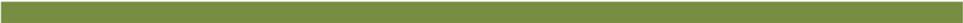




Securing today
and tomorrow

Your Ticket to Work



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Introduction

Several million disabled and blind Americans receive monthly Social Security benefits, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments, or both.

Many also have help from Medicare or Medicaid in paying medical bills. Many people with disabilities, however, want to work. To help them, Social Security has work incentives, including the *Ticket to Work* program.

Some of the work incentives allow you to keep some cash benefits, and your Medicaid or Medicare, while you transition to the workplace. And, if you find that you can't work, it's easy to start your payments again.

Your *Ticket to Work*

If you're an adult age 18 through 64, and you get disability benefits, you qualify for the *Ticket to Work* program. You can use the *Ticket to Work* program to get the services and support you need to go to work or to earn more money. The goal is to help you earn enough money so you can become financially independent.

This booklet answers questions about the program and tells you where to go if you need more help. If you have questions not answered here, call the *Ticket to Work* Helpline toll-free at **1-866-968-7842** (TTY **1-866-833-2967**).

The *Ticket to Work* program helps you, free of charge, to get vocational rehabilitation, training, job referrals, and other employment support services.

How the program works

When you take part in the *Ticket to Work* program, you can get help finding a job, vocational rehabilitation, or other support. Employment networks and state vocational rehabilitation agencies provide these services. These networks include private organizations and government agencies that have agreed to work with Social Security. They provide employment services and other support to beneficiaries with disabilities.

How do I start?

If you are interested in using the *Ticket to Work* program to go to work or get vocational services, call the *Ticket to Work* Helpline toll-free at **1-866-968-7842** (TTY **1-866-833-2967**). The *Ticket to Work* Helpline's staff can answer most of your questions about the program. They can also give you the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of employment networks, or the state vocational rehabilitation agency or One-Stop Career Center in your area. You can also get this information online at **www.socialsecurity.gov/work** or **www.choosework.net** by selecting the "Find Help" tab. To find your local One-Stop Career Center, visit

www.servicelocator.org/onestopcenters.asp, and select your state.

If your circumstances make paying for prescription medications difficult, visit www.healthfinder.gov to find out if you qualify for help.

What is an Employment Network?

Employment networks are organizations that can help you find and keep a job. Employment networks also provide other employment support services at no cost to you. The *Ticket to Work* program gives you the opportunity to choose from various employment networks.

Employment networks can be a single organization, or a group of providers, that provide all the services you need. The employment network you choose may also work with others who aren't part of the employment network to provide the services you need.

Before you decide to use an employment network, carefully choose the one you think can best help you reach your employment goal. You're free to talk with as many employment networks as you want before choosing. You can see a profile for some employment networks at www.choosework.net. Select the "Find Help" tab, type an employment network's name, state, or zip code in the search box, select "Search," and then "Open EN Profile" at the bottom of the listing. (Remember, some employment networks don't have a profile.)

See the following sections for help in working with an employment network.

What happens when I contact an employment network or state vocational rehabilitation agency?

To decide if they can help you, staff members will ask questions about your disability, your work history, and other subjects. Feel free to ask questions about how they can help you find and keep the job that is best for you.

Can an employment network or state vocational rehabilitation agency contact me?

Yes, they may contact you to find out if you have an interest in working with them. They'll give you details to help you decide if you're interested in help to find employment.

How will an employment network or state vocational rehabilitation agency know that I qualify?

We keep a record of people who qualify for the program, and who aren't working with employment networks. We give this information to employment networks and state vocational rehabilitation agencies.

What if I don't want to be contacted?

If you don't want to be contacted, call the *Ticket to Work* Helpline, and ask them to remove your name from the list. You can still take part in the Ticket program if you are not on the list.

Do I have to work with a particular employment network or state vocational rehabilitation agency?

No, you and an employment network or state vocational rehabilitation agency must agree you can work together. If you cannot agree, you may contact another employment network. If you sign a plan with a network or state agency, you can still change your mind and go to another network or agency.

What happens if an employment network or state vocational rehabilitation agency and I agree to work together?

First, the employment network will work with you to develop a plan that's right for you. The plan will state your goals for the work you want to do, and may include the salary you want to earn. The plan will also state exactly what services the employment network will provide to help you reach your goals. In addition, the plan will explain your rights under the program, including:

- Your right to choose another employment network if you're not satisfied with the services you get; and
- Information on available services and help resolving disputes through the state protection and advocacy system. Find more information about Protection and Advocacy services on page 10.

If you and your state vocational rehabilitation agency agree to work together, the agency will outline a plan for the services it will provide.

You or your representative (if you have one) and the network or state vocational rehabilitation agency must sign the plan before you can start getting services. The employment network or vocational rehabilitation agency should give you a copy of your plan in an accessible format. You can work with this organization to change your plan if your situation changes.

When you sign the plan with an employment network, you have agreed to get employment support from that network. If you or the employment network decides you can't work together, one of you must let Social Security know by contacting the *Ticket to Work* Helpline. You can't work with another employment network without signing a new plan with them.

If you sign a plan with a state vocational rehabilitation agency, you can later get employment support from an employment network, but you must finish your plan with the state agency first.

Promptly report any earnings, as well as when you start or stop working, to Social Security. You must also report your earnings to your employment network.

What if I am unhappy with the employment network or state vocational rehabilitation agency?

All employment networks have a process to resolve the concerns of unhappy clients. If this process isn't successful, you can call the *Ticket to Work* Helpline staff and ask them to resolve your problem informally. If they can't resolve your problem informally, they'll report your problem to us.

If you work with a state vocational rehabilitation agency, they'll give you a description of the services available through the client assistance program. The agency must also give you the opportunity to resolve your grievance through mediation or a fair hearing.

You can also ask the protection and advocacy agency in your state to help you at any stage of the grievance process if you're unhappy with an employment network.

How does taking part in the *Ticket to Work* program affect medical reviews of my disability?

We conduct reviews of your medical condition to see if you still qualify for disability benefits. If we find that you're no longer disabled, we may stop your benefits.

If you're taking part in the *Ticket to Work* program, and making timely progress in your return to work plan, **we won't conduct a review of your medical**

condition. You'll get more information about these requirements after you sign a plan with an employment network or state vocational rehabilitation agency.

Do I have to take part in the program?

No, the *Ticket to Work* program is voluntary. If you can't work, or have no interest in the program, you don't have to take part. If you decide not to take part in the program, it will not affect your disability benefits. If you change your mind and decide to take part in the program, contact the *Ticket to Work* Helpline.

Where can I get more information or advice?

Local state protection and advocacy services can provide information and advice about the *Ticket to Work* program. And they can help you with any problems you have with the employment plan you develop with the employment network.

The agencies can also give you information and advice about vocational rehabilitation and employment services, and help you select an employment network. Additionally, these agencies can tell you how your work may affect your benefits.

Other work incentives

In addition to the *Ticket to Work* program, Social Security has other special rules called “work incentives” that serve as a bridge between disability benefits and financial independence.

These work incentives include:

- Some cash benefits while you work;
- Medicare or Medicaid while you work;
- Help with extra work expenses you may have because of your disability;
- Expedited reinstatement; and
- Plan to achieve self-support (PASS).

You can find more information about Social Security and SSI work incentives by contacting us and asking for *Working While Disabled — How We Can Help* (Publication No. 05-10095).

Other Social Security programs and resources

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) projects

These organizations support disability beneficiaries and help them make wise choices about work. WIPA programs help working beneficiaries to make successful transitions to financial independence and to build economically secure futures.

These projects have Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWICs) who offer counseling and information about how work affects disability benefits.

CWICs work with beneficiaries to gather accurate information. They also guide beneficiaries as they return to work or enter the work world for the first time.

Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS)

There are 57 PABSS nationwide. They are part of each state's Protection and Advocacy program. Attorneys and advocates at these projects give support and guidance on disability beneficiary rights. When necessary, they'll offer free legal services, including representation. The PABSS goal is to remove barriers preventing you from working so employment can be a real option.

The WIPAs and PABSS work together closely and are excellent resources.

For information on special rules for blind persons, ask for *If You Are Blind Or Have Low Vision — How We Can Help* (Publication No. 05-10052).

How organizations can become an employment network (EN)

To find out more about becoming an employment network (EN), visit www.yourtickettowork.com. You can also contact Social Security's Employment Network Service Branch toll-free at **1-866-584-5180** (TTY **1-866-584-5181**). Or, you can email them at ENService@ssa.gov.

Contacting Social Security

There are several ways to contact Social Security, including online, by phone, and in person. We're here to answer your questions and to serve you. For more than 80 years, Social Security has helped secure today and tomorrow by providing benefits and financial protection for millions of people throughout their life's journey.

Visit our website

The most convenient way to conduct Social Security business from anywhere at any time, is to visit **www.socialsecurity.gov**. There, you can:

- Create a *my* Social Security account to review your *Social Security Statement*, verify your earnings, print a benefit verification letter, change your direct deposit information, request a replacement Medicare card, get a replacement SSA-1099/1042S, and more;
- Apply for Extra Help with Medicare prescription drug plan costs;
- Apply for retirement, disability, and Medicare benefits;
- Find copies of our publications;
- Get answers to frequently asked questions; and
- So much more!

Call us

If you don't have access to the internet, we offer many automated services by telephone, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** or at our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**, if you're deaf or hard of hearing.

If you need to speak to a person, we can answer your calls from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. We ask for your patience during busy periods since you may experience a higher than usual rate of busy signals and longer hold times to speak to us. We look forward to serving you.

Notes

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Notes



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