

FACT Sheet

Continuing Education Credits for SPEC VITA/TCE Partners and Volunteers



September 2017

Background:

IRS Stakeholder Partnerships, Education and Communication (SPEC) VITA/TCE Programs are approved to provide IRS Continuing Education (CE) credits for the following professionals:

- Enrolled Agents (EAs)
- Non-credentialed tax return preparers participating in the IRS Annual Filing Season Program (AFSP).
- California Tax Education Council (CTEC)
- Certified Financial Planners (CFP)

Attorneys and Certified Public Accountants (CPA) may also qualify for CE credits depending upon their state licensing requirements or National Boards of Standards.

The programs are also approved to provide CE credits for CTEC. CTEC is responsible for registering non-credentialed tax preparers for the state of California. CTEC registrants that participate in the VITA/TCE program can now receive CE credit for completing volunteer training.

Volunteers can earn CE credits by completing the required tax law certifications and serving as an IRS tax law-certified volunteer instructor, tax return preparer, and/or quality reviewer in the SPEC Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) or Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Programs.

Beginning Filing Season 2018 Continuing Education Credit Certificates will be available for volunteers to print from the VITA/TCE Central home page of Link & Learn Taxes (LLT).

Volunteer Requirements:

All volunteers requesting CE Credits must:

- Register in LLT and complete the following fields on the “My Account Page” in addition to the required fields:
 - Select a Professional Status
 - Name as listed on PTIN Card
 - PTIN Number (*PTIN is required for EA and non-credentialed tax preparers participating in the Annual Filing Season Program*).
 - CTEC Number (*Required for all CTEC registrants*)
- Complete the following certifications before beginning volunteer service:
 - Volunteer Standards of Conduct (VSC) Training and passing the test with a score of 80% or higher;
 - Intake/Interview & Quality Review Test; and
 - Certify to the Advanced level in tax law.
- Have a valid Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN) for CE credits to be reported to the PTIN holder's IRS PTIN account. To see if you are required to have a PTIN see [PTIN requirements for Tax Return Preparers.](#) **Note:** Attorneys, CPAs and CFPs are NOT required to *have a PTIN to earn IRS SPEC CE credits.*

- Complete a minimum of 10 hours volunteer service as a VITA or TCE quality reviewer, tax return preparer, and/or tax law instructor.
- Provide the partner/site coordinator with a signed Form 13615, printed from Link & Learn taxes, reflecting the volunteer certifications completed.

Volunteers can receive up to 14 hours of CE credits for certifying in tax law at the advanced level and volunteering as a quality reviewer, tax return preparer, or tax law instructor for a minimum of 10 hours. An additional 4 hours of CE credits can be earned by certifying in a specialty course (e.g. Health Savings Account, Military, International, Puerto Rico, or Foreign Student). Volunteers can earn a maximum of 18 CE credit hours.

Continuing Education Credits are provided as follows to Quality Reviewers, Instructors and Tax Return Preparers:

Tax Law Certifications	CE Credit hours
VSC (Ethics)	1
Federal Tax Law Updates	3
Federal Tax Law	10
Specialty Federal Tax Law Course	4
Total Allowable CE Credits	18

Volunteers who are participating in the SPEC VITA/TCE Programs as an IRS-tax law certified volunteer **cannot** receive compensation for any activities which they are requesting CE credits.

SPEC Partner Requirements

- Share the requirements for seeking continuing education credits with volunteers at the beginning of the filing season.
- SPEC partners, site coordinators, or AARP local coordinators must validate the volunteer’s completion of CE requirements using Form 13615, *Volunteer Standards of Conduct Agreement*.
- For all volunteers who have met the qualifications and are requesting CE credits:
 - Complete and sign the *Continuing Education Credits* section of Form 13615, and submit by **April 30** for sites closing April 15 to your SPEC relationship manager.
 - For year round sites, submit a completed Form 13615 monthly after April 30 once CE requirements are met.

For additional guidance on partner responsibilities, refer to [Publication 4396-A Partner Resource Guide](#).

Receiving the CE Credits

- Upon completion of all program requirements, CE certificates will be available via LLT for each volunteer that has met all requirements of the program. Please refer to the **Getting Started Tutorial** in LLT for assistance on printing certificates.
- In addition, for all volunteers with a valid PTIN, CE credits will be uploaded to their PTIN account. To view continuing education credits in a PTIN account go to the [PTIN system login page](#). Keep in mind a valid PTIN is required prior to certifying.
- Certified Financial Planners must self-report their CE credits to the CFP Board. Guidance is available at www.cfp.net.
- Attorneys and CPAs must present their CE certificates to their governing board for approval. **Note:** Please be aware the IRS SPEC CE Program is not an approved NASBA sponsor.

What is the IRS Annual Filing Season Program (AFSP)?

The Annual Filing Season Program launched by the Return Preparer Office (RPO) is intended to recognize and encourage non-credentialed tax return preparers who voluntarily increase their knowledge and improve their filing season competency through continuing education (CE). A non-credentialed tax return preparer is a tax return preparer without professional credentials. This program allows them to obtain an AFSP Record of Completion for participation in an annual continuing education program. Annual Filing Season Program participants are also included in a public database of return preparers on the IRS website. There are also reduced requirements for exempt individuals. IRS VITA/TCE volunteers are considered exempt if they meet all the above requirements to obtain at least 14 hours of continuing education credit through the VITA/TCE Program and obtain an additional 1 hour of ethics training from an [IRS Approved Provider](#).

How and when will I get my Record of Completion?

- After completing the required continuing education requirements and renewal of PTIN for the upcoming year.
- Volunteer will receive an email from TaxPro_PTIN@irs.gov with instructions on how to elect to participate and receive their record of completion in the online secure mailbox.
 - After notification they qualify, volunteer must sign the Circular 230 Agreement in their PTIN account and the AFSP- Record of Completion will be viewable/printable from their secure mailbox in the PTIN system.

See link for more information about the program: <http://www.irs.gov/Tax-Professionals/Annual-Filing-Season-Program>.