Policy: Confirming Identity for Release of Taxpayer Information

Background

After tax preparation is completed and the return has been transmitted to the IRS, a client may return to request a copy of the tax return or obtain other tax information, such as their Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) for a tax year.

The Tax Help program must confirm the identity of the taxpayer (and/or spouse, if any) prior to releasing tax information in order to protect the taxpayer from identity theft or tax fraud. Identity is usually verified by visually comparing the taxpayer with their photo ID.

How to Assist the Taxpayer

Identity is confirmed in one of three (3) ways, depending on whether the information is being requested in person, by email, or on the phone.

- **In person** – Foundation Communities tax staff will visually compare the taxpayer with their photo ID. Once the taxpayer's identity has been verified, staff will release a copy of the return or other tax return information as requested.
- **By encrypted email** – Foundation Communities tax staff will initiate an encrypted email to the taxpayer. The taxpayer must respond with a copy of their photo ID, as well as a current selfie of themselves holding the same photo ID. Once the taxpayer's identity has been verified, the tax return copy or other requested tax return information will be sent via encrypted email to the taxpayer.
- **By phone** – Foundation Communities tax staff will release **only** Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) over the telephone for taxpayers who can verify their name, SSN/ITIN, and one or two other pieces of information specific from the return in question (eg, dependent name or birthdate). If the taxpayer cannot correctly answer the identifying questions or is requesting information other than AGI, they will need to verify their identity using one of the above two options in order to receive the requested information.

In the case of a joint tax return, Foundation Communities will release a copy of the tax return to one spouse after validating that person's identity.

Note: If a taxpayer or spouse cannot verify their identity, or if a Foundation Communities tax staff member or volunteer is uncomfortable accepting items presented as proof of identity, the taxpayer and/or spouse should be advised to present an acceptable form of identification or request an IRS transcript in order to receive directly the desired information directly from the IRS. See How Can I Order A Transcript? In [English] [Spanish].