



# Department of Justice



## Office of Justice Programs

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Office of Justice Programs  
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### **DEPARTMENTS OF JUSTICE AND THE TREASURY ENTER NEW PARTNERSHIP TO ASSIST LOW INCOME FAMILIES**

ATLANTA, — The Departments of Justice and the Treasury today formalized a partnership to bring free tax services to families, assisting them in meeting their tax obligations and making sure they are taking advantage of eligible tax credits. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) centers will be located in communities designated as “Weed and Seed” sites funded by the Office of Justice Program’s (OJP) Community Capacity Development Office (CCDO).

“This partnership will assist families in a very direct way through earned income tax credit refunds,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Tracy Henke. “These refunds can help with a wide range of opportunities such as home ownership or opening up a small business, allowing citizens to develop an economic base to plan their futures.”

The Community Capacity Development Office supports local sites through its Weed and Seed initiative, which includes four components: law enforcement; community policing; prevention, intervention and treatment for residents; and neighborhood restoration. Revitalization of communities depends on the economic development through the coordinated use of federal, state and local and private sector resources. Approximately 5.5 million persons live in 330 active Weed and Seed communities throughout the country. As this cooperative effort expands to more Weed and Seed sites, it is expected that millions of dollars in refunds will go to families in need.

Today’s announcement included the names of three pilot sites selected for the 2004 tax year. Site selection was based on recommendations from the partnering agencies and geographic and demographic distribution and other economic development activities. The sites are Gastonia, NC; Phoenix, Ariz. and Grand Rapids, Mich. The overall target is to launch VITA centers in 50 Weed and Seed sites by 2006.

Weed and Seed sites will recruit community volunteers and provide computer-equipped locations for the VITA centers. The Internal Revenue Service will provide training and assist in documenting the number of families served, amount of savings realized and number of tax returns filed.

(MORE)

The Office of Justice Programs provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP is headed by an Assistant Attorney General and comprises five component bureaus and two offices: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and the Office for Victims of Crime, as well as the Office of the Police Corps and Law Enforcement Education and the Community Capacity Development Office, which incorporates the Weed and Seed initiative and OJP's American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs Desk. More information can be found at [www.ojp.usdoj.gov](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov).

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