

Introduction to the SSA Work Incentives

Shifting Gears.....Work Incentives

- Social Security's definition of disability involves inability to engage in substantial gainful activity.
- Once in the system, there are rules and policies called "work incentives" to encourage beneficiaries to work!
- Some incentives have been around a long time and others were created through the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999.

Question

Write down on a piece of paper one or two public benefits “fears” expressed by a consumer interested in employment.

Transition from These Programs to Employment....Addressing the Barriers

“It took me forever to get my SSDI check. I am not working and messing with that!”

“I want to work but what if my disability worsens after a while?”

“I would love to work, but I cannot afford to lose my healthcare.”

“My doctor said I am disabled and cannot work. That is why I am on Social Security.”

Work Incentives Policy

- Term used for policies and procedures created to address barriers to employment caused by benefits eligibility.
- Some remove the barrier, while others encourage working by rewarding employment activity.
- Work incentives have changed and improved significantly over time.....some are new, some have been around for decades.
- The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act was the latest and largest work incentives policy shift.

But Can SSA Beneficiaries Work?

- SSA definition does not require that you cannot work at all or at any point in your life.
- Technology and accommodations are improving everyday.
- A significant number of people who meet the definition of disability are working and not connected or disconnected from the SSA benefits.
- Purpose of the work incentives is to support as many people as choose to move into greater levels of self-sufficiency.

Program Rules are Different

- Rules for SSDI and SSI when you go back to work are completely different.
- Often, beneficiaries and their service providers get confused as to which rules apply.
- If person receives both checks, one set of rules applies to one check and the other set of rules applies to the other check.

Why Do I Need to Know About This?

- Many misconceptions have individuals unnecessarily holding themselves back.
- All professionals that work with individuals with disabilities should have a passing familiarity of these rules.
- Employment helps client gain self-sufficiency and participate in their community!

Who Can Help Me and Beneficiaries?

- Support system was created under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act.
- Created more staff with specialized knowledge within SSA.
- Created network of community-based support for beneficiaries returning to work.

Important Support within the Social Security Administration Regional Office

- Work Incentive Liaison
- Area Work Incentive Coordinator
- PASS Specialist

Work Incentives Liaisons (WIL)

- The Work Incentives Liaisons are located in the local SSA offices.
- The WIL position is part of an initiative to improve delivery of information and services regarding SSA's employment support programs.
- WILs are the “go-to” individuals in each local office on work incentives.
- They are specially trained to know the work incentive rules.
- See extensive list of office WILs in folder

Area Work Incentives Coordinators (AWICs)

- The AWICs are management staff assigned to each Area Director's office.
- AWICs train and monitor the work of the WILs.
- AWICs provide information and services related to SSA's employment support programs.
- AWICs can help facilitate solutions to work incentive related problems with local offices.

Area Work Incentives Coordinators (AWICs)

San Francisco Region

Megan Didion

Area Work Incentive Coordinator

16241 N. Tatum Blvd.

Phoenix, AZ 85032

Ph: 866-348-7855 ext. 15505

Megan.Didion@ssa.gov

PASS Specialist (Cadre)

- Assist individuals with the development of a PASS
- Review all submitted PASS Plans and approve, work to modify or deny
- Monitor approved Plans for appropriate use of PASS funds and assist in modifying expenses / income, as needed
- Provide community presentations
- AWICs may perform this function in some parts of the country.

PASS Specialist (Cadre)

Contact: Peter Prather or Patrick Mattis

888-674-6250

Mail completed PASS applications to:

SSA/PASS Cadre

1333 Front Street

San Diego CA 92101

Fax: (619) 557-5722

Community Based Support Outside SSA

- Act also requires that there be community based support around work incentives and return to work efforts.
- SSA has agreements with over 100 community based organizations throughout the country to provide work incentive planning services.
- SSA has agreements with Protection and Advocacy systems to provide advocacy assistance.

Work Incentives Planning & Assistance Projects (WIPA)

- Community Work Incentives Coordinator (CWIC)
- Provide community presentations on SSA Work Incentives and Benefits Planning
- Provide individualized benefits counseling
- Provide on-going benefits management
- Provide information & referral to individuals in need of community resources
- Prioritize those who are working or actively seeking employment.

Work Incentives Planning & Assistance Projects (WIPA)

AZ Freedom to Work

Arizona Bridge to Independent Living

5025 E. Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona
85034

Statewide: 866-304-WORK (9675)

Protection & Advocacy For Beneficiaries of Social Security

- Provide advocacy services to beneficiaries regarding issues related to employment.
- Mediate disputes between a beneficiary and either VR or EN.
- Example Potential Services:
 - Assistance in requesting reasonable accommodation at work
 - Representation in employment discrimination case.
 - Advocacy to assure an agency provides proper employment supports.

Protection & Advocacy For Beneficiaries of Social Security

(Requests for services are handled out of the Phoenix office)

Arizona Center for Disability Law

5025 E. Washington St., Suite 202

Phoenix, AZ. 85034 800-927-2260

PABSS Advocate, Linda Fischer, ACDL

100 North Stone Ave, Suite 305

Tucson, AZ 85701

520-327-9547 Voice/TTY

800-922-1447 (Toll Free - Voice/TTY)