



Social Security

Your Ticket  
To Work

[www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)

## Contacting Social Security

### Visit our website

Our website, [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov), is a valuable resource for information about all of Social Security's programs. At our website, you also can:

- Apply for retirement, disability, and Medicare benefits;
- Review your *Social Security Statement*;
- Get the address of your local Social Security office;
- Ask for a replacement Medicare card; and
- Find copies of our publications.

### Call our toll-free number

In addition to using our website, you can call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213**. We treat all calls confidentially. We can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. Generally, you'll have a shorter wait time if you call during the week after Tuesday. We can provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day. (You can use our automated response system to tell us a new address or request a replacement Medicare card.) If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you may call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**.

We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some telephone calls.

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Several million disabled and blind Americans receive monthly Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments. Some receive both. Many also have help from Medicare or Medicaid in paying medical bills. The impact of these programs in meeting people's needs is significant. However, many people with disabilities want to work. To help them, Social Security has a variety of work incentives, including the Ticket to Work program.

Some of the work incentives allow you to keep your cash benefits and medical coverage while you transition to the work place. And, if you find that you cannot work, it is easy to start your payments again.

## Your Ticket to Work

If you are an adult age 18 through 64 and get disability benefits, you qualify for Ticket to Work. This booklet answers questions about the program. It also tells you where to go if you have other questions and how to get additional help. If you have questions not answered here, call the Ticket Helpline, at **1-866-968-7842**, toll-free (TTY **1-866-833-2967**).

You can use the Ticket 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.

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

## How the program works

When you take part in the Ticket program, you can get help finding a job, vocational rehabilitation or other assistance. Employment networks 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 and state vocational rehabilitation agencies.

## How do I get started?

If you are interested in using the Ticket program to go to work or get vocational services, call the Ticket Helpline, at **1-866-968-7842**, toll-free (TTY **1-866-833-2967**). The Ticket Helpline's staff can answer most of your questions about the

Ticket program. It also can give you the names, addresses and telephone numbers of employment networks or the state vocational rehabilitation agency in your area. You also can get this information on the Internet at ***www.choosework.net*** by selecting “Find 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 program gives you the opportunity to choose from a variety of employment networks.

An employment network may be a single organization that provides all of the services you need or it can be a group of providers. The employment network you choose also may work with others who are not 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 are free to talk with as many employment networks as you want before choosing. You can see a profile for each employment network at ***www.choosework.net*** by going to “Find Help” and selecting “EN 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?**

You can expect staff members to ask questions about your disability, your work history and other subjects. This is necessary so they can decide if they can help. Feel free to ask any 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 are interested in working with them. They will give you detailed information to help you decide if you are interested in employment support to go to work.

## **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 are not working with employment networks. We give this information to employment networks and state vocational rehabilitation agencies.

## **What if I do not want to be contacted?**

If you do not want to be contacted, call the Ticket Helpline and ask them to remove your name from the list. Even if you are not on the list, you still can participate in the Ticket program.

## **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. Even after you have agreed to work with an employment network or state vocational rehabilitation agency and signed a plan, you can still change your mind and go to another network or state vocational rehabilitation 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 is right for you. The plan will state your goals for the type of work you want to do, and may include the amount of money you want to earn. The plan also will 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 go to another employment network if you are not satisfied with the services you get; and
- Information on the availability of services and help in resolving disputes through the state protection and advocacy system. Find more information about these services on page 12.

If you and your state vocational rehabilitation agency agree to work together and the state determines you are eligible, 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 will have to 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 cannot work together, one of you must let Social Security know by

contacting the Ticket Helpline. You cannot work with another employment network without signing a new plan with the new employment network.

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

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

There are several steps you can take if you are having a problem with your employment network. We require all employment networks to have a process to deal with situations in which clients are unhappy with them. If this process is not successful, you can call the Ticket Helpline staff and ask them to resolve your problem informally. If they cannot resolve your problem informally, they will report your problem to us.

If you work with a state vocational rehabilitation agency, the state agency must give you a description of the services available through the client assistance program. It also must give

you the opportunity to resolve your grievance through mediation or an impartial hearing.

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

## **How does participating in the Ticket program affect medical reviews of my disability?**

We ordinarily review your medical condition from time to time to see if you are still disabled. If we find that you are no longer disabled, we may stop your benefits.

If you are participating in the Ticket program and making timely progress pursuing your return to work plan, **we will not conduct a review of your medical condition.** We will send you more information about these requirements after you finalize and sign a plan with an employment network or state vocational rehabilitation agency.

## **Do I have to take part in the program?**

No, the Ticket program is voluntary. If you decide that you are not interested, or that you are not able to work, you do not have to take part. If you decide not to take part in the program, it will have no effect on your

disability benefits. If you change your mind and decide to take part in the program, contact the Ticket Helpline.

## **Where can I get more information or advice?**

Local State Protection and Advocacy Services can provide information and advice about the Ticket program. You should ask the Ticket Helpline's staff to help you contact your local state agency if you have a disagreement with your employment network that you can't settle.

These state agencies can help you with complaints about an employment network or other provider that is helping you. And they can help you with any problems you have with the employment plan you develop with the employment network.

The agencies also can give you information and advice about vocational rehabilitation and employment services. This includes helping 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 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:

- Cash benefits while you work;
- Medicare or Medicaid while you work; and
- Help with any extra work expenses you may have as a result of your disability.

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 are community-based organizations that support and guide disability beneficiaries. This helps disability beneficiaries make informed choices about work. WIPA supports working beneficiaries make successful transitions to financial independence and helps them build economically secure futures.

Each of the nation's 95 WIPA projects employs Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWICs) who offer in-depth counseling and information about benefits and the effect of employment on those benefits. CWICs work with beneficiaries to gather accurate and pertinent information. They also

guide beneficiaries as they return to work or enter the work world for the first time.

A second program called the Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) is part of each state's Protection and Advocacy program. There are 57 PABSS nationwide. Attorneys and advocates who work for the PABSS projects provide support, guidance and information on disability beneficiary rights. When necessary, they will 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 closely together and are excellent community resources.

*Notes*

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