

Ticket to Work Program

The Social Security Administration (SSA), which has served the most vulnerable Americans for decades, discovered years ago that some Supplementary Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) program participants were likely to receive disability benefits their entire lives. Many of these beneficiaries wanted to work, but were limited by SSA program rules which mandated that benefits recipient were unable to engage in “substantial gainful” employment. As a result, the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act was signed into law in 1999, and the Ticket to Work (TTW) program was born.

While the program has undergone changes, the fundamental goal of the TTW program is to help SSI and SSDI benefit participants who want to transition into the workforce without losing their benefits. The program also was developed to increase disabled workers access to employment services, link participants with vocational and rehabilitative training and connect these workers with additional services through local vocational rehabilitation agencies.

The TTW process is easy to initiate and can be started through the SSA’s online or paperless process. The SSA issues tickets to eligible benefits recipients, who opt to assign their tickets to employment support services, which include an employment network (EN), vocational rehabilitation (VR) services or a program which helps them achieve work goals.

This free and voluntary program, which serves adult beneficiaries ages 18 to 65, offers a number of contingencies that help prospective workers protect their benefits. Disabled individuals, even if they receive a ticket, are not required to work, but can use their ticket in an effort to find work. Also, those program beneficiaries that elect to pursue employment with the aid of an EN, such as Goodwill, will not

be adversely affected if the EN does not accept tickets.

As an individual gains and maintains substantial employment, their cash benefits will be adjusted. Over time, if employment is truly sustainable, cash benefits may cease, but Medicaid coverage will continue. Also, if the employment opportunity ends, the program participants can have their cash benefits reinstated.

Millions of disabled Americans receive monthly income payments through SSA programs; however, many want to be self-sufficient. The TTW program allows them to the freedom to work without fear of losing needed benefits or supports, for themselves or their families.