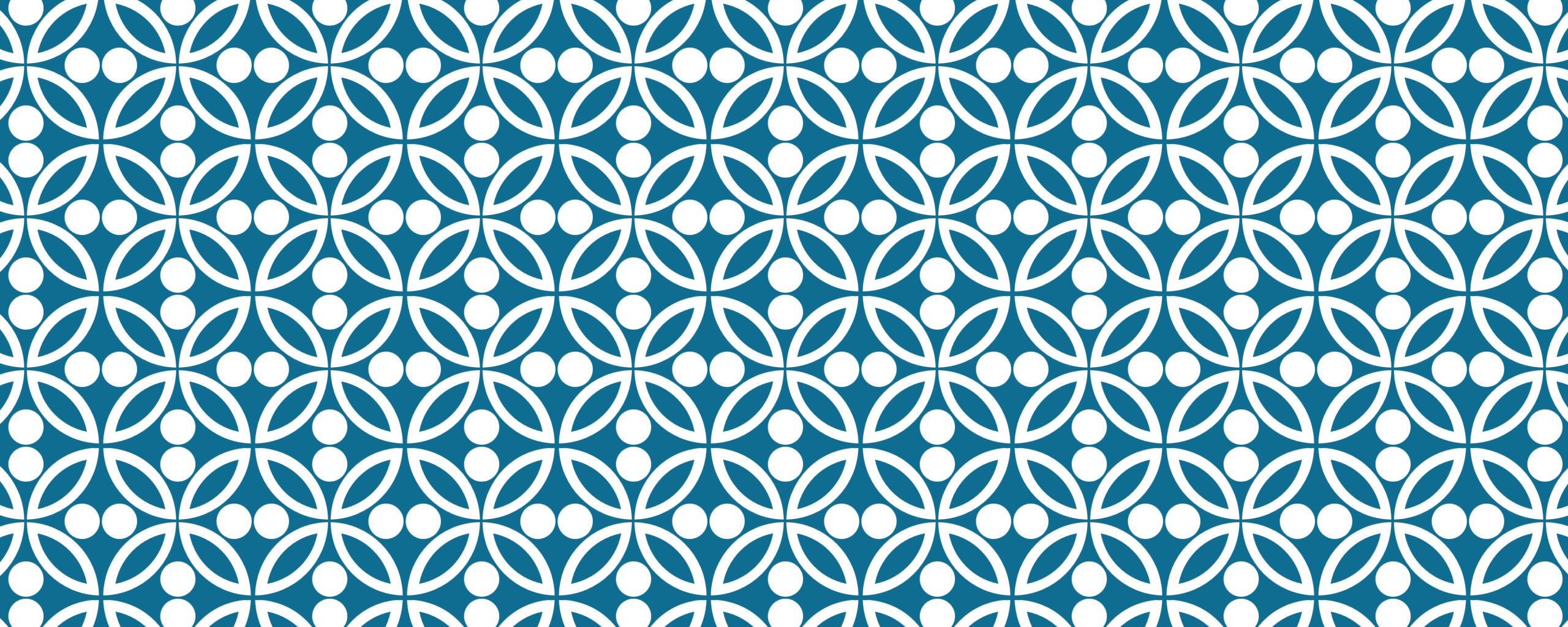
VOLUNTEER PROTECTION ACT

Volunteers are not liable for mistakes they might make on a tax return if:

- They were acting within the scope of the program and their training
- Harm was not caused by willful or criminal misconduct
- They are “true” volunteers (not receiving compensation other than reimbursement/allowance for expenses)
- See Pub. 1084, pages 6 - 7

SCOPE

- VITA cannot prepare every return
- Basic returns with low-moderate income (<\$54k)
- Limited small business/self-employed
- See Pub. 4012, pages 9 - 11



TAXSLAYER & E-FILING ALTERNATIVES

TAXSLAYER- <https://online.taxslayerpro.com>

- Tax software used by volunteers to prepare returns
- Access online from any internet connection
- Coordinator will be main Administrator for account
- Coordinator usually sets up/manages users
- Coordinator usually transmits prepared returns and resolves rejects

TAXSLAYER (CONT'D)

- “Practice Lab” is practice version of TaxSlayer used for training (vita.taxslayerpro.com/IRSTraining)
- TaxSlayer practice lab offers training manual/online tutorials
- TaxSlayer Administrator training Dec. 13, 2016 will cover transmitting returns, checking acknowledgments, fixing rejects, pulling reports

SITE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER – QSR 8

- 9-digit number specific to individual VITA site, begins with “S”
- Will be embedded in TaxSlayer account- administrator must confirm or correct number before returns are prepared to get credit for returns
- Provided by IRS- existing sites already have one, new sites need to request from SPEC Relationship Manager
- See Pub 1084 page 40

ELECTRONIC FILING ID NUMBER – QSR 9

- 6-digit number specific to VITA sites that transmit tax returns electronically
- Will be embedded in TaxSlayer account- administrator must confirm or correct number before returns are prepared to avoid rejects and get credit for returns
- Provided by IRS - existing sites already have one, new sites need to complete e-services registration and e-file application
- See Pub. 1084 page 41

TAXSLAYER DEMONSTRATION

- <https://online.taxslayerpro.com>
- Bookmark the URL or create shortcut on desktop
- Will receive a software CD, don't need to load but keep as backup

FACILITATED SELF-ASSISTANCE (FSA)

- MyFreeTaxes.com versus .org
- Free tax software available for taxpayers interested and capable of doing their own return
- Basic returns with income <\$64k
- TP is responsible for following up if return rejects
- Can relieve wait time at VITA site or help if TaxSlayer system goes down
- See Pub 1084 page 81

DROP-OFF TAX PREPARATION

- ALL Quality Site Requirements apply, including complete Intake/Interview and Quality Review process
- Taxpayers complete intake process and leave docs at site
- Return prepared later by certified volunteer who may contact the taxpayer to resolve any questions
- Taxpayer returns to site for Quality Review process, sign e-file authorization and get copy of return for their records

VIRTUAL TAX PREPARATION

- Virtual tax prep involves two separate sites: client intake site and preparation site
- Site must have written procedures approved by SPEC Territory Manager for Virtual operations
- Taxpayer must sign Virtual Consent Form 14446
- See your SPEC Relationship Manager for more info

CLIENT OUTREACH TIPS

Tip #1

Have a plan – where will you distribute marketing materials? What other outreach channels will you use? City newsletters, email blasts, link on your organization's web page, partner agencies/network, etc.

Tip #2

Most commercial paid preparers start advertising in November. Think about this when you are planning your outreach efforts.

Tip #3

Keep your EKS site listing up-to-date (Google docs). In addition to the correct information being available through the online tax site finder, the information in the website listing gets sent to each county lead, United Way, the 211 Call Center and the IRS.

CLIENT OUTREACH TIPS

Tip #4

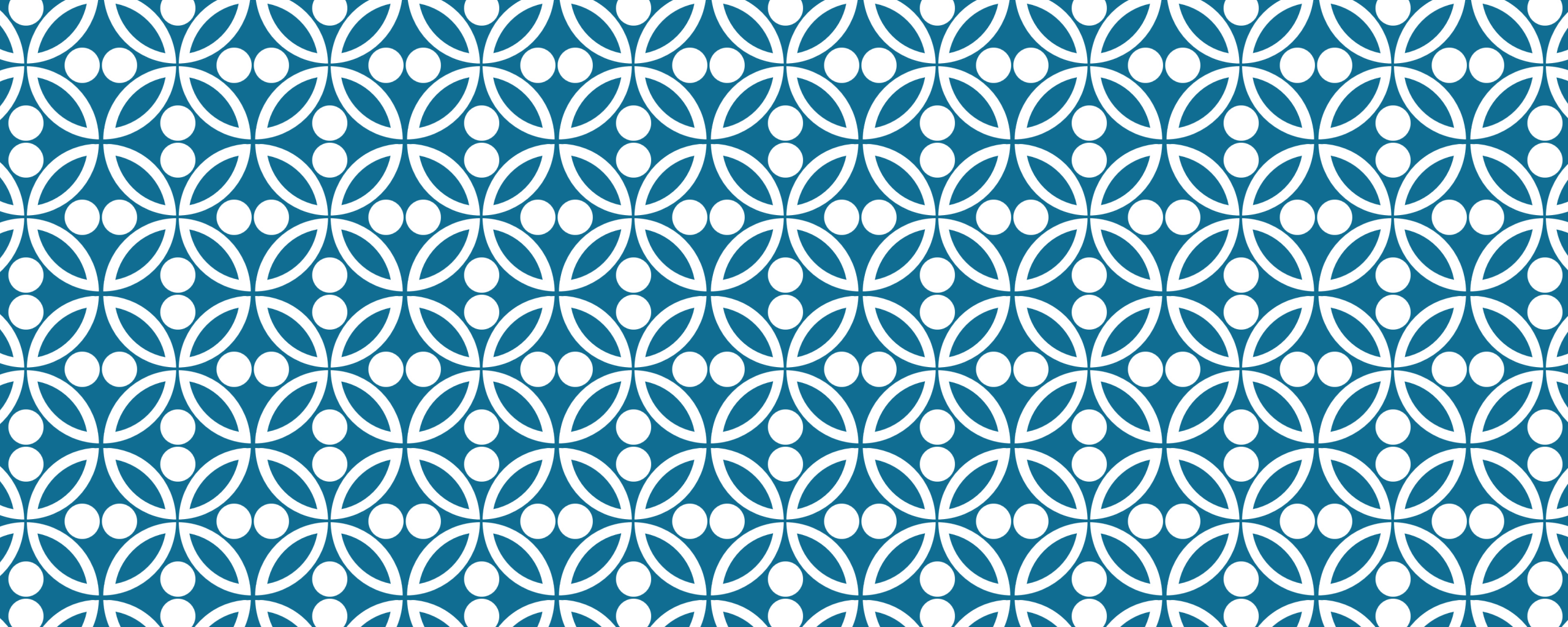
The flow of clients varies by site, but generally speaking, the busiest time for a tax site is from the end of January to the end of February. To help stay busy, do a second big marketing push in late February to early March to keep your clients coming in. Sometimes procrastinating taxpayers just need a little coaxing...

Tip #5

Track where you have distributed materials before and during the season. Write down quantities, locations and your contact. Make sure to include any opportunities that pop up during the season so you can take advantage of that same opportunity the next year.

Tip #6

If an organization has agreed to distribute materials for you – follow up to make sure it actually happened.



CIVIL RIGHTS & REFERENCE MATERIALS

CIVIL RIGHTS – QSR 7

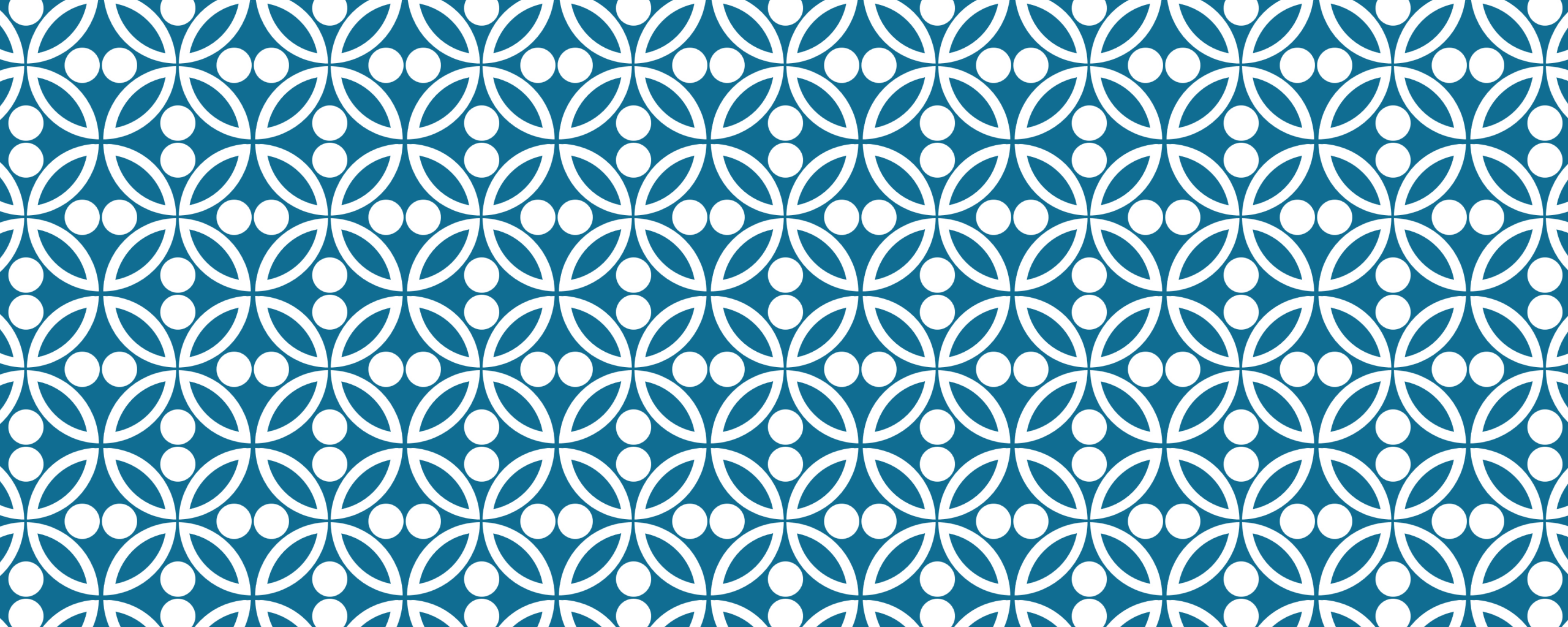
- Tax sites must display a current Pub. 4053, *Your Civil Rights Are Protected*, poster
- Poster should be located at first point of contact between volunteer and taxpayer
- Sites must make reasonable efforts to ensure that everyone has access to free tax services including disabled and limited English-speaking taxpayers
- See Pub. 1084 page 39

REFERENCE MATERIALS – QSR 4

- Sites must have current tax law reference materials available for use by volunteers (hard or electronic copy)
- Pub. 4012, *Volunteer Resource Guide*
- Pub. 17, *Your Federal Income Tax for Individuals*
- Volunteer Tax Alerts
- Pub. 4836, VolTax poster
- See Pub. 1084 page 32 - 33

SCOPE

- Some returns are outside the scope and training of VITA and should be referred to a professional tax preparer
- Income is not necessarily the determining factor
- Taxpayers should be screened before tax preparation begins to ensure their return is in scope for VITA
- Volunteers should only prepare returns within the scope of their tax law certification
- See Pub. 4012, pgs. 9 -11



INTAKE/INTERVIEW & QUALITY REVIEW PROCESS

INTAKE/INTERVIEW (& QUALITY REVIEW)— QSR 2

- Form 13614-C, *Intake/Interview and Quality Review Sheet*, must be used for EVERY tax return prepared
- Site must have process to ensure returns are assigned to a volunteer with appropriate tax law certification for return
- Volunteer must review intake sheet and all supporting documents (identity and financial) with taxpayer before preparing the return
- Grey areas on intake sheet must be completed by volunteer
- See Pub. 1084, pgs. 26 – 27

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

- All taxpayers are required to have healthcare insurance, an exemption to that requirement, or pay a penalty
- Use taxpayer information from Intake sheet pg. 3 to determine health coverage/exemption status of taxpayer
- If taxpayer received coverage from the Marketplace, must have Form 1095-A to prepare their return
- 1095-B from insurance and 1095-C from employer not required to prepare return
- ACA Training Publication 5157-A included in training kit

DUE DILIGENCE

- Volunteers must ensure the information included on the tax return is accurate and complete
- Taxpayers should be asked to clarify information that appears to be inconsistent, incomplete, or unusual
- Site Coordinator may decide the return cannot be completed with the information/documentation provided and refer the taxpayer to a professional preparer
- See Pub. 1084, pgs. 52 - 53 and Pub. 5101 Intake Training

CONFIRM PHOTO ID AND TAX ID NUMBERS — QSR 3

- Sites must confirm taxpayer identity before preparing and submitting a tax return
- Volunteer must ask for and review photo identification for primary and secondary taxpayer
- Volunteer must ask for and review Social Security Number (SSN) or Individual Tax ID Number (ITIN) documents for everyone listed on the return
- See Pub. 1084, pg. 31 and Pub. 4299 for info on acceptable documents

INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS (ITIN)

- Individual Tax Identification Numbers (ITIN) are issued to individuals who are not eligible for a Social Security Number (SSN) but still need to file a tax return
- Taxpayer should have ITIN card or letter/copy
- ITIN clients may have W-2's with different SSN
- Names must match on documents
- Some ITINs will expire in December 2016

EXPIRING ITINS

- ITIN with middle digits of -78 or -79 (XXX-7X-XXXX)
- ITIN not used on a tax return in the last three years (2015, 2014, 2013)
- Taxpayer may have received notice from IRS- ask!
- Ask: Has taxpayer filed a return (or were they claimed as a dependent on a return) in the last three years?
- Ask: Has ITIN been renewed? Should have confirmation letter from IRS

EXPIRING ITINS (CONTINUED)

- IRS encourages taxpayers to submit returns *after* ITINs have been renewed to avoid delays in processing the tax return
- Return can be e-filed with expired ITINs but exemptions or credits claimed using that number will be disallowed until ITIN is renewed; *entire refund will be held*
- Return can be prepared on software and paper copy provided to taxpayer to include with renewal application
- Refer taxpayer to Certifying Acceptance Agent or IRS Taxpayer Assistance Center for help with renewal

IDENTITY THEFT

- Sites can prepare returns for identity theft victims who have received an Identity Protection (IP) PIN from IRS
- IP PIN must be included on return if one was issued to taxpayer/spouse
- Refer identity theft victims who need to request a new or replacement IP PIN should to the ID Protection Special Unit
- See Pub. 4012, page P-4

(INTAKE/INTERVIEW &) QUALITY REVIEW – QSR 2

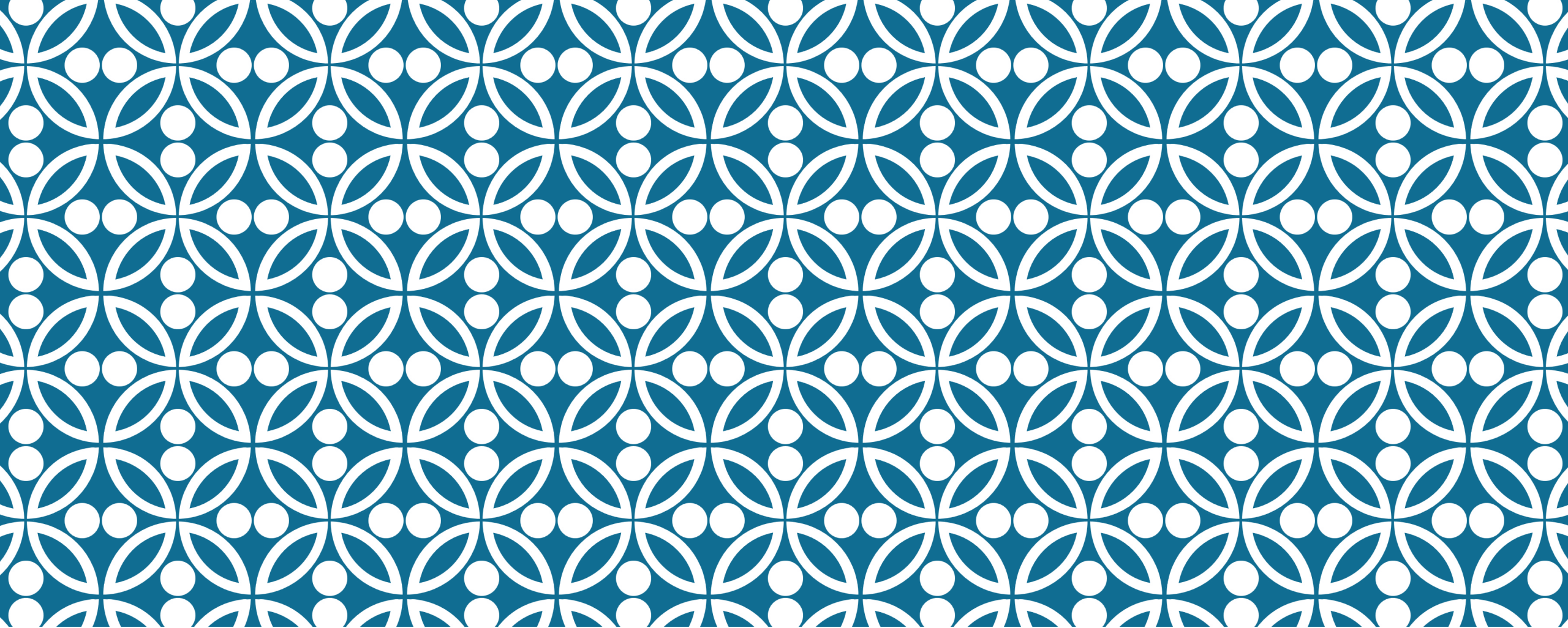
- EVERY tax return must be quality reviewed before the taxpayer signs the return and leaves the site
- Form 13614-C contains a QR checklist on page 4
- Reviews cannot be completed by the volunteer who prepared the return - must be a designated or peer reviewer
- Reviewer should ensure taxpayer understands and agrees with return and their responsibility for the information
- See Pub. 1084, pages 26 – 30, Pub. 5101 Intake/QR Trg

TIMELY FILING — QSR 6

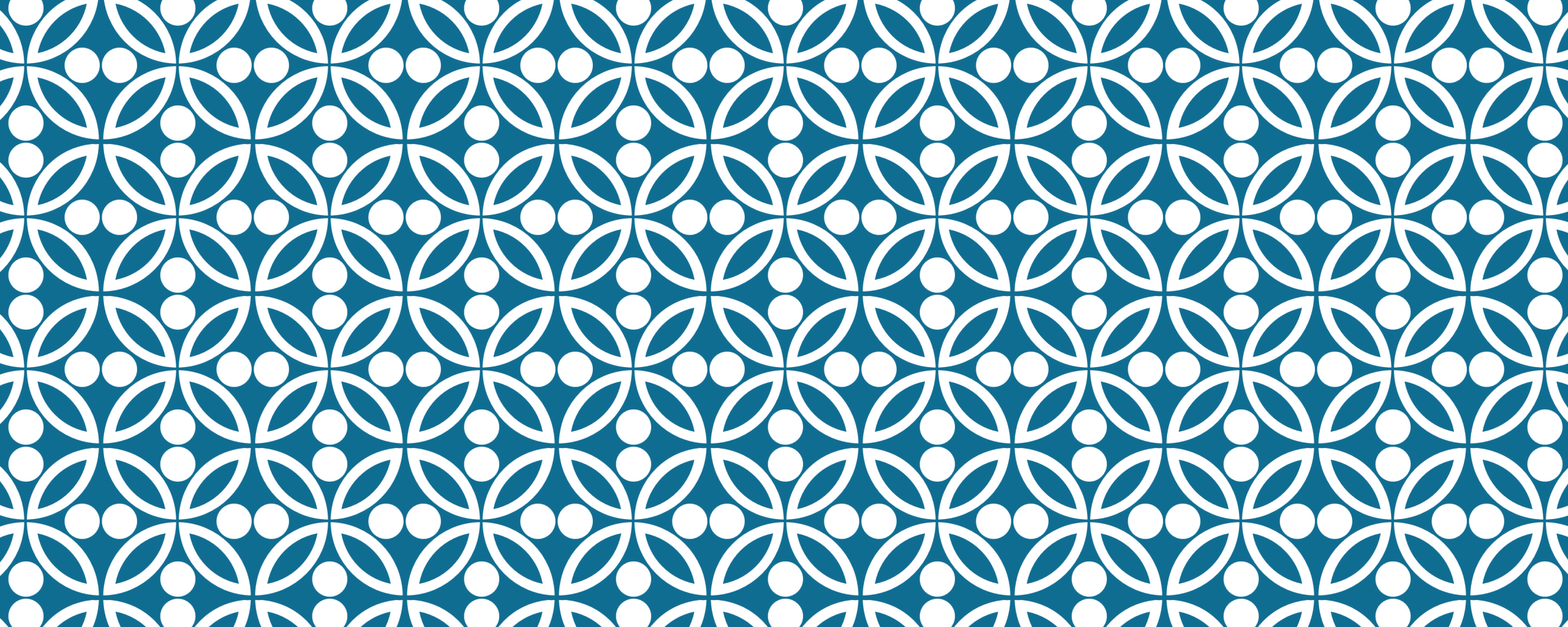
- Taxpayer must sign Form 8879, IRS e-file Signature Authorization, before site can transmit completed return
- Both taxpayer and spouse must sign 8879 for Joint returns
- Tax returns should be filed ASAP and generally no later than 3 days after taxpayer signs the e-file authorization
- Site should retrieve e-file acknowledgments and resolve any rejects promptly
- See Pub. 1084, page 37 – 38, Pub. 3189

DROP-OFF DIFFERENCES

- Intake/Interview process is key to ensure all required information and documents are available to prepare return
- Same Quality Review process and requirements apply
- Return may not be prepared same day; taxpayer will come back to site after return is complete to sign and finalize
- Timeframe will depend on site schedule but no excuse to stockpile or delay checking acknowledgments/work rejects
- If client doesn't return to site for review after several contact attempts, return/documents should be securely disposed of



CLIENT FLOW ACTIVITY- PUT STEPS IN ORDER OF PROCESS AT VITA SITE



SECURITY, PRIVACY, AND CONFIDENTIALITY

SECURITY, PRIVACY, AND CONFIDENTIALITY — QSR 10

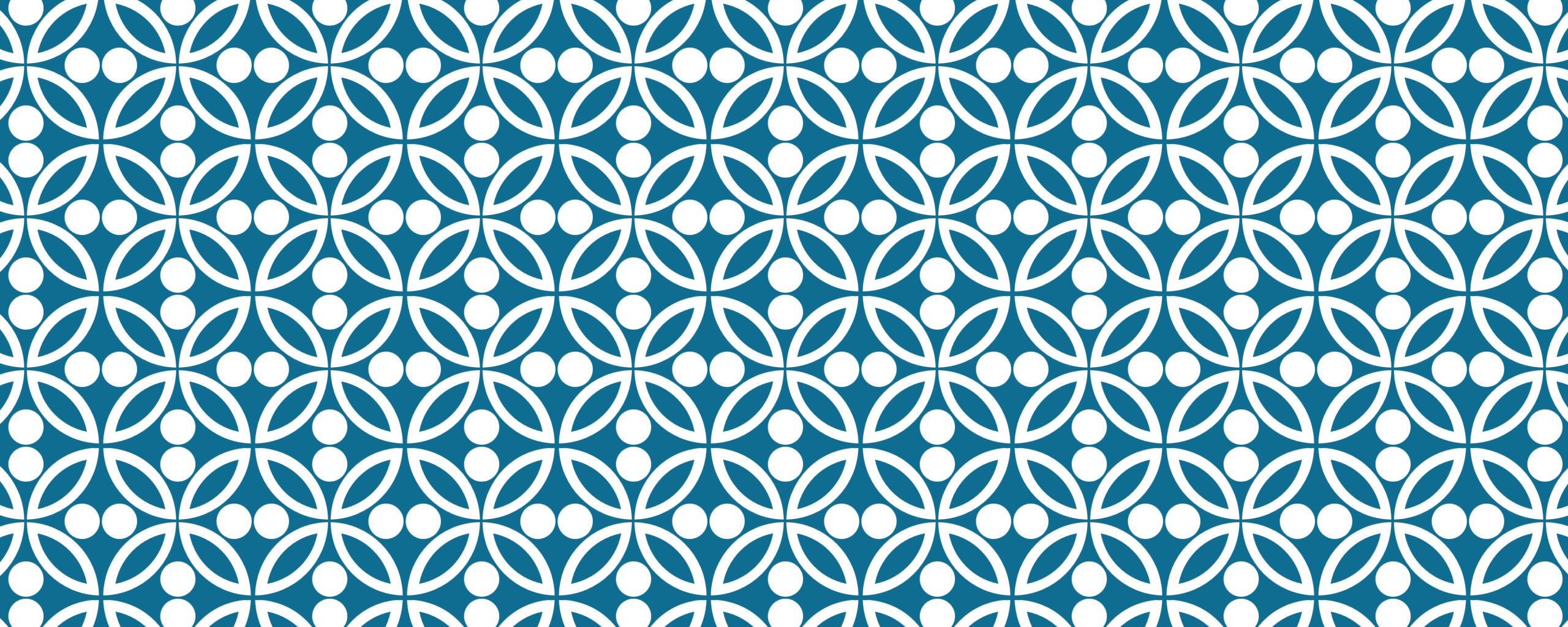
- Pub. 4299, *Security, Privacy, and Civil Rights*, provides guidelines to protect physical/electronic data throughout tax prep process
- Personal data of clients AND volunteers must be kept confidential
- Sites/partners who wish to use taxpayer info for purposes other than return preparation must secure client consent on Form 7216
- Volunteers must wear or display their name, including their first name and at least the first initial of their last name
- See Pub. 1084, page 42 - 43

PRIOR YEAR RETURNS

- Sites may e-file returns for current tax year and two prior tax years on TaxSlayer
- Prior year tax law reference materials must be used (except Intake sheet - current year must be used to determine scope)
- Volunteers do not have to be certified in prior year tax law but must be certified at level appropriate for return
- See Pub. 1084, page 82 and Pub. 4012 pgs. M-3 – M-4

AMENDED RETURNS

- Sites may prepare amended returns even if original return was prepared by someone else
- Taxpayer must have copy of original return and all necessary information to prepare the amendment
- If possible, wait until original return has been processed before submitting an amended return
- Amended returns cannot be e-filed
- See Pub. 1084, page 71 and Pub. 4012, page M-1



REPORTS, RECOGNITION, & REVIEWS

VOLUNTEER SUMMARY REPORT- FORM 13206

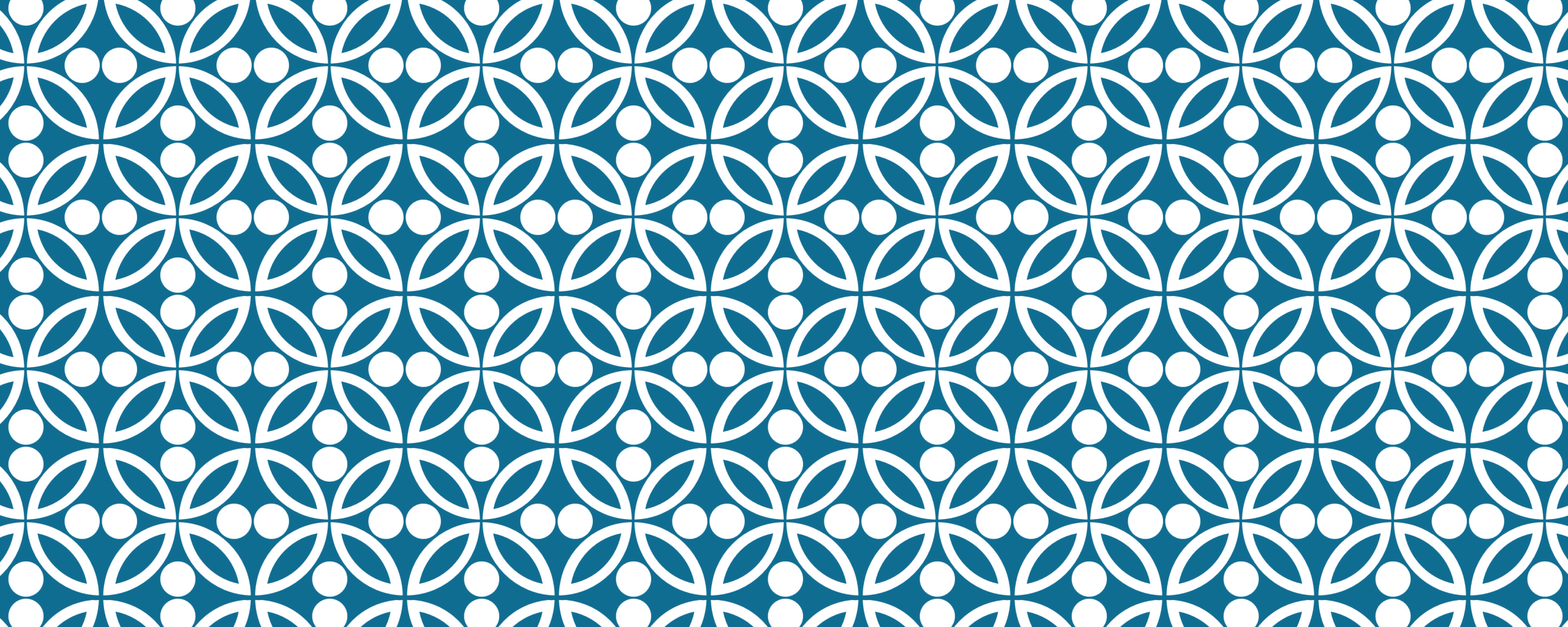
- Coordinators are required to provide SPEC with a list of all volunteers who work at the VITA site
- Form 13206 is available as PDF or Excel file and should include volunteer names, tax law certification, and position
- Includes section for tax professionals requesting CE credits
- First report must be submitted before Feb. 15; subsequent reports for volunteers not previously reported by 3rd of month
- See Pub. 1084, page 23

IRS VOLUNTEER MILESTONE RECOGNITION

- IRS provides token recognition items for volunteers who complete 10 years or more of service
- Form 14308, *SPEC Site Milestone Recognition*
- Form 14309, *SPEC Volunteer Milestone Recognition*
- Download forms from Site Coordinator Corner on IRS.gov (keyword search Coordinator Corner) or ask your SPEC RM
- See Pub. 1084, page 76

SITE REVIEWS AND SITE VISITS

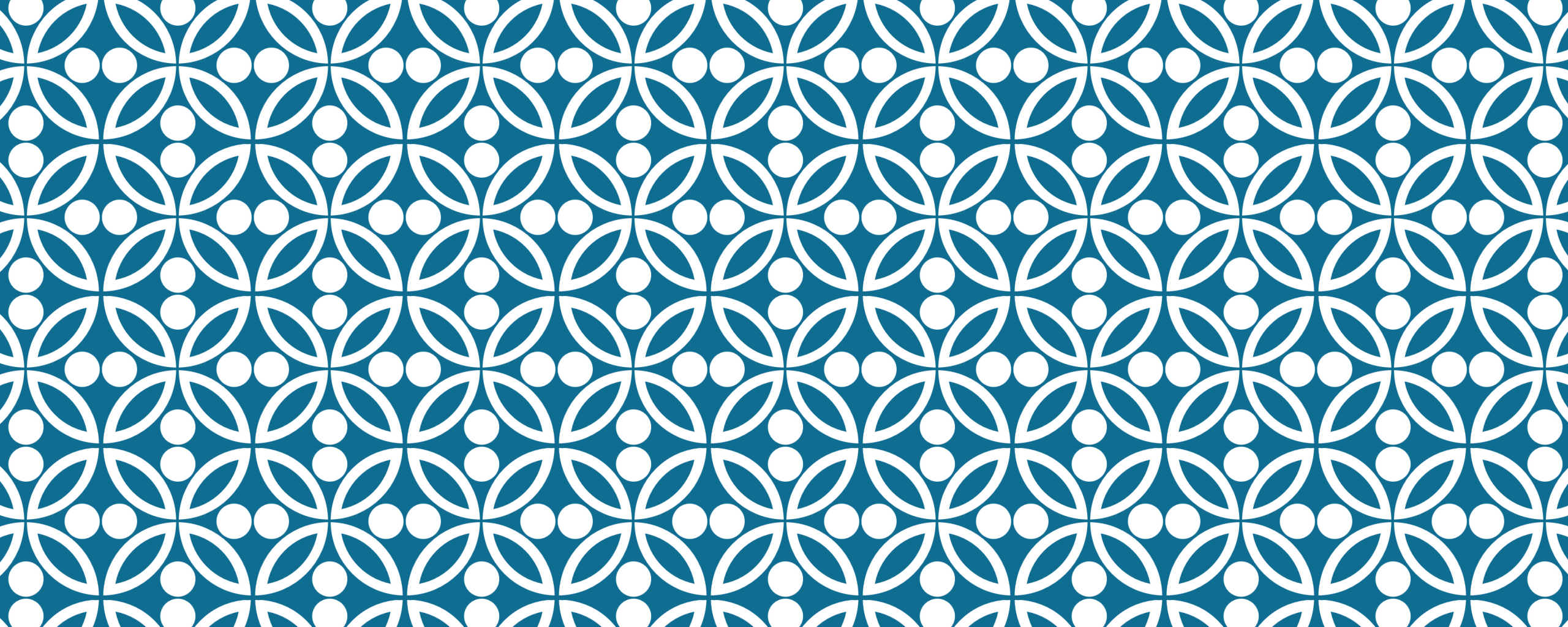
- IRS oversight of the VITA program includes visiting sites to ensure consistent adherence to Quality Site Requirements
- Visits are unannounced and may include a “mystery shopper”
- Visits may include a review of returns prepared at the site
- Reviews may be performed remotely, over the telephone
- Official visits/reviews are documented on Form 6729
- See Pub. 1084, pages 83 - 89



END OF TAX SEASON |

SITE CLOSEOUT PROCEDURES

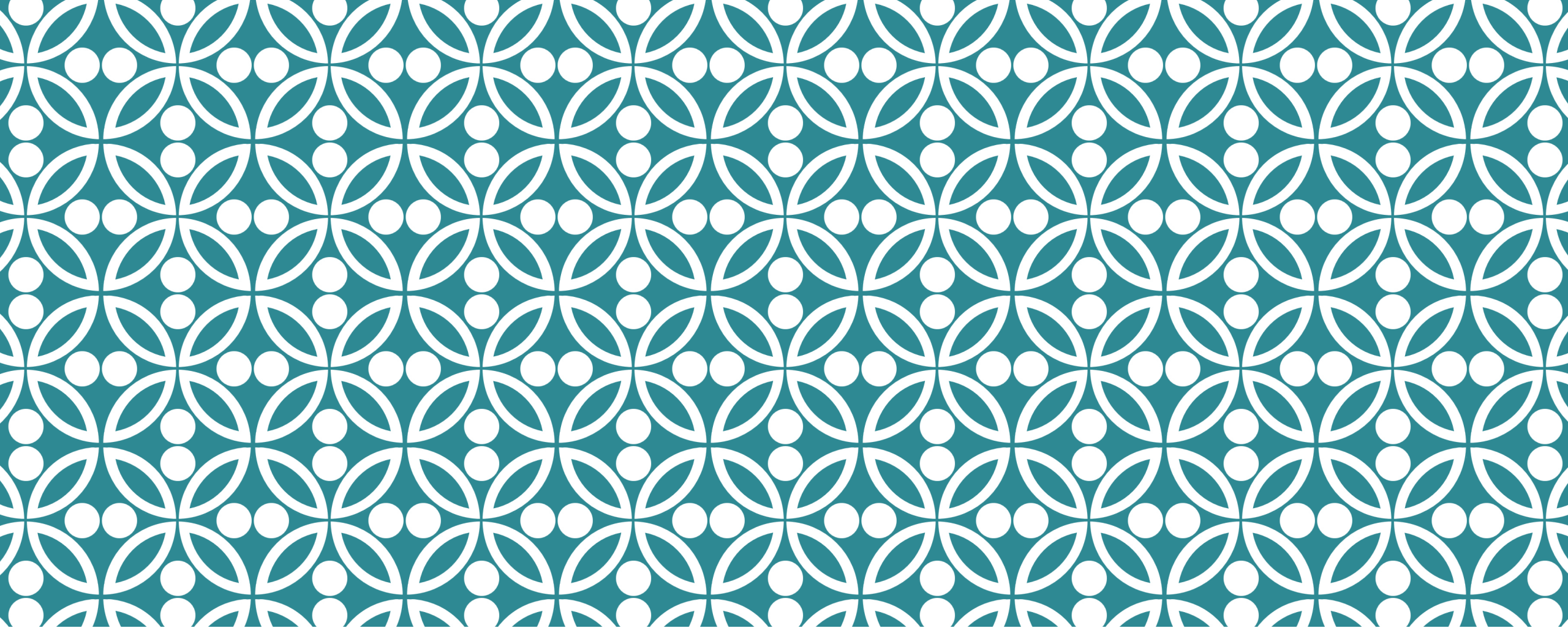
- Ensure all current year tax returns are filed before midnight April 18 to be considered on time
- Check acknowledgments and ensure rejects are resolved
- No taxpayer information should be kept at the site once returns are confirmed accepted
- Deactivate TaxSlayer user accounts (can't delete)
- Sites open past April 18 should update schedule if changed
- See Pub. 1084, page 90



SUMMARY AND WRAP UP

SITE COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Site operations comply with Quality Site Requirements
- Volunteers comply with Standards of Conduct
- Logistics for smooth site operations
- Administrative and troubleshooting support
- Liaison with SPEC and EKS
- See Pub. 1084, pages 57 – 59 and Pub. 5088 Site Coordinator Training



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

Quiz time!

IRS SPEC COUNTY RELATIONSHIP MANAGERS

- Alameda: Deborah Torres, deborah.torres@irs.gov, 510-907-5356
- Contra Costa: Raquel Rangel, raquel.rangel@irs.gov, 510-907-5357
- Marin: Katia O'Sullivan, katia.osullivan@irs.gov, 510-907-5106
- Napa: Sean Chan, sean.chan@irs.gov, 510-907-5244
- San Francisco: Patrick Brown, patrick.m.brown@irs.gov, 510-907-5355
- San Mateo: Katia O'Sullivan, katia.osullivan@irs.gov, 510-907-5106
- Solano: Sean Chan, sean.chan@irs.gov, 510-907-5244
- Santa Clara: Lydia Arzate Lydia.Arzate@irs.gov, 408-283-1434
Carlos Camino carlos.camino@irs.gov, 408-283-1436
- SPEC Territory Manager: Shelly Dunn, shelly.dunn@irs.gov, 510-907-5410

EVALUATION

We will email you a short evaluation.

Please fill it out so we can improve for next year.

THANK YOU !