



Securing today
and tomorrow

Your Ticket to Work

SSA.gov





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Introduction

Millions of Americans with disabilities receive monthly Social Security benefits, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments, or both. They may also have help from Medicare or Medicaid to pay medical bills. Many people with disabilities, however, want to work. To help them, Social Security has work incentives, including the *Ticket to Work (Ticket)* program.

Some work incentives allow you to keep some Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits or SSI, and your Medicaid or Medicare, while you transition to the workplace. And, if you find that you can't work because of your medical condition, you may be eligible for benefits to start again without filing a new application.

Your Ticket to Work

If you are an adult age 18 through 64, and you get disability benefits, you may be eligible for the *Ticket* program. You can use this program to get the services and support you need to go to work. 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* Help Line toll-free at **1-866-968-7842 (TTY 1-866-833-2967)**.

See the following sections for help in working with an Employment Network, often called an “EN.”

The *Ticket* program helps you get vocational rehabilitation, training, job search assistance, ongoing support, and other employment support services free of charge.

How the program works

When you take part in the *Ticket* program, ENs and state vocational rehabilitation agencies provide employment support services at no cost to help you find and keep a job. ENs may be public, private, or government entities that have agreed to work with Social Security to provide employment services and other supports to eligible beneficiaries with disabilities. Before you decide to reach out to an EN, carefully select the one you think can best help you reach your employment goal. You’re free to contact as many ENs as you want before selecting one. Keep in mind that the EN will also have a chance to decide if their services are a good fit for your goals.

How to Find an Employment Network (EN)?

To find an EN, select the “Find Help” tab and then either “Guided Search” or “Direct Search” on www.choosework.ssa.gov. The “Guided Search” option asks about your work history and specific needs. It

will supply a list of providers based on the answers you provided. The “Direct Search” option will allow you to manually search for a provider. Entering a ZIP code will filter the results to display only the providers in your area (including national ENs). You can also filter the results based on other options such as type of provider, virtual or in-person services, and services provided.

How do I start?

If you are interested in using the *Ticket* program, you can find information online at **www.choosework.ssa.gov** by selecting the “Find Help” tab. You can also get job search assistance or other vocational services by calling the *Ticket to Work* Help Line toll-free at **1-866-968-7842** (TTY **1-866-833-2967**) from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET. The *Ticket* program’s Help Line’s staff can answer most of your questions about the program. When you call, representatives can also send you lists of ENs and the state vocational rehabilitation agency or One-Stop Career Center in your area.

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are answers to several common questions about working with ENs and state vocational rehabilitation agencies in the *Ticket* program.

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

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 EN 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 will give you details to help you decide if you're interested in help to find employment.

How will an EN or state vocational rehabilitation agency know that I am eligible?

We keep a record of people who are eligible for the program and who are not already working with ENs. We give this information to ENs 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* Help Line, 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 EN or state vocational rehabilitation agency?

No, you and an EN or state vocational rehabilitation agency must choose to work together. If you can't agree to work together, you should contact another EN. If you sign a plan with an EN or state vocational rehabilitation agency, you can still change your mind and go to another EN. If you decide to work with your state vocational rehabilitation agency, it may also be possible to receive services from another state vocational rehabilitation agency in your region. The services you receive from both agencies must be different.

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

If you opt to work with an EN, you and the EN will work together to develop an employment plan that is 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 EN 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 EN if you are not satisfied with the services you get.
- Information on available services and help resolving disputes through the state protection and advocacy

system. Find more information about Protection and Advocacy services at choosework.ssa.gov/about/meet-your-employment-team/index.html#PABSS.

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 EN or state vocational rehabilitation agency must sign the plan before you can start getting services. The EN 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 EN, you agree to get employment support from that EN. If you or the EN decides you can't work together, one of you must contact the *Ticket to Work* Help Line to let Social Security know. You can't work with another EN without signing a new plan with them.

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

You are still responsible for promptly reporting any earnings, as well as when you start or stop working, to Social Security. You must also report your earnings to your EN.

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

All ENs have a process to resolve the concerns of unhappy clients. If this process isn't successful, you can call the *Ticket to Work* Help Line staff and ask them to assist in resolving your problem informally. If they can't resolve your problem informally, they will report your problem to us.

If you work with a state vocational rehabilitation agency, they will give you a description of the services available through their Client Assistance Program. The state vocational rehabilitation agency must also give you the opportunity to resolve your grievance through mediation or a fair hearing.

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

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

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

However, if you're taking part in the *Ticket* program and making timely progress in your employment 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 EN or state vocational rehabilitation agency.

Do I have to take part in the program?

No, the *Ticket* program is free and 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* Help Line.

Where can I get more information or advice?

Local state protection and advocacy services can provide information and advice about the *Ticket* program. They can also help you with any problems you have with the employment plan you develop with the EN.

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

If your circumstances make paying for prescription medications difficult, visit **www.healthcare.gov** to find out if you may be eligible for help.

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. The work incentives available to you depend on the type of disability benefits you receive. Some work incentives include:

- Continued benefit payments while you work.
- Medicare continuation or Medicaid coverage while you work.
- Impairment-related work expenses (IRWE) exclusions. When determining your gross earnings, we deduct certain out-of-pocket expenses for items or services directly related to helping you work with a disabling condition.
- Expedited reinstatement to benefits if you are unable to work at a substantial level due to your disabling condition.

You can find more information about work incentives in the publication *Working While Disabled — How We Can Help* (Publication No. 05-10095) and the *Red Book – A Guide to Work Incentives and Employment Supports* (Publication No. 64-030).

Other Social Security programs and resources

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) projects

WIPA organizations help eligible disability beneficiaries make informed choices about work. WIPA programs help working beneficiaries to make successful transitions to financial independence and to build economically secure futures.

These organizations are staffed with Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWICs) who offer counseling and information about how work affects disability benefits.

CWICs work with beneficiaries to gather accurate information about their benefits, earnings, and work expenses. 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 that are part of a state's Protection and Advocacy program. Attorneys and advocates at these programs give support and guidance 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.

For information on special rules for blind persons, there is *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 EN, visit **yourtickettowork.ssa.gov**. You can also contact Social Security's Employment Network Service Branch by email at **ENService@ssa.gov**.

Contacting Us

There are several ways to contact us, such as online, by phone, and in person (by appointment). We're here to answer your questions and to serve you. For nearly 90 years, we have 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 business with us is online at **www.ssa.gov**. You can accomplish a lot.

- Apply for *Extra Help* with Medicare prescription drug plan costs.
- Apply for most types of benefits.
- Start or complete your request for an original or replacement Social Security card.
- Find copies of our publications.
- Get answers to frequently asked questions.

When you create a personal *my* Social Security account, you can do even more.

- Review your *Social Security Statement*.
- Verify your earnings.
- Get estimates of future benefits.
- Print a benefit verification letter.
- Change your direct deposit information (Social Security beneficiaries only).
- Get a replacement SSA-1099/1042S.

If you live outside the United States, visit [**www.ssa.gov/foreign**](http://www.ssa.gov/foreign) to access our online services.

Call us

If you cannot use our online services, we can help you by phone when you call our National toll-free 800 Number. We can also make a video, phone, or in-person appointment for you, if needed. We provide free interpreter services upon request.

You can call us at **1-800-772-1213** — or at our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**, if you're deaf or hard of hearing — between 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. For quicker access to a representative, try calling early in the day (between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. local time) or later in the day. **We are less busy later in the week (Wednesday to Friday) and later in the month.** We also offer many automated phone services, available 24 hours a day, so you may not need to speak with a representative.

If you have documents we need, they must be original or copies that are certified by the issuing agency.

Notes



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