

Melanie Porter



Senior Advisor, Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support Social Security Administration

Melanie Porter joined SSA in 2016. She is the Senior Advisor to the Division Director of the Office of Beneficiary Outreach and Employment Support within the ORDES. Melanie serves as the Contracting Officer's Representative for the Ticket to Work, Ticket Program Manager Contract. In this role, Melanie oversees the daily operations for all Ticket program activities, and works closely with executive management providing strategic input on policy and other factors affecting the overall management of the Ticket to Work program.

From 2004 through 2016, Melanie worked at Booz Allen Hamilton and managed a number of technology, policy, process improvement, and performance management projects for SSA. This included initiatives within the Office of Systems, the Office of Disability Policy, the Office of Disability Determination, the Disability Determination Services, and the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review. In 2010, Melanie took on the role of Project Director for the Beneficiary Access & Support Services contract, where she oversaw beneficiary outreach, operations for the Ticket to Work Help line, and the development of the www.choosework.net website. Throughout her tenure, Melanie also served as the Co-Chair and Strategic Advisor for Booz Allen's internal diverseABILITY forum, where she helped promote disability awareness within the community.

Prior to joining Booz Allen, Melanie was the Quality Assurance Coordinator and one of the lead training specialists at Maximus, providing training and ensuring quality for all Ticket to Work call center representatives. Melanie holds an M.S. degree in Behavior Analysis from the University of North Texas, a B.S. degree in Psychology from Western Michigan University, and is a certified Project Management Professional. In 2014, Melanie was named one of the Careers and the Disabled Magazine's Top Ten Employees of the Year and was a recipient of the Women of Color in Technology All Star Award in 2011.

Reneé P. Clarke, Ph.D.



***Social Science Research Analyst, Office of Research, Demonstration,
and Employment Support
Social Security Administration***

Reneé Clarke is a Social Science Research Analyst in the Office of Beneficiary Outreach and Employment Support within ORDES. Until recently, Reneé oversaw the management of the Ticket to Work program as the Contracting Officer's Representative. In addition, in her role on the Quality Assurance team, Reneé has investigated contractor propriety, developed quality/evaluation metrics, rewritten procedural manuals, and assisted with the development of Ticket to Work program policies, procedures, processes, and research initiatives.

Reneé came to SSA in 2014 from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) where she worked for seven years, most of which were spent as an intern while she finished her doctorate. While at CMS, Renee worked as a Contracting Officer's Representative in Program Integrity overseeing contractors who investigate fraud, waste, and abuse of the Medicare trust fund. Reneé also worked for the Division of Research to edit publication materials, analyze data, compose reports, and write helpful fact-sheets about various Medicare audiences (e.g., caregivers, Medicare and Medicaid dual eligible, etc.). Reneé received two Special Achievement Awards at CMS for dedication to program integrity and contract management, and for efforts towards improving the system that produced fraud alerts. Reneé also received an Employee of the Month award for demonstrating exemplary performance in implementing contractor evaluation processes.

Reneé holds a Bachelor's in Psychology from the University of Connecticut and a Ph.D. in Social Psychology from Howard University.

Joseph M. Ashley, Rh.D., CRC



***Assistant Commissioner, Grants & Special Programs
Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services***

Joseph M. Ashley, Rh.D., CRC, serves as the Assistant Commissioner for Grants and Special Programs and has worked in this capacity since 2000. Joseph is responsible for identifying and securing grants to support the employment choices for individuals with disabilities. He also has responsibility for Social Security Cost Reimbursement and Ticket to Work programs as well as the agency's implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA).

Joseph has helped create a Partnership Plus network with vocational rehabilitation (VR) providers that includes a Work Incentives and Benefits Counseling service. He currently is the agency representative on the Virginia State Career Pathways Workgroup and on the WIOA Implementation team. He has served as co-director on a number of Department of Labor grants, such as the Disability Employment Initiative Rounds I and IV that focuses on increasing the capacity of the workforce system to support workforce services for individuals with disabilities. He also serves as the co-principal investigator on the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research funded University of Richmond's Vocational Rehabilitation Return on Investment grant. The grant works with eight state VR agencies to create the return on investment model for the VR program. He is also currently the Director for Virginia's Rehabilitation Services Administration Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities Grant Project. He serves on the Project Steering Committee for the Department of Labor Workforce Innovation-funded Virginia Financial Success Network grant project.

Judy Sanderson, M.Ed,



***Director, Director of Employment Services
Granite State Independent Living, New Hampshire.***

Judy has worked in employment services for individuals with disabilities for over 30 years. Currently, she supervises the Enhanced Work Incentives Counseling (EWIC) portion of our Benefit Offset National Demonstration (BOND) site, employment services for those with developmental disabilities, services as a vendor for Vocational Rehabilitation, and oversees all Ticket to Work activities. Granite State Independent Living has been an employment network since 2008 and a National Employment Network Association (NENA) member since 2010. She serves on a number of NENA committees including Operations, and is Co-Chair of the Legislative/Policy Committee and Marketing and Outreach Committee. In addition, she is President of the New Hampshire Rehabilitation Association and Secretary of the state-wide Private Provider Network and serves on the state-wide Employment Leadership Awards Committee that formally recognizes employers with exemplary hiring practices around people with disabilities. Judy is an Enhanced Work Incentive Counselor as well as Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators and Association of People Supporting Employment Certified.

Cheryl Bates-Harris



Senior Disability Advocacy Specialist National Disability Rights Network

Cheryl Bates-Harris is a Senior Disability Advocacy Specialist for the Training and Advocacy Support Center of the National Disability Rights Network where she has 21 years experience and expertise working with people with disabilities. She has an in-depth knowledge of cross-disability issues and focuses on employment issues of people with disabilities, including Vocational Rehabilitation, Social Security and Return to Work (PABSS), and other work programs that impact people with disabilities, including Department of Labor OneStops. Since the passage of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Improvement Act (TWWIIA), Cheryl has conducted national training on TWWIIA and Vocational Rehabilitation Services and has conducted extensive training on the intersection issues of the Ticket to Work with state vocational rehab services. President Bush appointed her to the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Advisory panel in 2004. A prime impetus behind Segregated and Exploited; the Failure of the Developmental Disabilities System to Provide Meaningful Work, she provides training and technical assistance to the Protection and Advocacy and Client Assistance Programs nationwide and has been an invited speaker at many national conferences.

MJ Willard, Ed.D



***Executive Director
National Telecommuting Institute***

MJ Willard has spent her career pioneering methods of increasing the independence of people with severe disabilities. After earning a doctorate in Educational Psychology, in 1981 she founded Helping Hands, a nonprofit that grew out of her research in training capuchin monkeys to serve as aides for quadriplegics. Helping Hands trains and places these service animals with quadriplegics. MJ left there in 1995 to found another nonprofit, National Telecommuting Institute (NTI), where she serves as Executive Director. NTI places approximately 500 people with disabilities in home-based call centers or tech support jobs each year.

MJ also founded TakeCharge, the first organization approved as an Employment Network under the Ticket to Work program in 2001. TakeCharge operates under the Client Directed Services model in which it distributes most of the ticket payments to beneficiaries as work support payments. She is currently affiliated with four Employment Networks. Collectively they hold 4,800 Tickets.

Andraéa LaVant



Inclusion Senior Specialist Girl Scouts Nation's Capital

Andraéa LaVant serves as the Inclusion Senior Specialist at Girl Scouts Nation's Capital in Washington, DC, where she is responsible for increasing and supporting the membership of girls and adults of all abilities and fostering a culture of inclusion among volunteers, staff, and girls within the Council and across the United States.

As a disability advocate, Andraéa has prompted change for people with disabilities across the globe. She assisted the development and launch of the National African American History Month Program: Civil Rights in America, hosted by the White House Office of Public Engagement; spoke at President Obama's Disability Roundtable; and served as delegate in the United States/Jordan Young Women with Disabilities Leadership Exchange Program.

Andraéa served at the Center for Workforce Development coordinating the operations of training centers to prepare young people with disabilities transition from school to employment. Andraéa's other experiences include working for Youth Service America, a national non-profit that strives to improve communities by increasing young people to serve in substantive roles.

In addition to her inclusion-focused work, Andraéa is also an emerging fashion blogger and designer. Under her blog Infynite Expression (housed on www.andraealavant.com), Andraéa prompts people of all abilities to embrace their uniqueness and enhance their style, ultimately reminding them that "when it comes to self-expression, the choices are INFYNITE."

Andraéa studied Public Relations at Middle Tennessee State University.