

# FACT SHEET – For Partners and Employees

## Quality & Oversight Updates for 2016 Filing Season



### Key Points

- All VITA/TCE sites are asked to have their volunteer lists to the territory by February 3<sup>rd</sup> but no later than February 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Returning volunteer instructors, preparers, coordinators, and quality reviewers are no longer required to take the Form 13614-C Training, instead, they will certify by passing the (new) test in Form 6744 or in Link & Learn.
- Partner and Sub-Partner Forms 13325/13324, *Civil Rights Assurance Agreement* Forms have merged into the Form 13533, *Partner Sponsor Agreement*. (To allow one form, one signature).
- Publication 5159 - *Partner FSR Guide* has merged into the Publication 4396A - *Partner Resource Package*.
- At the Site Coordinator's discretion, SSA verification documents with truncated SSN can be used as acceptable documents.
- The requirement to visit all VITA/TCE sites has been changed from every four years to every five years. (Field Site Visits-10% and Remote Site Reviews - 10%)

*This document summarizes quality and oversight updates for the 2016 Filing Season.*

**Background:** SPEC continues to encourage consistent site operations and effective communications to improve quality and oversight of the VITA/TCE programs. The following updates are effective for the 2016 Filing Season.

### Updates to Quality Site Requirements (QSR)

#### QSR #1 – Certification

- **Update:** All VITA/TCE sites are asked to have their volunteer lists to their SPEC Territory by February 3<sup>rd</sup> but no later than February 15<sup>th</sup>. A new report must continue to be submitted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of each month to show new volunteers not previously reported.  
**Why:** To give additional time for sites opening later than February 3<sup>rd</sup> to send their listings to their territories. This also allows territories to assist with submitting timely volunteer milestones.
- **Update:** Returning volunteer instructors, preparers, Site Coordinators and quality reviewers are no longer required to take Intake/Interview & Quality Review Training and will now certify by passing the new IRS test. **NOTE:** New volunteers in these same positions are required to take Intake/Interview & Quality Review Training and pass the new certification test.  
**Why:** To provide a consistent certification path similar to the VITA/TCE tax law certifications.

### Changes to Oversight

- **Change:** Publication 5159, *Partner Filing Season Readiness Training Guide*, is now obsolete. This information can be found in the Publication 4396-A, *Partner Resource Package*.  
**Why:** Pub 4396-A will be the primary guide to promote and inform new and existing partners on effective site management expectations and will serve as a partner resource tool.
- **Change:** The VolTax toll free number, 1-877-330-1205, is no longer available. Volunteers and taxpayers are to use [wi.voltax@irs.gov](mailto:wi.voltax@irs.gov) to report unethical volunteer or site practices. **Why:** Calls received on the toll free number did not support the intended purpose. Most of the calls did not relate to unethical behavior.

- **Change:** Forms 13325/13324, *Civil Rights Assurance Agreements* for the partner and sub-partner, has merged into Form 13533, *SPEC Partner Sponsor Agreement*. There is now one form and one signature for each partner.  
*Why:* This was a recommendation from several employees and partners and will result in a reduction of burden on the partners and the agency.
- **Change:** Social Security Administration (SSA) verification documents with a truncated SSN, (i.e. \*\*\*-\*\*-1234) can be used as acceptable documents for social security number verification at the Site Coordinator's discretion.  
*Why:* SSA is following strict security guidelines and they are now truncating SSNs on their verification documents. Before this change SPEC allowed these documents as proof of valid social security numbers. Now, the Site Coordinator can determine if they will allow a truncated SSN as proof or require the taxpayer to provide a social security card or another acceptable method of verification.
- **Change:** SPEC will provide additional guidance for following the Virtual VITA/TCE Program.  
*Why:* In 2015, sites were not following the required security e-file standards.
- **New:** SPEC will provide a contingency plan allowing sites to temporarily switch to a Virtual VITA Model during temporary emergencies, such as software shut down, internet shut down, or when volunteer quality reviewers are not present at the site.  
*Why:* This will provide sites an alternative filing method for assisting taxpayers during temporary emergencies.
- **New:** SPEC will provide guidance on how to help deter identity theft returns from being filed at their VITA/TCE sites. This could include requiring sites to increase their requirements for reviewing photo ID and social security numbers.  
*Why:* The number of ID theft-related returns in our VITA/TCE sites is steadily increasing.
- **Change:** Extension 245 for the Identity Protection Specialized Unit phone line is no longer available. Taxpayers can continue to use the toll free number, 1-800-908-4490, to receive a replacement IP-PIN if the taxpayer is unable or unwilling to create an account on [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).  
*Why:* The extension number was eliminated due to limited use.
- **Change:** The policy for Field Site Visits (FSV) and Remote Site Reviews (RSR) has changed from every four years to every five years. This reduces the FSV/RSR review requirements from 25% to 20% (FSV 10% and RSR 10 %).  
*Why:* A change in FSV/RSR review policy was made due to budget constraints and in an effort to use travel funds to assist partners with critical training needs such as attending a Site Coordinator's Training that includes multiple Site Coordinators.
- **New:** All policy changes altering the current Quality Site Requirements (QSR), software agreements, e-file requirement, security policies, etc., must be approved by the SPEC Director.  
*Why:* SPEC is not willing to jeopardize quality standards, security requirements, or other license agreements in an effort to increase return preparation.

### **Update to Volunteer Standards of Conduct**

- The language for Volunteer Standards of Conduct #2 has changed to: *"Do not accept payments, solicit donations, or accept refund payments for federal or state tax return preparation."*  
*Why:* To make it clear that taking or accepting refunds for any reason is not acceptable.