

# OneStops.info

Policy • Implementation • Research

*Access for All in Workforce Development*

Issue 2 • August 2002

## One-Stop Career Centers and the New Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program

### Table of Contents

Overview of Major Provisions of the Ticket to Work Program .....	2,3
Overview of Payment Systems .....	4,5
Policy Tradeoffs/Considerations .....	6
Options for Participation in the Ticket to Work Program .....	7,8
Overview of Social Security Disability Programs .....	9
Suggestions for Moving Forward ....	10
Glossary .....	11
Resources .....	12

Under the Workforce Investment Act, One-Stop Career Centers must be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. Under the One-Stop service delivery system, One-Stop “partners,” including State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies (State VR agencies) collaborate to create a seamless system of service delivery that will enhance access to services and supports and improve long-term employment outcomes for individuals receiving assistance, including individuals with disabilities.

In December 2001, the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration (SSA) published in the Federal Register final regulations implementing the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program (Ticket to Work program). The regulations are effective as of January 28, 2002.

The purpose of the Ticket to Work program is to expand the universe of service providers to include, among others, One-Stop Career Centers. The expansion of service providers will enhance the range of choices available to Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) recipients and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who are seeking employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, and other support services to assist them in finding, entering, and retaining self-supporting employment.

In a nutshell, the Ticket to Work program offers One-Stop Career Centers an additional potential funding source to meet the needs of customers with disabilities for long-term successful employment. However, it is important to note that One-Stop Career Centers and other service providers get paid by SSA a specified amount only when individuals with disabilities are no longer entitled to SSI or SSDI cash benefits because of work or earnings.

The purpose of this edition of OneStops.info is twofold. First, it provides an overview of the major provisions in the final regulations implementing the Ticket to Work program. [A comprehensive description of the final regulations is set out in a separate Policy Brief from the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on State Systems at the Institute for Community Inclusion entitled Final Regulations Implementing the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program (The Ticket to Work Program), Volume 4, Number 1, March 2002.] Second, it describes the policy tradeoffs and other factors a One-Stop Career Center may want to consider before determining whether and how to get involved in this new program.



The National Center on Workforce and Disability is a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston, and funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor.



**INFORMATION ON DEMAND**

**No Question Too Basic. No Question Too Tough.**

**1-888-886-9898 | [www.onestops.info](http://www.onestops.info)**

### **What is the purpose of the Ticket to Work program? ■**

The purpose of the Ticket to Work program is to expand the universe of service providers and thereby enhance the range of choices available to SSDI and SSI beneficiaries who are disabled or blind to assist them in finding, entering, and retaining self-supporting employment. Expanded opportunities for these individuals will also increase the likelihood that they will reduce or eliminate their dependency on SSDI and SSI cash benefits.

### **Is the Ticket to Work program in effect in my state? ■**

The new Ticket to Work program is being phased into operation on a gradual basis at sites selected by the Commissioner of SSA. The first group of states (Phase I) began implementation in February 2002. These states are Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

Phase II will be implemented later in calendar year 2002. Phase II states are Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

Phase III will be implemented in calendar year 2003. Phase III states are Alabama, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Washington, West Virginia, and Wyoming. Phase III also includes Puerto Rico and the Trust Territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands.

### **What is a “Ticket”? ■**

The new Ticket to Work program provides “Tickets” to every individual who meets eligibility criteria established by the Commissioner. A Ticket is a document issued by SSA that provides evidence of the Commissioner’s commitment to make payments of specified amounts to service providers (the technical term is “employment network”) such as One-Stop Career Centers or a State Vocational Rehabilitation agency (State VR agency) to which a SSI or SSDI beneficiary’s Ticket has been assigned.

### **Who is eligible to receive a Ticket? ■**

In general, all SSI and SSDI disability federal cash beneficiaries age 18 through 64 are eligible for a Ticket except beneficiaries whose conditions are expected to improve and who have not had at least one “continuing disability review” (i.e., a review process conducted by SSA to determine whether current SSI disability and SSDI beneficiaries remain disabled under the Social Security Act), beneficiaries who have not attained age 18, and childhood SSI beneficiaries who have attained age 18 but who have not had a redetermination under the adult disability standard (i.e., the disability standard for adults to receive SSI benefits, which is different from the disability standard for children who receive SSI).

### **Is participation in the Ticket to Work program voluntary or mandatory? ■**

Participation in the Ticket to Work program is voluntary. The Ticket may be used to obtain vocational rehabilitation, employment, and other support services. The beneficiary holding a Ticket may assign the Ticket to any employment network (e.g., One-Stop Career Center) of his/her choice that is willing to accept the assignment or to the State VR agency if the disabled beneficiary is eligible to receive State VR services.

### **Can a beneficiary switch employment networks? ■**

Yes. A beneficiary can retrieve the Ticket from the employment network or the State VR agency at any time and can reassign the Ticket to another employment network or the State VR agency if he/she remains eligible for a Ticket. However, an employment network also has the right to discharge a beneficiary from its services at any time if it believes the individual is not making sufficient progress towards employment goals.

### **Who manages the new Ticket to Work program? ■**

The Commissioner of SSA has entered into a contract with a Program Manager that will be responsible for assisting the Commissioner in administering the Ticket to Work program. SSA has selected MAXIMUS, Inc. to serve as the Program Manager for the entire country. The Program Manager's responsibilities include: recruiting and monitoring employment networks, facilitating beneficiary access to employment networks, facilitating payments to employment networks, and resolving disputes among stakeholders. MAXIMUS has developed a website about the Ticket to Work Program: [www.yourtickettowork.com](http://www.yourtickettowork.com).

### **In addition to One-Stop Career Centers, what other entities may become employment networks? ■**

In addition to One-Stop Career Centers, employment networks may include qualified state agencies (including State VR agencies, Medicaid agencies, and agencies serving persons with mental retardation, developmental disabilities, and mental illness), local agencies, public schools, public and private colleges and universities, and private entities (including community rehabilitation providers, employers, and nontraditional providers). An employment network can be a single entity or an association of entities. The employment network can provide services directly or through contract or other arrangement with other entities.

### **Must employment networks meet minimum qualifications? ■**

All employment networks must meet minimum qualifications based on general criteria (e.g., physical and program accessibility) and specific criteria (e.g., licensure or accreditation if applicable, or demonstration of sufficient education or experience to deliver services). Any entity must have applicable certificates, licenses, or other credentials if state law requires such documentation.

### **What are the employment network's responsibilities, including reporting requirements? ■**

The employment network is responsible for coordination and delivery of employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, and other support services. The employment network must report, among other things, information to assist the Program Manager in determining whether an individual is making "timely progress" and information about a beneficiary's work activity and earnings.

The employment network must ensure that services provided under the Ticket to Work program are provided under an appropriate "Individual Work Plan" developed and implemented in partnership with each beneficiary receiving services. Similarly, the State VR agency must ensure that services provided under the Ticket to Work program are provided under an appropriate "Individualized Plan for Employment" (required by Title I of the Rehabilitation Act) developed and implemented in partnership with each beneficiary receiving services.

### When and how does SSA pay an employment network? ■

The Commissioner pays the employment network under one of two systems:

- The outcome payment system; or
- The outcome-milestone payment system.

When responding to the RFP, the employment network chooses which payment system it wishes to be compensated under for all individuals it chooses to serve under the Ticket to Work program. Periodic opportunities will be provided to employment networks to change the payment system they are using.

### Are the amounts of outcome and outcome-milestone payments adjusted annually? ■

Yes. The payment systems will be adjusted annually, based on recalculation of the previous year's national average monthly SSDI or SSI cash benefits for all beneficiaries and annual adjustments in the SGA amount.

### May an employment network use other sources of funding for which an individual may be eligible in combination with funding from the Ticket to Work? ■

Yes. There is nothing in the regulations that prohibits an employment network from supplementing the funding received from the Ticket to Work program with other sources (e.g., WIA Title I funds, training funds, etc.) in order to meet the needs of an individual. However, an employment network may not request or receive compensation for services from the beneficiary. Also, other funding sources would have to allow such blending of funding.

### Outcome Payment System

Under the outcome payment system, an employment network can receive a monthly payment over a period not to exceed 60 months (which do not have to be consecutive) for every month the beneficiary does not receive cash benefits due to work/earnings. The payment rate is based on 40% of the national average monthly SSDI or SSI cash benefit for all beneficiaries.

#### 2002 Outcome Payments - SSDI:

Using calendar year 2002 figures, under the outcome payment system, an employment network could be paid the following amounts for SSDI beneficiaries (including concurrent SSI recipients):

- ▶ \$317 per month,
- ▶ \$3,804 per year, and
- ▶ \$19,020 for a 60-month outcome payment period.

#### 2002 Outcome Payments - SSI:

Using the calendar year 2002 figures, under the outcome payment system, the employment network could be paid the following amounts for SSI recipients:

- ▶ \$191 per month;
- ▶ \$2,292 per year; and
- ▶ \$11,460 for a 60-month outcome payment period.

### Outcome-Milestone Payment System

Under the outcome-milestone payment system, the total amount payable to an employment network is about 85 percent of the total potentially payable under the outcome payment system for the same beneficiary. This total payment consists of two parts—payments for milestones and payments for outcomes.

An employment network can receive payment for up to four milestones. The four milestones an employment network may receive occur after the Ticket is first assigned and the beneficiary starts to work and before the beneficiary attains any outcome payment months or the Ticket terminates:

- ▶ Milestone 1 is met when an individual works for 1 calendar month and has gross earnings from employment (or net earnings from self-employment) for the month that are more than the SGA threshold amount (\$780 per month, \$1,300 per month for individuals who are blind—2002 figure).
- ▶ Milestone 2 is met when an individual works for 3 calendar months out of 12 and has gross earnings from employment (or net earnings from self-employment) for each of the 3 months that are more than the SGA threshold amount.
- ▶ Milestone 3 is met when an individual works for 7 calendar months out of 12 and has gross earnings from employment (or net earnings from self-employment) for each of the 7 months that are more than the SGA threshold amount.
- ▶ Milestone 4 is met when an individual works for 12 calendar months out of 15 and has gross earnings from employment (or net earnings from self-employment) for each of the 12 months that are more than the SGA threshold amount.

If an employment network receives milestone payments with respect to a Ticket, each outcome payment it receives will be reduced by an amount equal to 1/60 of the milestone payments received, rounded to the nearest cent.

#### **2002 Outcome-Milestone Payments - SSDI:**

Using calendar year 2002 figures, and assuming that once an individual begins working he/she will attain all four milestones in one year and then the 60 outcome payment months during the next five years, an employment network could receive the following payments for SSDI beneficiaries (including concurrent SSI recipients):

- ▶▶ Milestone 1: \$269;
- ▶▶ Milestone 2: \$538;
- ▶▶ Milestone 3: \$1,077;
- ▶▶ Milestone 4: \$1,346; and
- ▶▶ 60 outcome payments: \$215.17 per month (i.e., \$269 less 1/60 of the total milestone payments, rounded to the nearest cent).

Thus, in year one, the total milestone payments would equal \$3,230. Then, in each of the following 5 years, the outcome payments would equal \$2,582.04, for a 5-year total of \$12,910.20. Adding the milestone and outcome payments together, the total payment would be \$16,140.20 over 6 years.

#### **2002 Outcome-Milestone Payments - SSI:**

Using calendar year 2002 figures, and assuming that once an individual begins working he/she will attain all four milestones in one year and then 60 outcome payment months during the next five years, an employment network could receive the following payments for SSI only beneficiaries:

- ▶▶ Milestone 1: \$162;
- ▶▶ Milestone 2: \$324;
- ▶▶ Milestone 3: \$648;
- ▶▶ Milestone 4: \$811; and
- ▶▶ 60 outcome payments: \$129.58 per month (i.e., \$162 less than 1-60 of the total milestone payments, rounded to the nearest cent).

Thus, in year one, the total milestone payments would equal \$1,945. Then, in each of the following 5 years, the outcome payments would equal \$1,554.96, for a 5-year total of \$7,774.80. Adding the milestone and outcome payments together, the total payment would be \$9,719.80 over 6 years.

#### **Do the 60 outcome payments need to be consecutive months? ■**

No. The 60 outcomes payments do not have to occur consecutively, and the individual work requirements in the Ticket regulations could result in the 60 outcome payments being spread out over a period considerably longer than 5 years. However, bear in mind that the employment network will only receive outcome payments during those months when the individual does not receive a check from SSA. Therefore, there is substantial incentive for the employment network to support the individual to maintain employment at a sufficient earnings level.

#### **How much does an individual have to earn in order for his/her monthly cash benefits to equal zero? ■**

For an individual receiving SSDI, cash benefits equal zero when his/her monthly earnings exceed SGA, which for 2002 is \$780 (\$1,300 for blind individuals). For individuals receiving SSI based on disability or blindness the amount will vary depending on their monthly SSI payment, but for the calendar year 2002, the average amount is \$1,040 per month.

#### **How are State VR agencies treated under the Ticket to Work program? ■**

Unless a payment has previously been made with respect to a Ticket, a State VR agency may choose to serve a beneficiary with a Ticket as an employment network or under the cost-reimbursement payment system.

- When a State VR agency opts to serve a beneficiary with a Ticket as an employment network, it will be paid under its elected employment network payment system.
- When a State VR agency elects to serve a beneficiary with a Ticket under the cost-reimbursement payment system, it will be paid under the payment rules in effect prior to the enactment of TWWIIA. Under these rules, SSA reimburses State VR agencies for the costs of vocational rehabilitation services provided to SSDI and SSI beneficiaries with a single payment after the beneficiary performs SGA for a continuous period of at least nine months.



Set out below are some policy tradeoffs and other factors a One-Stop Career Center may want to consider before determining whether and how to get involved in the Ticket to Work program.

### 1. Essential Elements for Success under the Ticket Program ■

To successfully serve individuals under the Ticket to Work program, three elements are essential:

1. The ability to place an individual into employment resulting in earnings at a level that is high enough to ensure that SSDI and SSI cash benefits are no longer payable to the individual.
2. The ability to provide sufficient services and supports to ensure that the individual maintains earnings, since employment networks will only receive outcome payments during those months when a beneficiary's cash payment is zero.
3. The ability to provide the Program Manager documentation of an individual's monthly earnings in a timely and efficient manner.

### 2. Factors to Consider ■

As a One-Stop Career Center determines whether or not to participate in the Ticket to Work program, the following are factors to consider:

- Do the payment systems provide sufficient incentives so that the One-Stop Career Center believes that it is a reasonable risk to provide services prior to placement when no payment will be received from the Ticket to Work program unless cash benefits are no longer payable to an individual? What other possible sources of revenue or services exist that could be combined with the Ticket to Work program to reduce risk?
- Could the Ticket to Work program be integrated into other aspects of the services provided by One-Stop Career Centers? For example, could the Ticket to Work become part of the menu of intensive and training services?
- Are the administrative and reporting requirements manageable or are they overly burdensome, including the need to track earnings of individuals post-placement on a long-term basis in order to receive payment?

- Does the One-Stop Career Center have the capacity and expertise to successfully place SSI and SSDI recipients? Does this include availability of expertise concerning the impact of employment on an individual's public benefits including benefits provided under such programs as SSI, SSDI, State SSI Supplementation program, Medicaid, and Medicare (benefit counseling)?
- Does the One-Stop Career Center have sufficient expertise for determining at intake which individuals with Tickets will be able to become employed at earnings levels that will reduce their cash benefits to zero, and in turn produce revenue for the One-Stop Career Center?
- Is the One-Stop Career Center able to provide long-term post-placement supports for individuals with disabilities, either directly or through accessing an easily available source?
- Does the One-Stop Career Center wish to be an employment network on its own, or does it wish to partner with another entity? [Partnership options and examples are contained later in this publication.]
- What potential partners exist that the One-Stop Career Center might work with on the Ticket to Work program to reduce risk and/or provide services that the One-Stop system does not currently provide?
- In light of a One-Stop Career Center's expertise and structure, what specific aspects of providing services under the Ticket to Work program is the Center best suited for (intake and referral, initial placement, etc.)?

### 3. Learning from the experience of State VR agencies ■

The State VR agency may participate in the Ticket to Work program either as an employment network or be paid under the cost-reimbursement system (see above). Your State VR agency may have spent significant time, energy, and resources weighing the pros and cons of participating in the Ticket to Work program as an employment network. In addition, the State VR agency may have already developed policies describing the circumstances under which it will participate as an employment network. Conversations with State VR agency staff may help a One-Stop Career Center “think through” major policy issues concerning whether and how it wants to serve as an employment network.

### How does a One-Stop Career Center become an employment network? ■

A One-Stop Career Center becomes an employment network by responding to an open request for proposals which is available at [www.yourtickettowork.com/rfp](http://www.yourtickettowork.com/rfp).

#### 1. The One-Stop Career Center becomes an employment network on its own. ■

The One-Stop Career Center can become an employment network on its own. By becoming a solo employment network, the One-Stop Career Center has complete control of the program and maximizes flexibility. Being a solo employment network does not preclude the option of subcontracting with other entities for service delivery as needed. By acting as a solo employment network, the management and administrative challenges of partnering with another entity are reduced. However, the One-Stop Career Center is also responsible for overseeing all administrative and service delivery responsibilities for the individuals served through the Ticket to Work program. The One-Stop Career Center must be confident that it has sufficient expertise and resources available, either internally or within easy access externally, to successfully assist SSDI and SSI recipients to obtain employment. Also, while operating as a solo employment network allows the One-Stop Career Center to retain all revenue generated from the Ticket to Work program, it also requires the One-Stop Career Center to assume all risk over possible non-payment due to inability of an individual to find or maintain employment at a sufficient earnings level so that SSDI and SSI cash benefits are no longer payable.

#### 2. The Local Workforce Investment Board becomes an employment network ■

As an alternative, the LWIB can become the employment network. For some LWIBs this may be advantageous for a number of reasons:

- the full array of workforce development services in the service delivery area could potentially be more easily utilized to meet the needs of a Ticket program participant, including multiple One-Stop locations, youth services, and other services administered by the LWIB.
- the LWIB may have the infrastructure to more easily handle the administrative requirements of the Ticket Program then are available at the One-Stop Career Centers.

However, LWIBs should ensure that their role within the Ticket program does not violate the prohibition on direct service delivery under WIA.

#### 3. Become an employment network in partnership with other entities. ■

Under the Ticket to Work program, SSA allows entities to partner with each other to form an employment network. There are many positives to such an arrangement, particularly for a One-Stop Career Center. These include the ability to obtain sufficient expertise and resources necessary to successfully serve SSDI and SSI recipients through the Ticket to Work program that may not exist within the current structure of the One-Stop Career Center. It also allows the One-Stop Career Center to handle the aspects of service delivery that it typically handles for other customers (e.g., intake, job placement), while other partners in the employment network perform aspects of service delivery that they more typically perform (such as intensive post-placement supports). While there are many advantages to such a partnership, as with any partnership, there is a need for clear agreements on the roles of the various partners. Such an agreement would describe the respective responsibilities of each party (e.g., who provides and pays for specific services) and the allotment of funds between parties regarding payment by SSA for a successful placement. There must also be a willingness to accept the administrative and management challenges of undertaking such a partnership. Consideration must also be given to whether the Ticket to Work program generates sufficient revenue to make it fiscally worthwhile to share revenue generated.

The following are partnership options One-Stop systems may wish to consider:

##### a. Partnership options with State VR agency.

Part of how One-Stop Career Centers determine strategies under the Ticket to Work program may be dependent on the relationship that the State VR agency has with other aspects of the One-Stop system. Since the State VR agency is a mandatory partner in the One-Stop system, the Ticket to Work could simply become another element of that partnership, possibly but not necessarily requiring an addendum to the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Ticket to Work program also has the potential of strengthening the role of the State VR agency as a One-Stop partner, particularly in cases where the State VR agency has not had a strong role in the One-Stop system. One-Stop Career Centers should bear in mind, however, that while the State VR agency may be an important part of the strategy for serving SSDI and SSI recipients, the State VR agency may not have the capacity to serve all SSDI and SSI recipients using Tickets. Therefore, One-Stop Career Centers should not assume that partnering with the State VR agency is the only avenue to pursue under the Ticket to Work program.

**b. Partnership options with non-mandatory partners.**

Several state and local agencies in your state are currently responsible for serving persons with disabilities, including state and local agencies that are not mandatory partners such as MR/DD agencies, Mental Health/Substance Abuse agencies, and TANF agencies. These agencies fund and provide an array of employment-related services and may be willing to partner with One-Stop Career Centers to leverage the resources of the Ticket to Work program and expand options for employment services. Any of these agencies may want to enter into an agreement with the One-Stop Career Center describing the services the One-Stop would provide, the payment for these services out of agency budgets, and the shared allotment of payments from SSA.

**c. Partnership options with community rehabilitation providers and similar entities.**

There are a wide array of community agencies and organizations that assist people with disabilities with employment-related issues. These include such entities as community rehabilitation providers, independent living centers, etc. Such entities make logical partners under the Ticket to Work program, given the experience of these entities in providing intensive, ongoing supports to people with disabilities. However, many such entities are not “street level” organizations with the level of customer flow that is typical of One-Stop Career Centers, and therefore may be willing to partner as an employment network in order to more easily access referrals. Potentially, One-Stop Career Centers could use the Ticket to Work under the same mechanisms as the ITA, having agreements with a number of agencies, and giving the customer a choice of which agency to use for post-placement supports.

**d. Partnership options with employers.**

The employment network options delineated by SSA include the possibility of employers serving as an employment network. Employers who are interested in hiring individuals with disabilities may view the Ticket to Work program as a potential vehicle for reducing their net labor costs. Employers reluctant to get involved with the Ticket to Work program

(because of the administrative and reporting requirements) may want to enter into an agreement with a One-Stop Career Center. Under such an arrangement, for example, the One-Stop Career Center might fulfill the administrative and reporting requirements and the employer might assume the training responsibilities. An employer may be very interested in such an arrangement, especially if it would typically provide comparable training for all new employees. Such an agreement might also set out the policy governing the allotment of the SSA payment for a successful placement between the One-Stop Career Center and the employer.

**4. Don't become an employment network, but partner with employment networks, and subcontract as a referral source or for other services. ■**

Whether or not a One-Stop Career Center decides to become an employment network, there is no doubt that SSDI and SSI beneficiaries with Tickets will be coming into One-Stop Career Centers looking for services. One-Stop Career Centers should at least be prepared to act as a referral source for individuals using the Ticket. The One-Stop Career Center may wish to enter into an agreement with disability agencies and organizations that are employment networks, to act as a referral source or provide other One-Stop services as part of the placement process.

**5. Pursue a variety of options simultaneously. ■**

One-Stop Career Centers have the option of simultaneously pursuing a variety of arrangements under the Ticket to Work program. Entities are permitted to become solo employment networks at the same time they are part of an employment network with other partners, as long as an RFP is completed and approved for each employment network arrangement. One-Stop Career Centers should bear in mind that completion of the RFP simply allows you to provide services through the Ticket to Work program, and unlike typical service contracts, One-Stop Career Centers can participate in any way and at any level that they see fit.



## Overview of Social Security Disability Programs ■

The Social Security Administration (SSA) administers two disability programs. Individuals may receive cash benefits from one or both programs.

### **Social Security Disability Insurance program (SSDI)**

SSDI is a program of federal disability insurance benefits for workers who have contributed to the Social Security Trust Fund and become disabled or blind before retirement age. SSA also pays insurance benefits to individuals with disabilities when they are the widow(er)s or surviving divorced spouses of insured workers and when they are the adult children of disabled, retired, or deceased insured workers. SSDI makes monthly cash payments directly to eligible persons with disabilities throughout the period of eligibility.

### **The Supplemental Security Income program (SSI)**

SSI makes cash assistance payments to aged, blind and disabled people (including children under age 18) who have limited income and resources. The federal government funds SSI from general tax revenues.

Individuals may be dually eligible for SSDI and SSI.

The definition of disability for purposes of initial eligibility is identical under the SSDI and SSI programs. Disability is defined as the inability to engage in substantial gainful activity (SGA) by reason of a medically determinable physical or mental impairment that is expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months or to result in death. For 2002, earnings averaging over \$780 per month generally demonstrate SGA. If the individual is blind, earnings averaging over \$1,300 per month generally demonstrate SGA. These figures are adjusted annually for inflation. Also, when SSA determines whether earnings are SGA, it does not count subsidies and deducts such things as the cost of certain impairment-related items and services that individuals need to work.

After initial eligibility is determined, the impact of earnings on the eligibility for cash benefits under these programs is very different. The amount of SSI cash benefits is gradually reduced in relation to earnings. In contrast, SSDI uses an "all or nothing basis" whereby recipients receive their full SSDI cash benefits during a 9-month trial work period and 3-month grace period. After that, benefits stop during any month in which the individual works at the SGA level.

Individuals on SSDI typically are covered by Medicare insurance, whereas individuals on SSI are typically covered under the Medicaid program. Individuals may express hesitancy to participate in the Ticket to Work program because of the perception that loss of health benefits will automatically occur once SSDI or SSI cash benefits cease. However, an increase in earnings to the point where an individual no longer receives an SSDI or SSI check does not automatically result in immediate loss of Medicare or Medicaid, respectively. In fact, under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA), the ability to maintain health coverage and have earnings from employment has been significantly enhanced. For a more in-depth description of the SSDI and SSI programs, including the work incentives included in these programs after the enactment of TWWIIA, see a Policy Brief from the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on State Systems at the Institute for Community Inclusion entitled *Improvements to the SSDI and SSI Work Incentives and Expanded Availability of Health Care Services to Workers with Disabilities Under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (Volume 2, Number 1, February 2000)*.

### Suggestions for Moving Forward ■

As One-Stop Career Centers and systems consider their possible roles under the Ticket to Work program, as already noted, it may be worth contacting your State VR agency to determine their plans and thoughts on the Ticket to Work program. Additionally, the following suggestions may be helpful.

#### 1. Visit the SSA and MAXIMUS websites:

Both the Social Security Administration's Office of Employment Support Programs ([www.ssa.gov/work](http://www.ssa.gov/work)) and MAXIMUS ([www.yourtickettowork.com](http://www.yourtickettowork.com)) websites have extensive information on the Ticket to Work program. Visiting these sites can help in gaining a better understanding of the Ticket to Work program.

**2. Get a copy of the RFP:** The RFP for the Ticket to Work program can be downloaded from the MAXIMUS website. Reviewing the RFP can help in gaining an understanding of the administrative requirements of the Ticket to Work program.

**3. Contact MAXIMUS:** As the Program Manager, MAXIMUS is available to assist entities, such as One-Stop Career Centers, who are potentially interested in participating in the Ticket to Work program (MAXIMUS has expressed particular interest in having One-Stop Career Centers participate in the Ticket program). Additionally, MAXIMUS is conducting extensive training on the Ticket program, particularly in states where the Ticket to Work program either currently is or will soon be operational. Find out if and when MAXIMUS will be conducting training in your area.

**4. Contact NCWD:** The National Center on Workforce and Disability/Adult is available to assist One-Stop Career Centers and Workforce Investment Boards in determining strategies for participation in the Ticket to Work program, as well as a wide range of other disability-related issues. In addition to this publication, NCWD will have additional information available on the role of One-Stop Career Centers and Workforce Investment Boards in the Ticket to Work program later in 2002. This includes information on the specific experiences of One-Stop Career Centers that are participating in the Ticket to Work program.

### Changes Related to the Ticket Program ■

The Ticket to Work Program was established as a result of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (TWWIIA). The Ticket program is just one aspect of an overall federal effort to encourage individuals on SSI and SSDI to pursue employment. Other major aspects of TWWIIA, besides the Ticket program, include:

- Establishment of Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach Projects (BPAO): counselors available to anyone on SSI and SSDI who needs assistance in understanding the impact of employment on their public benefits.
- Extension of free Medicare coverage from 4 1/2 to 8 1/2 years, after an individual becomes employed.
- Expanding state options for allowing individuals to buy Medicaid coverage when their assets and earnings increase.
- Grants to Protection and Advocacy Agencies (publicly funded disability legal advocates) to provide information and advice about obtaining vocational rehabilitation, employment services, advocacy, and other services an SSI or SSDI beneficiary may need to secure or regain gainful employment, including applying for and receiving work incentives.

These other aspects of TWWIIA are intended to work in tandem with the Ticket program, to address barriers and disincentives to employment. One-Stop Career Centers and LWIBs wishing to learn more about these other aspects of TWWIIA can find information at: [www.ssa.gov/work/Beneficiaries/activity.html](http://www.ssa.gov/work/Beneficiaries/activity.html)

### BPAO Projects ■

Individuals will participate in the Ticket program only if they feel confident that the positives of going to work outweigh the impact that income from employment has on any public benefits they are receiving. Public benefit programs can often be confusing, and individuals receiving public benefits may also not be aware of changes that have occurred which reduce disincentives to employment (such as those occurring under TWWIIA). To address these issues, the Social Security Administration has awarded grants to community organizations throughout the United States, to establish Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach (BPAO) projects. Staff at these BPAO projects are trained to help individuals understand the impact of income from employment on the full range of public benefits including: SSI, SSDI, Medicare, Medicaid, public housing, TANF, food stamps, and other public benefit programs. The ability to easily link individuals with quality benefits counseling is key to success for One-Stop Career Centers participating as Employment Networks in the Ticket program. Staff from BPAO projects are establishing a variety of relationships with their local One-Stop systems, including in some cases, being stationed at a One-Stop Career Center on a part or full-time basis. One-Stop Career Centers should consider how to link with the BPAO projects in their local area. Contact information for each of the BPAO projects is available at: [www.ssa.gov/work/ServiceProviders/BPAODirectory.html](http://www.ssa.gov/work/ServiceProviders/BPAODirectory.html)

**CRP—Community Rehabilitation Provider**

A community-based agency, typically private and non-profit, that provides employment services, including vocational rehabilitation services, to adults with disabilities. The majority of funding for most CRPs comes from government agencies and funding sources.

**CDR—Continuing Disability Review**

A medical review conducted by the Social Security Administration to determine if an individual's impairment continues to exist and thus whether the individual is still eligible to receive Social Security disability benefits. When the individual is "using" a Ticket (i.e., making sufficient progress toward working at levels eliminating eligibility for cash benefits) he or she is not subject to medical CDRs.

**ILC—Independent Living Centers**

ILCs are community-based, non-profit, non-residential organizations that provide advocacy, peer counseling, independent living skills training, and information & referral to persons of any age with any type of disability.

**SGA—Substantial Gainful Activity**

For purposes of determining initial eligibility for SSDI and SSI, the definition of "disability" is the inability to engage in any "substantial gainful activity" (SGA) by reason of a medically determinable physical or mental impairment that is expected to last for a specified period. For calendar year 2002, SGA is \$780 (\$1,300 for individuals who are blind). SGA is adjusted on an annual basis for inflation.

**SSA—Social Security Administration**

SSA provides monthly cash benefits to approximately 10 million individuals in the United States with disabilities under the SSDI and SSI programs. SSA is also responsible for administering the Ticket to Work program.

**SSDI—Social Security Disability Insurance**

A program of federal disability insurance benefits for workers who have contributed to the Social Security Trust Fund and became disabled or blind before retirement age. The SSDI program also covers spouses with disabilities and dependent children of fully insured workers upon the retirement, disability, or death of a primary beneficiary. SSDI provides monthly cash benefits paid directly to eligible persons with disabilities throughout the period of eligibility. Individuals on SSDI typically are also eligible for Medicare.

**SSI—Supplemental Security Income**

A means-tested program providing monthly cash income to low-income persons with limited resources on the basis of disability and blindness as well as age. The SSI program is funded out of the general revenues of the Treasury. People who receive SSI also automatically become eligible to receive Medicaid medical insurance in most states.

**TWWIIA—Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act**

A piece of legislation which began to go into effect in the year 2000. TWWIIA is designed to create greater incentives for people with disabilities on Social Security disability benefits to return to work.

## Resources

Social Security Administration Office of Employment Support Programs website:

[www.ssa.gov/work](http://www.ssa.gov/work)

Program Manager: MAXIMUS

Ticket to Work website:

[www.yourtickettowork.com](http://www.yourtickettowork.com)

Voice: 1-866-968-7842 (toll-free)

TTY: 1-866-TDD2WORK

National Center on Workforce and Disability/Adult (NCWD)

Institute for Community Inclusion

Voice/TTY: 1-888-886-9898 (toll-free)

[www.onestops.info](http://www.onestops.info)

### Other Publications

The following publications are available from the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on State Systems at the Institute for Community Inclusion:

Policy Brief: Final Regulations Implementing the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program (The Ticket to Work Program)

(Vol. 4, No. 1, March 2002)

[www.communityinclusion.org/publications/text/pb8text.html](http://www.communityinclusion.org/publications/text/pb8text.html)

Policy Brief: The Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program and Established Under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999

(Vol. 2, No. 2, February 2000)

[www.communityinclusion.org/publications/policy.html#pb3](http://www.communityinclusion.org/publications/policy.html#pb3)

Policy Brief: Improvements to the SSDI and SSI Work Incentives and Expanded Availability of Health Care Services to Workers with Disabilities under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999

(Vol. 2, No. 1, February 2000)

[www.communityinclusion.org/publications/policy.html#pb2](http://www.communityinclusion.org/publications/policy.html#pb2)



**National Center on Workforce and Disability/Adult**

Institute for Community Inclusion

UMass Boston

100 Morrissey Blvd.

Boston, MA 02125

888-886-9898 (toll free and TTY)

[contact@onestops.info](mailto:contact@onestops.info)

**[www.onestops.info](http://www.onestops.info)**

This issue of OneStops.info was written by **Robert Silverstein** of the **Center for the Study & Advancement of Disability Policy**, with additional editorial contributions by David Hoff of the Institute for Community Inclusion.

Funding for this publication was provided by the **Office of Disability Employment Policy**—U.S. Department of Labor.

NCWD's role is to facilitate workforce policy development and implementation impacting the employment of people with disabilities. NCWD activities include: training and technical assistance to State and Local Workforce Investment Boards, One-Stop Career Centers, USDOL staff, and other entities; publications for policymakers and practitioners; a comprehensive web site; collection of information on promising developments from the field; and activities with the **National Collaborative on Workforce Development/Youth** ([www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info)), based at the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, D.C. Feel free to contact us to learn more about NCWD and meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities in the workforce development system.

*The opinions contained in this publication are those of the grantees and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Labor or the U.S. Department of Education.*

### NCWD PARTNERS

Institute for Community Inclusion

Center for the Study & Advancement of Disability Policy

Goodwill Industries International

Law Health Policy & Disability Center,

Univ. of Iowa College of Law

National Association of Workforce Boards

National Conference of State Legislatures

The New England Council

TransCen, Inc.

**This publication will  
be made available in  
alternate formats  
upon request.**