

The Basics

Ticket to Work Program

Administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA), the Ticket to Work Program is an employment program created in the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999. It is a voluntary program offering Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) expanded opportunities to obtain the services and supports needed to enter or re-enter the workforce. SSA pays approved providers of services, referred to as Employment Networks or “ENs”, for assisting beneficiaries in reaching designated Milestones and Outcomes associated with achieving self-supporting employment. The overall goal of the program is to reduce reliance on Social Security benefits and promote increased self-sufficiency.

Under the Ticket Program, SSA approves a variety of entities (service providers, state agencies, employers, etc.) to function as ENs. State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies have automatic EN status. A beneficiary goes to an EN or VR agency to discuss his/her employment goals and the services and supports needed to achieve those goals. If the needs of the beneficiary and the services the EN can offer are a match, an individualized plan for services is developed and the beneficiary’s Ticket is assigned to the EN or the State VR agency.

The EN or State VR agency provides the agreed upon services and the beneficiary works towards his/her employment goal. While the beneficiary is making timely progress in meeting the employment goal listed in the service plan (as spelled out in regulations), any regularly scheduled medical Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs) are postponed. If the beneficiary goes to work and reaches certain levels of earnings over designated periods of time, SSA pays the Milestone and Outcome payments to the EN. State VR agencies are the only ENs that have a second payment system available to them. VR can still provide services and receive payments under the Cost Reimbursement (CR) program that has been in existence since 1981. The Ticket legislation permits VR to choose on a case-by-case basis whether to serve a beneficiary under the CR program or as an EN.

After job placement, the beneficiary and the EN stay in touch and share wage information which is used by MAXIMUS to process Milestone and Outcome payments for the EN. Payments are direct deposited into the EN’s bank account.

At any point in this process the EN or the beneficiary may exercise the right to dissolve the relationship. This is done by contacting MAXIMUS in writing. The beneficiary has the opportunity to reassign his/her Ticket to another EN or the State VR agency.



An Evolving Program

Recognizing the shift in public policy from traditional “fee for service” strategies to paying for Milestones and Outcomes, Congress instructed SSA to use its regulatory authority to make programmatic and policy changes based on lessons learned through early implementation of the Ticket Program. Initial regulations were published in December 2001. Nationwide implementation was completed in 2003. Notices of Proposed Rulemaking were published in September 2005 and August 2007. Final regulations published May 20th go in to effect on July 21, 2008.

The regulatory improvement incorporated recommendations from advisory groups, beneficiaries, service providers, and others. These changes go a long way in:

- better meeting the needs of beneficiaries,
- improving the EN payment structure,
- expanding the scope of services available to beneficiaries,
- increasing opportunities for service coordination, and
- providing greater flexibility for all involved.

SSA has also improved many of its administrative structures to ensure timely processing of applications, EN payments, and payments to State VR agencies under the traditional Cost Reimbursement program.

SSA contracts with two organizations to assist with administration of the Ticket Program.

CESSI-A Division of Axiom, the Program Manager for Recruitment and Outreach, is undertaking national, regional, state, and local initiatives to recruit qualified entities to become ENs and to outreach to beneficiaries with disabilities to familiarize them with the Ticket Program and other work incentives, and to connect beneficiaries to ENs and community resources through local Work Incentive Seminars or WISE events. Account representatives are available to do an EN application walk-through and provide one-on-one assistance to potential ENs.

Any organization interested in exploring becoming an EN, should call CESSI at 1-877-743-8237 (v/tty), or visit http://www.cessi.net/contracts/pm/ssa_pmro.html.

As the Operations Support Manager, MAXIMUS works with approved ENs, offering an array of training and support services to help ENs get set up and operate a Ticket to Work Program. MAXIMUS also administers the assignment of Tickets and manages information on approved ENs.

Call MAXIMUS at (866)968-7842 (v) or (866)833-2967 (tty), or visit www.yourtickettowork.org to learn more about the Ticket to Work Program and functioning as an EN.

Both CESSI and MAXIMUS offer Ticket to Work Training opportunities for ENs and potential ENs.