

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 6-11
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TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE ADMINISTRATORS
STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARD DIRECTORS
ONE-STOP CENTER SYSTEM MANAGERS

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SUBJECT: Increasing the Public Workforce Development System's Participation
In The Ticket to Work (TTW) Program for Disability Beneficiaries

1. **Purpose.** To provide updated information to the state workforce agencies, local workforce investment boards (LWIBs), and One-Stop Career Centers on the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program, including changes to the Social Security Administration's (SSA's) policies for Employment Networks (ENs).
2. **References.** Training and Employment Notice (TEN) No. 6-02, January 6, 2003, "The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIA) and Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program Implementation," Training and Employment Notice No. 20-07, December 12, 2007, "Ticket to Work Program-Employment Networks."
3. **Background.** The U.S. Department of Labor (the Department) has initiated several efforts to expand the capacity of the public workforce system to serve persons with disabilities, including those receiving Social Security disability benefits, and promote the employment of persons with disabilities. The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIA), Public Law 106-170, was enacted in 1999 to expand employment opportunities of Social Security disability beneficiaries receiving Social Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits by providing incentives and options for them to enter or re-enter the world of work. The Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program (The Ticket to Work Program) is the centerpiece of the TWWIA. The Ticket to Work Program is an outcome-based funding mechanism for meeting the needs of job seekers with

**EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION
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disabilities. Approximately 10 million people receive SSDI and/or SSI benefits. The Ticket Program is intended to provide SSI disability and SSDI beneficiaries with greater choices in obtaining employment, vocational rehabilitation, or other support services from public and private providers through the establishment of ENs. This voluntary program will enable these beneficiaries, with the assistance of ENs, to obtain, regain, or maintain employment and to reduce their dependency on cash assistance.

An EN is an entity that is approved by the SSA to serve individuals under the Ticket to Work Program. Once qualified by Social Security, an EN can accept a Ticket from any individual who qualifies for the Ticket to Work Program. All individuals on SSDI and SSI between the ages of 18 and 64 qualify for the Ticket Program. The individual has complete choice regarding which EN he/she assigns his/her Ticket, and the EN has complete choice regarding which Tickets to accept. When an individual becomes employed at specified earning levels, the EN generates a series of payments from SSA on behalf of that individual. Per the Ticket to Work regulations, workforce development systems are automatically assumed to be qualified as ENs, although they must still complete the application process. The EN application process allows an entity to become a qualified vendor, but does not obligate the entity to provide services (i.e., it is not a contract for services). It simply allows the entity to serve individuals under the Ticket Program, if the entity so chooses.

Under the Ticket Program a beneficiary may obtain rehabilitation and employment services from any EN the beneficiary selects, as long as the EN agrees to accept that person's Ticket assignment. The EN, in conjunction with the beneficiary, establishes an Individual Work Plan and agrees to provide the employment support necessary to help the beneficiary achieve work with eventual earnings at the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level. To be eligible for disability benefits, a person must be unable to engage in SGA. A person who is earning more than a certain monthly amount (net of impairment-related work expenses) is ordinarily considered to be engaging in SGA. The amount of monthly earnings considered as SGA depends on the nature of a person's disability. SGA amounts generally increase with increases in the national average wage index. The monthly SGA amount for individuals who are blind for 2011 is \$1,640. For individuals who are disabled, but not blind, the monthly SGA amount for 2011 is \$1,000. When the beneficiary achieves certain work-related milestones and outcomes, the EN becomes eligible for payment from the SSA. ENs can be a single entity, a partnership, or alliance of entities (public and/or private), or a consortium of organizations collaborating to combine resources to serve Ticket holders.

4. State Workforce Agencies, One Stop Career Centers, and LWIBs as ENs.

The workforce development system is currently serving thousands of Social Security disability beneficiaries each year and could be participating in and reaping the benefits of the Ticket Program by becoming ENs.¹ This Program is a potential

¹ *Use of One-Stops by Social Security Disability Beneficiaries in Four States*

funding source for any entity that provides return-to-work services to Social Security disability beneficiaries. There are a variety of options available to the public workforce system in determining the appropriate entity to serve as an EN, i.e., what entity will have the actual contract with SSA as a qualified EN. Given the diversity of the One-Stop Career Centers and the state and local workforce systems throughout the country, and the need for the One-Stop system to have flexibility in terms of responsiveness to state and local needs, it is important that a broad range of entities consider becoming ENs. These entities include: One-Stop operators, LWIBs, state workforce agencies, etc. Currently the full range of these types of entities are serving as ENs in a way that allows One-Stop Career Centers to receive funds from SSA for providing services to Ticket to Work customers.

The comprehensive nature of the One-Stop Career Center system makes it a natural service provider as an EN. One-Stop Career Centers should consider becoming ENs because these organizations are experienced employment support providers that can help Social Security disability beneficiaries return to work. Participation as an EN also provides an additional revenue source to the One-Stop delivery system.

In states and/or local areas where there is a multitude of One-Stop Career Center operators, it may be optimal for a LWIB or state entity (e.g. state workforce agency) to serve as the EN, so that the Ticket Program can be operated in a coordinated fashion, possibly in conjunction with other partners. This could also potentially allow for more efficient and streamlined administration of the Ticket Program, and also facilitate the reinvestment of any funds generated within the system. State Workforce Investment Boards have a role in promoting the establishment of statewide ENs.

5. **Changes to SSA's EN Policies and Procedures.** The SSA recently implemented streamlined procedures ("Electronic Process") to facilitate greater participation by the state workforce agencies, One-Stop Career Centers and LWIBs in the Ticket Program. This change reflects SSA's partnership with the Department and the public workforce system. It recognizes that One-Stop Career Centers are already serving Ticket holders in helping them to find employment. The following is an explanation of the process for state workforce agencies, LWIBs and One-Stop Career Centers that become ENs:

- Each month, the EN submits a file of customer Social Security numbers (SSNs). Those SSNs are then matched with the Ticket database and a file returned to the LWIB or One-Stop Career Center showing which individuals are Ticket holders whose Tickets are available for assignment;

Implementing Disability Program Navigator Initiatives, produced by Mathematica Policy Research Inc. for ETA found that One-Stop Career Centers are serving 500,000 to 1 million of individuals who are Ticket eligible and want to work. This report can be found at:

<https://disability.workforce3one.org/view/2001018107873517795/info>.

- After receiving the list, the EN can begin to contact those individuals to explain the advantages of assigning their Ticket to the LWIB or One-Stop Career Center and the potential for ongoing services. For those that agree, the EN develops an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) outlining the Ticket holder's vocational goals. SSA, through its Ticket Program Operations Support Manager, MAXIMUS Inc., will provide templates and guidance for One-Stop Career Center customers who may not have a formal IEP;
 - When the EN submits its next monthly customer file, it will also submit a second file of SSNs for Ticket holders from whom the State Agency, LWIB or One-Stop Career Center has obtained IEPs. The IEP must include the beneficiary's signed acknowledgement that he or she is assigning the Ticket to the EN. Those Tickets will then be automatically assigned to the State Agency, LWIB or One-Stop Career Center; and
 - SSA will monitor the earnings of all assigned Tickets and automatically issue quarterly payments to the LWIB or One-Stop Career Center for Ticket holders generating qualifying earnings.
6. **2011 Payments.** When an individual becomes employed at specific earning levels, the EN qualifies for a series of payments from SSA when the beneficiary achieves certain work-related earnings milestones and these payments continue when the EN assists the beneficiary in sustaining employment. The value of the Ticket, based on 2011 payment rates is approximately \$23,000. The time it takes to receive the incremental payments depends on the consistency of the beneficiary's work. If a beneficiary sustains employment, the payments on an individual ticket will be paid out over the course of four to six years. Payments begin when an individual earns at least \$720 per month. A complete breakdown of EN payments can be found at: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work/envr.html>.
7. **Additional Technical Assistance.** SSA recently launched the new EN Technical Assistance and Support Center (TASC) within the Ticket Program Operations Support Manager, housed at MAXIMUS. The EN TASC was established to address technical assistance needs identified by ENs to provide regional and functional services to deliver improved training, enhanced internal procedures, increase Ticket assignments and payments. Furthermore, the technical assistance and support will aid ENs in attaining new competencies and in meeting performance objectives. ENs can expect to see these changes unfold throughout 2011.

The SSA has just produced three (3) fact sheets that are informative to the public workforce system on the Ticket to Work program, including:

- “*Overview of the Ticket to Work Program Design,*” which includes the benefits of becoming an EN and an EN payment chart;
- “*Ticket to Work Resources of Interest,*” which includes links to a variety of program tools and information on how to apply to become an EN; and
- “*SSA's New Electronic Process,*” which describes the streamlined process to expedite Ticket assignments and payments to the State Agencies, LWIBs, and

One-Stop Career Centers that become ENs.

These fact sheets can be found at:

<https://disability.workforce3one.org/view/2001104537590438700/info>.

In Program Year 2010, the Department awarded \$21,276,575 to nine states under the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) to: 1) improve coordination and collaboration among employment and training and programs implemented at state and local levels, including the Ticket to Work Program; and 2) build effective community partnerships that leverage public and private resources to better serve individuals with disabilities and improve employment outcomes. The Department will be funding a second round of DEI grants in PY 2011. The DEI is jointly funded and administered by the Department's Employment and Training Administration and the Office of Disability Employment Policy.

Training and technical assistance is provided under contract with NDI Consulting, Inc. and its subcontractor, the National Disability Institute. Technical assistance, training, and support are provided to both the DEI grantees and the public workforce system. This support includes serving as a technical resource on the Ticket to Work Program and ENs to the DEI projects, as well as the public workforce system. The goal of these activities is to help expand the workforce development system's capacity to serve as ENs for beneficiaries under the Ticket to Work Program. For additional information, visit the following Web site: <http://dei-ideas.org>.

The Department has also received funds from SSA to support the One-Stop Ticket Success Project. This project provides technical assistance to the public workforce development system to become ENs and expand its capacity to serve Social Security disability beneficiaries. This assistance is provided through a partnership between BCT Partners and the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts-Boston.

Workforce investment systems accepted to participate in this project will receive the following technical assistance:

- An individualized and comprehensive review of current capacity to serve as an EN;
- Development of a business plan that incorporates specific tools and resources to function as an EN;
- Development of mechanisms for identification and outreach to Ticket holders, and streamlined EN payment processes;
- Ongoing on-site and virtual assistance (phone, webinar, email); and
- Access to a peer support network, allowing leadership and staff to discuss problems and solutions with other ENs across the United States.

For additional information contact: BCT Partners at (973) 622-0900 x 117 and/or ICI at (617) 287-4308.

8. **Additional Information on the Ticket to Work Program.** The following resources may be helpful:

- Additional general information on the Ticket to Work Program can be found at: www.ssa.gov/work/aboutticket.html.
- Fact sheets can be found at: www.socialsecurity.gov/work/formsandpubs.html#Materials; and
- The Ticket Estimator can be found at: www.cessi.net/en_estimator
With this tool, One-Stops can calculate the potential revenues from the Ticket Program based on the number of Ticket holders served.

9. **Action Required.** Recipients are requested to distribute this TEN to the state and local workforce investment boards, One-Stop Career Centers and other workforce system partners.

10. **Inquiries.** Questions on this TEN may be directed to Randee Chafkin, Office of Workforce Investment, Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor at (202) 693-2723 or chafkin.randee@dol.gov.