



HELPING YOUTH ACCESS THE FOSTER YOUTH TAX CREDIT IN 2026:

JBAY Launches County Toolkit

February 25, 2026





Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Why is Tax Filing a Poverty Reduction Strategy
- FYTC County Toolkit Now Available
 - Educating Youth
 - Conducting Outreach
 - Connecting Youth with Tax Filing Assistance
 - After Filing
 - Special Topics
- Q&A



Presenters

Imelda Islas-Olivo
Project Manager,
Housing & Economic
Mobility

AJ Johnson
Director of Housing &
Economic Mobility

Simone Tureck Lee
Senior Director of
Programs & Policy

Why is Tax Filing a Poverty Reduction Strategy?





The Foster Youth Tax Credit (FYTC) is the first-ever tax credit for foster youth



In 2021, JBAY proposed the creation of a new tax credit for current and former foster youth in California: the **Foster Youth Tax Credit (FYTC)**.

- Championed by Governor Gavin Newsom, State Controller Betty Yee, and Senator Anna Caballero, the FYTC was established in the 2021-22 state budget, first available to youth during the 2023 tax season.
- FYTC is administered by the California Franchise Tax Board (FTB) in partnership with California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to verify foster care eligibility.

In 2026 the FYTC provides up to \$1,189 for youth who:

- ✓ **File their 2025 state tax return**
- ✓ **Were age 18-25 at end of tax year (12/31/25)**
- ✓ **Were in foster care on or after 13th birthday**
- ✓ **Are eligible for CalEITC (income between \$1-\$32,900, SSN/ITIN, and lived in CA at least half the tax year)**



In Addition to the FYTC, Current & Former Foster Youth May Qualify for Other Credits



State Tax Credits

- California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC)
- Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC)
- Child & Dependent Care Expenses Credit*
- Renters Credit*

Federal Tax Credits

- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- Child Tax Credit (CTC)
- Child & Dependent Care Tax Credit
- American Opportunity Credit and Lifetime Learning Credit*

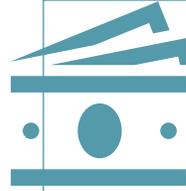
* The credits with asterisks are not refundable. They will just reduce what you owe, if you owe anything.



Why Should Current & Former Foster Youth File Taxes?

In 2025, current & former foster youth ages 18-25 who filed taxes received an average of:

- ✓ **\$1,857 cash back** for single filers
- ✓ **\$4,008 cash back** for parenting filers!
Just 5% owed taxes.



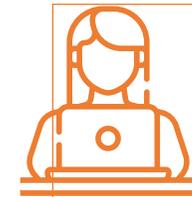
Cash Money!



Tax filing is how you access state or federal relief



Establishes income for public benefits; tax refunds aren't counted against eligibility



Important independent living skill—eventually we all have to do it!



Uncovers identity theft

In 2025, Filing Taxes **Increased Income by 12%** and **Reduced Poverty by 7%** for Current and Former Foster Youth



Filer	Adjusted Gross Income (AGI)	Average Return	AGI + Average Return	% Change
Filers without dependents	\$17,892	\$1,857	\$19,749	10%
Filers with dependents	\$15,536	\$4,008	\$19,544	26%
All Filers	\$17,490	\$2,157	\$19,647	12%



Filer	Poverty Rate Prior to Filing	Poverty Rate After Filing	% Change
Filers without dependents	54%	49%	-9%
Filers with dependents	71%	66%	-7%
All Filers	56%	52%	-7%



Foster Youth Tax Credit (FYTC) Implementation Snapshot (2023-2025)



16,200 youth have received the FYTC

- In 2025, **17%** of the estimated eligible population received the FYTC



\$17.38 million collectively received from the FYTC



Power of the FYTC

In addition to the FYTC, youth received other tax credits totaling an estimated

\$16.91 million

FYTC County Toolkit Now Available



Senate Bill 624 (Caballero, 2025) Mandated New Outreach Requirements and Guidance



- California Department of Social Services must **issue guidance to counties** on best practices for encouraging **current and former foster youth** to file taxes and access the FYTC.



**First guidance:
By July 30, 2026;
bi-annually thereafter**

- County child welfare agencies and probation departments must **mail information** about the FYTC and free tax filing to **nonminor dependents**.



**First mailing:
Nov 2026-Jan 2027;
annually thereafter**



Toolkit Available at:

www.jbay.org/resources/county-fytc-toolkit/

County Toolkit

Increasing Access to the California Foster Youth Tax Credit



February 2026





Toolkit Components



**Educate
Youth**



**Conduct
Outreach**



**Connect
Youth to
Tax Filing
Assistance**



After Filing



**Special
Topics**



Host a Tax Prep Workshop Using JBAY's Curriculum, "Taxes 101"



You don't have to be a tax expert to deliver this curriculum



Vetted by young adults with foster care experience



Includes engagement activities
(i.e. quizzes, polls, discussion)

Topics covered:

- What are taxes, why should I file, and when?
- What are tax credits?
- How do I prepare to file my taxes?
- How do I file my taxes?
- What happens after I file my taxes?



How to Deliver a Taxes 101 Workshop Series

- **Delivered across two sessions, each 1.5 hours long.**
 - Could be done as part of three-part series concluding with a third session to assist youth with filing taxes in partnership with a local tax assistance site.
- **Can be done virtually or in person.**
 - In person: Requires WiFi and PPT capability. Food and prizes recommended. One training room is sufficient.
 - Virtual: Recommended to set up polls/quizzes ahead of time in an app. Breakout rooms needed.
- **At least two staff members recommended; add'l support is helpful if virtual.**
- **Preparation:** Review trainer's guide and slide deck ahead of time; print select items if in person.

Download PPT & Trainer's Guide:
<https://jbay.org/resources/taxes-101/>

Help Youth Prepare to File: Tax Prep Checklist

Educate
Youth

JBAY Foster System Advocates for Youth

TAX PREP CHECKLIST

File your **2024 taxes** to claim the **\$1,154 California Foster Youth Tax Credit** and more!

STEP 1: Have your personal information ready

- Do you have a government ID, driver's license, or passport?**
 - IF YES:** Your name, address, and ID number will be used to file your taxes.
 - IF NO:** You can get help [obtaining your ID](#). Current and former foster youth should contact their case manager, dependency attorney, I.P. coordinator or the Ombudsperson for help at 1-877-846-1602 or fosteryouthhelp@dss.ca.gov.
- Do you have a Social Security Number or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number?**
 - IF YES:** You will need one of these numbers to file your taxes.
 - IF NO: GETTING YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY CARD / NUMBER**
You can get help [obtaining your social security card](#) from your case manager, dependency attorney, or the Ombudsperson's office. If you have a Social Security Number but you do not know what it is or have forgotten it, go to your local Social Security office. Bring as many legal identity documents as you currently have with you, such as your passport, birth certificate, driver's license, marriage license, or official name change order. You may be able to order a replacement card online.
 - IF NO: GETTING YOUR INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (ITIN)**
If you do not have a Social Security Number and are not eligible for one, you may use an ITIN to file your taxes. In order to receive an ITIN number [apply online](#), use an IRS acceptance agent, or work with VITA site that offers that help. You can see if this is right for you by [completing this quiz](#).
- NOTE:** If you are married, have children or caring for an elderly parent in your home you'll need their social security number too.
- Do you have a permanent address?**
 - IF YES:** Great, this will be used if you choose to have your cash back refund mailed to you as a check.
 - IF NO:** That's OK – you can still file your taxes and get your refund! With their permission, you can use a health care clinic, shelter, or drop-in center's address as your permanent address.
- Do you have a bank account number & a routing number?**
 - IF YES:** Have your checking or savings account and bank routing numbers ready when you file so you can receive your **cash back refund fastest with direct deposit**. You can also use a Cash App to receive your tax refund as long as the app has routing and account numbers. In the app, select "checking" as the account type.
 - IF NO:** A paper check will be mailed to the address you file taxes with.
- Did you file taxes last year?**
 - IF YES:** Find your copy of your 2023 federal and state tax return. This may be a paper copy or an electronic copy depending on how you filed. If you filed online you can login to your account and download the file.
 - IF NO:** That's OK! If you are a parent or you earned at least \$1 in 2023 you may qualify for a cash back refund. You can file the previous year's tax returns as well. You will need to gather the same information and documents for each tax year.

- Government ID, driver's license, or passport
- Social Security Number or Individual Taxpayer ID Number (ITIN)
- Foster care verification (optional)
- Permanent address
- Bank account & routing number
- Last year's taxes (if filed)
- W-2 if employed
- 1099-NEC or 1099-MISC if self-employed
- 1099-G if received unemployment
- 1099-INT if have savings account
- 1098-T if have educational financial aid
- Receipts for qualifying educational expenses not covered by financial aid
- Receipts from childcare, day care/paid preschool, summer day camps, babysitters if parenting

Download: <https://jbay.org/resources/tax-prep/>

Draw on Trusted Messengers for Outreach

Conduct
Outreach

Trusted Messengers

- **County caseworkers (SW/PO)**
- **Dependency attorneys**
- **Caregivers**
- **Foster care placement providers** (i.e. THP-NMD, STRTPs, FFAs)
- **Independent Living Program (ILP)**
- **Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)**
- **Aftercare providers and other CBOs** (i.e. transitional housing, housing navigators, service providers)
- **Foster youth college support programs** (i.e. NextUp, Guardian Scholars)
- **Peer outreach**

Methods

- **Text Messages**
- **Email**
- **Social media**
- **Mailers**
- **Flyers and posters**
- **Announcements**
- **Tabling**
- **Combine with other materials**

Outreach Materials Available

Conduct Outreach



TAX FILING RESOURCES:

File your federal taxes for free with the IRS. Visit: irs.gov/efile

Want the fastest refund possible? Use CalFile visit: ftb.ca.gov/calfile

Looking for FREE tax preparation help? visit: ftb.ca.gov/vita

Foster Youth Tax Credit
Check This Out!
(up to \$1,189 cash back)

- Must have been age 18 through 25 at the end of the taxable year
- Must have been in California foster care at age 13 or older
- Must be eligible for California Earned Income Tax Credit (up to \$3,756 cash back)

FTN Filers Are Eligible! (state credits only)

Note: Information is for taxable year 2025

FTB 854 (REV 12-2025)

You may qualify for cash-back tax credits that can increase your refund when you file your taxes

The California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC), state Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC), state Foster Youth Tax Credit (FYTC) and the federal EITC can combine to put hundreds or even thousands of extra dollars in your pocket.

The amount of CalEITC you may be eligible for depends on how much money you earn from work. You may also be eligible if you:

- Are at least 18 years old or have a child.
- Work for an employer or work for yourself.
- Have a Social Security Number or a federal Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).
- Lived in California at least half the taxable year.

If you qualify for CalEITC and have a child under the age of 6, you may also be eligible for the YCTC. For taxable year 2025 forward, if you meet all other requirements you do not need income to be eligible for the Young Child Tax Credit.

For information about CalEITC, YCTC, FYTC, and the federal EITC, visit: ftb.ca.gov/calite



\$1,189 Tax Credit for Current & Former Foster Youth

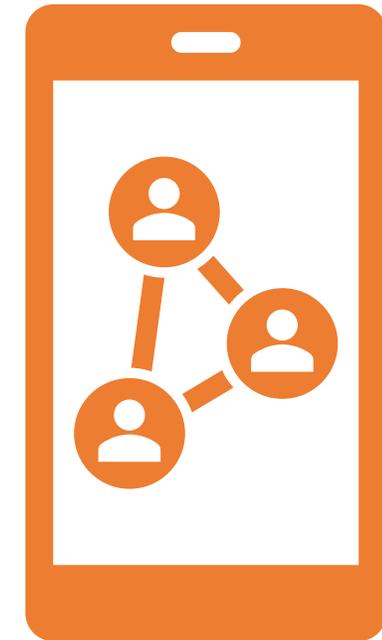
File your taxes to claim the **\$1,189 California Foster Youth Tax Credit!**

Claiming the Foster Youth Tax Credit:

- **File Your CA State Return**
Check "Yes" on the Foster Youth Tax Credit boxes stating that you qualify.
- **Foster Care**
You were in foster care on or after your 13th birthday.
- **Age**
You were 18-25 years old on December 31, 2025.
- **Income**
You earned between \$1-\$32,900 from any work in 2025.
- **Identification**
You have a Social Security Number or Individual Tax Identification Number.
- **Residence**
You lived in California more than half of 2025.

FREE filing support available. Scan or use the link below to learn more.

<https://jbay.org/resources/fytc/>



Order posters from the State Franchise Tax Board:

<https://tinyurl.com/FTB-FYTC>

Download flyer from JBAY

<https://jbay.org/resources/fytc-flyer/>

Social media posts

<https://jbay.org/resources/fytc-sm-toolkit/>

Counties: Mail FYTC Flyers to All Non-Minor Dependents

Conduct Outreach

- **SB 624 compliance:** Required starting with 2027 tax season; some counties are early adopters.
- **Customizable:** JBAY can tailor the design/messaging as desired for your county.
- **Measure impact:** JBAY will provide trackable QR codes so you can understand how effective this strategy is in your county.
- **Goal:** QR code leads youth to webpage with info on how to access free filing assistance.

\$1,189 Tax Credit for Current & Former Foster Youth

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Interested in being an early adopter of SB 624?
E-mail Imelda Islas-Olivo at imelda@jbay.org

There are Three Main Ways Youth Can File Taxes



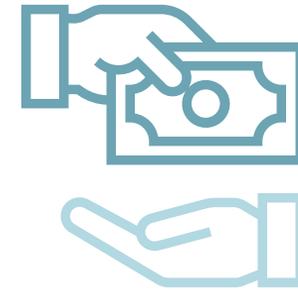
Self-File Online
**FREE if you use a
free site**

(Most common:
78% of youth)



1:1 Assistance from
a Volunteer Income
Tax Assistance
(VITA) Site
FREE

(14% of youth)



Paid Preparer
**NOT FREE – not
recommended**

(8% of youth)



VITA Sites: 1:1 Free Tax Preparation

Tax Filing
Assistance



Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Sites offer **free, one-on-one** tax return preparation to people who earn \$67K or less.



IRS-certified volunteers do the tax preparation.



There are not enough VITA sites to serve all eligible individuals (not even close). There are “VITA deserts” in some regions of the state.



Some VITA sites offer remote assistance.



VITA Roster

Tax Filing
Assistance

When tax season officially begins, use JBAY's VITA roster to locate:

- **VITA sites for foster youth:** There are 5 located in Bay Area and LA. These sites are best-equipped to serve current and former foster youth.
- **General VITA sites that have been trained on the FYTC:** These sites have received training from JBAY on the FYTC and assisting foster youth clients.
- **Sites open beyond April:** Most VITA sites close after the April tax deadline. JBAY has identified sites statewide that remain open longer, many until October.
- **The VITA locator provided by the IRS:** You can use this to identify any additional sites across the state.
 - *If visiting a general VITA site, youth should bring info about the FYTC to make sure the person assisting them is aware of it: <https://jbay.org/resources/fytc-info-for-tax-preparers/>*

ROSTER: <https://jbay.org/resources/fy-vita-sites/>

SFCASA'S VITA Site Will Provide Virtual Tax Assistance Statewide

Tax Filing Assistance

- San Francisco Court Appointed Special Advocates (SFCASA) is one of few foster youth VITA sites statewide.
- They are available to:
 - ✓ Coordinate with other CASA programs statewide to assist youth with tax filing
 - ✓ Assist youth directly, regardless of their involvement with CASA
 - ✓ Can assist virtually and in person

www.sfcasa.org/fileyourtaxes
fytaxhelp@sfcasa.org



File Your Taxes

Free Tax Preparation for current/former foster youth

Ready to file your 2025 tax return?
SFCASA's VITA site has you covered!
Sign up through the QR Code
Current/former foster/juvenile justice youth

Find out if you qualify for the \$1,189 Foster Youth Tax Credit. You might get cash back!

January 26 – April 30, 2026
Virtual and In-person,
Monday - Saturday

IRS-certified volunteers will assist you for free!

Get a \$25 gift card for filing!

CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN
SAN FRANCISCO CASA

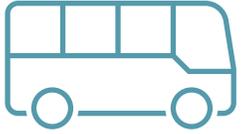
The Community College Foundation's VITA Site Will Provide Virtual Tax Assistance Across SoCal

- The Community College Foundation (TCCF) is one of few foster youth VITA sites statewide.
- They can assist youth virtually, across most of **Southern California**:
 - ✓ **Los Angeles County** (located in LA)
 - ✓ **Kern County**
 - ✓ **Riverside County**
 - ✓ **San Bernardino County**
 - ✓ **Santa Barbara County**
 - ✓ **Ventura County**

TCCF has started scheduling VITA appointments via this Calendly link



<https://calendly.com/vita-site>



E-Bus – LAVITA & Golden State Opportunity

LAVITA and Golden State Opportunity partner with other organizations across the state to provide VITA services on a bus. They travel throughout the state, usually where VITA services are limited or scarce.

We will be sharing the route schedule once available.





Self-Filing



- This is the most common way to file for youth who received the FYTC in 2025 (78%).
- File for free at myfreetaxes.org (must earn <\$89K in tax year)
- You can also self-file using Turbo Tax, etc. but unless you get the free version, you will pay for these programs.
- **Youth can use JBAY's self-filing guide for assistance.**

Step-by-Step Guide: <https://jbay.org/resources/self-filing-guide/>



Tax Events

Tax Filing
Assistance

Self-Filing Event

- Group of youth follow the Self-Filing Guide to complete their taxes on myfreetaxes.org.
- If they get stuck or have questions, VITA volunteers are present to assist.
- Ideal for youth who have some reservations about self-filing on their own.

VITA Sub-Site Event

- A local VITA site essentially brings their site to you for a day.
- Youth are assisted one-on-one. VITA volunteers file their taxes.
- Ideal for youth who could benefit from more support.

Self-Filing & Sub-Site Events: *How-To*

Partner with local VITA site:

- Use VITA roster to identify a local site that can send VITA volunteers
- Request their partnership on a “sub-site event” or “self-filing event.”
- Can also consider inviting other partners: e.g. local housing provider, campus support program can send add'l youth/students.

Extensive outreach:

- Emailing, texting, calling, flyers, RSVP form
- Then do it all again! It takes a lot of outreach to secure attendance.
- **Incentivize attendance:** Can you offer financial incentives - gift cards? Raffle? Food is a must!

Self-Filing & Sub-Site Events: *How-To*

Make sure youth are prepared:

- **Host a three-part event:**
 - (1) “Taxes 101” workshop part 1
 - (2) “Taxes 101” workshop part 2
 - (3) Self-Filing or Sub-Site Event

OR

- **Meet one-on-one with each youth prior to the self-filing or sub-site event to review the Tax Prep Checklist and help them gather their documents.**



Self-Filing & Sub-Site Events: *How-To*

Logistics	Self-Filing Events	Sub-Site Events
Timing	<p>One event that everyone attends together. Recommended timing: 3 hours</p>	<p>Appointments are best, even if accepting drop-ins, to help estimate timing and attendance. Length of event entirely dependent on availability of VITA volunteers.</p>
Space Requirements	<p>1 large room with adequate space between youth to ensure privacy. Have designated check-in area for youth to check in and ensure they have their documents ready at beginning of event. Seating should allow visibility of projector screen and capability to work at computers.</p>	<p>1 room for appointments with adequate space between volunteers to ensure privacy. Separate waiting area/room ensures youth working on their taxes with a volunteer are not disturbed by those waiting for their appointment. At check-in, ensure youth have their documents ready while they await their appointment.</p>
Equipment Needed	<p>Projector with self-filing guide displayed. Computer for each student. Printer recommended.</p>	<p>Computer for each VITA volunteer. Printer recommended.</p>
Staffing on Campus	<p>At least 2 staff members recommended for groups of up to 15 youth. At least 3 staff for groups larger than 15.</p>	<p>At least 2 staff members recommended for groups of up to 15 youth (1 at check-in, 1 inside appointment room). At least 3 staff for groups larger 15.</p>
VITA Volunteers	<p>1 VITA volunteer for every 5 youth recommended.</p>	<p>Ask VITA site for their recommendation based on your group size and the time available.</p>

Taxes Are Filed...Common Questions Youth Might Ask

After Filing



- **What if a youth needs to amend their taxes?**
 - If they miss the Foster Youth Tax Credit or other credits, they can amend their taxes at myfreetaxes.org, Turbo Tax, or a VITA site.
 - Paid preparers will amend taxes too...*for a fee!* (Even if it was their error)
- **How do they check their refund status?**
 - **Federal:** Set up a free IRS account through ID.ME. This also allows them to set up a payment plan if they owe and protects them from identity theft.
 - **State:** Visit <https://www.ftb.ca.gov/refund/>. They will need their SSN, mailing address and zip code, and exact refund amount.

View the After Filing Guide for more information:
<https://jbay.org/resources/after-filing-fy/>

Taxes Are Filed... Common Questions Youth Might Ask

After Filing



- **What if they owe taxes?**

- Most youth don't owe (~95%), but for those who do, this is stressful.
- **Federal:** Set up payment plan at ID.ME.
- **State:** Set up payment plan at <https://www.ftb.ca.gov/pay/index.html>

- **What if a youth gets a letter from the IRS?**

- Must respond within 30 days!
- This usually means the IRS need additional information to file their taxes (e.g. verification of foster youth status if DSS/FTB match fails, verification that a child is in their care, verification of self-employment income, etc.)

View the After Filing Guide for more information:
<https://jbay.org/resources/after-filing-fy/>

A Youth Isn't Eligible for the FYTC Because they Were Claimed as a Dependent on Someone Else's Tax Return

Legitimate Claiming:

Youth under age 19 and full-time students under age 24 may be legally claimed on someone else's tax return if:

- The youth lived with the person for 6 months or more during the tax year
- This person provided more than half of the youth's care

Fraudulent Claiming:

- A former resource parent continues claiming their former foster child after they've moved out
- The youth exited foster care to reunification, guardianship or adoption, but that arrangement fell apart and the youth no longer lives there, however the parent/guardian continues to claim them

Steps to resolve fraudulent claiming are outlined in the After Filing Guide:

<https://jbay.org/resources/after-filing-fy/>

Self-Employment: What Are the Implications?

- **Gig work** (e.g. driving for ride share or food delivery), **independent contractor work** (e.g. part-time youth advocate)
- Self-employed individuals do not have taxes subtracted from their paychecks.
- Young adults who were self-employed and earned above \$400 during the tax year are required by law to report their Form 1099 and file their taxes.
- They will likely owe because they haven't been paying taxes through the year.
- **Recommended: Save 30% of each paycheck**

Financial Aid: How Can Students Avoid Owing Taxes?

- Financial aid not spent on "qualified education expenses" may be taxable, including any unspent financial aid.
- Advise students to:
 - Spend as much financial aid as possible on qualified expenses
 - Save receipts for tracking and reporting on their taxes
- **Qualified expenses:** tuition, fees, course-related expenses or equipment (i.e. books, supplies, laptops, software)
- **Non-qualified expenses:** room and board (rent, dorm cost, cafeteria food card), student health fees, supplies not required for a course, travel, clerical help

For Future Questions:

Imelda Islas-Olivo

Foster Youth Tax Project Coordinator

imelda@jbay.org

