



# Social Security Disability Benefits: The Impact of Employment

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## Section Purpose

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Provide information on social security disability benefits, so that One-Stop staff have an understanding of how these benefits are utilized by people with disabilities, and the impact employment has on these benefits. The goal is for One-Stop staff to be able to assist customers with disabilities in understanding the impact of employment on benefits, and allaying their concerns over loss of benefits when they go to work.

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## Section Contents

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- A) **One-Stop Centers and Social Security Disability Benefits:** Comprehensive information on various aspects of social security disability benefits
- B) **TWWIIA - Questions and Answers - SSA Fact Sheet:** A fact sheet from the Social Security Administration on the new Ticket-to-Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act, which is designed to assist people with disabilities in going to work, while addressing concerns over benefit loss
- C) **Social Security Administration Fact Sheet - Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999:** A fact sheet specifically on the Ticket-to-Work aspects of TWWIIA, which will allow people receiving social security disability benefits to obtain assistance in finding employment at a vendor of their choice
- D) **Social Security Resources:** A listing of resources for assistance on social security disability issues

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# One-Stop Centers and Social Security Disability Benefits

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*By David Hoff, Institute for Community Inclusion*

## What You Should Know

- Many people with disabilities that use One-Stop system services receive some type of Social Security disability benefits. Nationwide, over 8 million people with disabilities receive some form of these benefits.
- When people with disabilities decide to seek employment, one of their key concerns is how employment will impact their social security benefits. Benefit regulations can be complex. One-Stop staff don't need to be experts; however, it is a good idea to have some understanding of the Social Security disability benefit programs in order to help recipients find employment.
- People with disabilities often perceive employment-related regulations for Social Security benefits as insurmountable barriers to employment. However, in many cases, there is misunderstanding concerning the impact that employment will have on an individual's benefits. By providing information on basic Social Security Administration requirements, and assisting customers to obtain expertise in benefits management, One-Stop staff can help people with disabilities become more willing and confident in seeking employment.
- Areas that One-Stop staff should be familiar with:
  - ◆ The difference between the two Social Security disability programs: SSI and SSDI
  - ◆ How employment and earned income impact SSI and SSDI
  - ◆ Basic information about Social Security Work Incentives: PASS, IRWE, Blind Work Expense, Student Earned Income Exclusion
  - ◆ Upcoming changes in the Social Security disability program under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999
  - ◆ Resources available for additional assistance

Note: At this writing (5/2001), as a result of the Ticket-to-Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA), and other regulatory changes, the social security disability benefits system is undergoing extensive changes, to enhance the ability of people with disabilities to return to work. The information in this section reflects the most up-to-date changes. It is recommended that One-Stop Centers contact the Social Security Administration to stay updated on these changes (contact information is in the resource listing at the end of this section).

# The Basics of Social Security Disability Benefits

## Two Social Security Disability Programs:

- SSI - Supplementary Security Income
- SSDI - Social Security Disability Insurance - also referred to by Social Security simply as Social Security benefits

*Note: Some people receive benefits from both programs*

	SSI	SSDI
<p><b>Requirements to Qualify</b></p> <p><i>Note: The SGA amounts are for 2001, and are adjusted annually for inflation.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Liquid assets of no more than \$2,000 (\$3,000 for a married couple)</li> <li>• Earnings below the substantial gainful activity level of \$740 per month (individuals who are blind do not have to meet this requirement)</li> <li>• Once individuals qualify for SSI, they can earn more than SGA, and still receive a portion of their cash benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Must meet one of the following criteria:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Previous worked &amp; paid Social Security taxes</li> <li>2. Unmarried with a parent who receives Social Security benefits</li> <li>3. Unmarried with a deceased parent who worked &amp; paid Social Security taxes</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Earnings below the substantial gainful activity level of \$740 per month (\$1,240 for individuals who are blind)</li> </ul>
<b>Medical Coverage</b>	Usually Medicaid	Usually Medicare
<b>Affect of Income on Cash Benefits</b>	<p><b>Gradual Reduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly checks gradually reduced in relation to income</li> <li>• After the first \$85.00 of earned income, SSI check is reduced by \$1.00 for every \$2.00 earned</li> </ul>	<p><b>All or Nothing</b></p> <p>Receive full monthly benefit until going over earnings limit of \$740/mo. (\$1,240 for individuals who are blind). After exceeding earning limit for 12 months, check is completely stopped.</p>
<b>Affect of Income on Medical Benefits</b>	<p>Even if cash benefit ends, individual keeps Medicaid coverage until going over the "threshold limit", an annual income limit that varies from state to state (from \$12,000 to over \$25,000)</p> <p><i>Note: The impact of employment on Medicaid benefits may be significantly reduced as a result of TWWIIA. Check with your local Medicaid or Social Security office for the most current information.</i></p>	<p>When cash benefits end, Medicare coverage stays in affect for 7 1/2 years (this includes an expansion of 4 1/2 years under the new TWWIIA legislation, as of 10/1/2000)</p>

## Calculating the Impact of Earnings from Employment

- Income is counted according to the date the pay was issued, not earned (e.g.: a paycheck issued on May 5 for the week ending April 28 would count for May.)
- Social Security uses gross income figures (i.e.: before taxes) to calculate the affect of income on benefits.
- Remember, SSI checks are gradually reduced in relation to income. SSDI checks, however, are “all or nothing” (either you get the full amount or nothing).
- With very limited exceptions, individuals receiving social security disability benefits (SSI or SSDI) are always going to be financially better off by working, at least on a part-time basis.

## How Income Affects SSI Benefits

- Cash benefits are reduced in relation to income.
- The first \$85 are not counted. This is called the Earned Income Exclusion.

If the person is working:

Step 1: (Gross Monthly Earnings from Job - \$85) divided by 2 = Countable Income

Step 2: Benefit Rate (Standard SSI payment) – Countable Income

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= SSI Monthly Payment While Working

If the person receives SSI and SSDI:

Step 1: SSDI Monthly Payment – \$20 = Countable Income

Step 2: Benefit Rate (Standard SSI payment) – Countable Income

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= SSI Monthly Payment While on SSDI

- Medicaid Coverage: Even if cash benefits are eliminated, Medicaid coverage remains in affect until annual earnings reach the “threshold amount” under 1619b (this figure varies by state, from \$11,000 to over \$29,000). To maintain Medicaid coverage, the insurance must be used at least once every 12 months.
- If a person’s income exceeds this level, they may be able to lower countable income and still qualify for Medicaid through the use of IRWE’s, PASS’s, etc. See page 246 for “Methods for Preserving Benefits”.

- After an individual's income exceeds the threshold level, if income drops back below that level within the next twelve months, the individual again becomes eligible for Medicaid and SSI cash payments (if applicable) without having to reapply.
- Under the new TWWIIA legislation, states will have the option of significantly expanding Medicaid coverage and reducing the impact of employment on Medicaid. Contact your local Medicaid or Social Security office to obtain the most current information on this issue.

## How Income Impacts SSDI Benefits

### Basic Guidelines

- Earnings less than substantial gainful activity level (SGA)- \$740/month (\$1,240 for individuals who are legally blind) - no effect on benefits.  
*Note: These are the 2001 SGA amounts, which are adjusted annually for inflation.*
- First 9 months of working: no limit on earnings, and no effect on benefits.

### How the System Works

- Months in which an individual earns above \$530/month (2001 figure - adjusted annual for inflation) count as **trial work months**.
- After accumulating **9 trial work months** over a 60-month period, individual enters **extended period of eligibility**.
- Individual remains in extended period of eligibility for a minimum of 36 months.
- If earnings remain below the **Substantial Gainful Activity level** (SGA), benefits continue indefinitely. (Note: a Social Security Work Incentive known as an "IRWE" can be used to stay below the SGA; information on IRWE's is contained later in this section.)
- If earnings remain above the **Substantial Gainful Activity** level, SSDI cash benefits continue for 3 more months, then stop.
- If earnings drop below the **Substantial Gainful Activity** level during any of the 36 months of extended eligibility, individual will receive a SSDI check for that month.
- SSDI cash benefits can be started again during this 36 month period of extended eligibility without a new application.
- Under the new TWWIIA legislation, once benefits end, they can be reinstated at any point within the next 5 years without a new application
- Medicare Coverage: Coverage continues free of charge for at least 93 months after end of trial work period, and for as long as individual remains below the substantial gainful activity level of earnings. If free Medicare ends, individual can purchase Medicare coverage for approximately \$300/month. States are required to pay the Medicare hospital premiums for individuals below certain income levels.

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# Methods for Preserving Benefits

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Social Security has several programs, called “Work Incentives”, that reduce the impact of working on disability benefits. Below is information on some of the major work incentives. For further information on any of these work incentives, contact your local Social Security office, or check the Social Security web site ([www.ssa.gov/work/ResourcesToolkit/workincentives.html](http://www.ssa.gov/work/ResourcesToolkit/workincentives.html)).

## Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE)

- IRWEs are expenses for items and services a disabled person needs in order to work.
- Examples of items that may qualify as an IRWE include: attendant care services, transportation costs, job coaching, medical devices, adaptive equipment, medication, psychological evaluations, and therapy.
- The local Social Security office determines whether a particular expense is deductible as an IRWE.
- The expense must be paid for by the individual, and not reimbursed from another source.
- The cost of the expense is deducted from the amount of earnings reported to Social Security. For instance, if a person earns \$450 but spends \$50 on job coaching, Social Security would only “count” \$400 of earnings.

## Plan For Achieving Self-Support (PASS)

PASS’s allow an individual to qualify, maintain or increase their monthly SSI benefits by “setting aside” income (including SSDI) for expenses to achieve a vocational goal.

- Income set aside is excluded from the monthly income determination for SSI purposes, and also does not count towards the \$2,000 limit on assets (\$3,000 for couples). This means that using a PASS may allow an individual to qualify for SSI.
  - An individual on SSDI can use a PASS to set aside their SSDI “income”, thus qualifying them for SSI
- The types of things that a PASS plan can cover include education and training classes, job coaching, transportation, initial costs for purchase of a vehicle, clothing for a job, items to start a business, equipment to do a job, etc.
- A PASS plan is time limited, although there is no specific time limits. Typically PASS’s are approved in 18 month increments.
- Financially, a PASS is better than an IRWE, but IRWE’s are not time-limited and cover a wider range of expenses.
- If a One-Stop has a structure where individuals can pay for intensive or training services, a PASS could potentially pay for these services.
- There is a ten page application form for PASS’s (forms are available from the Social Security web site and offices). PASS plans are sent to the local office, which passes them on to the central office for review.
  - Teams of specialists, called “PASS Cadres”, are available to help prepare applications (a listing of which can be obtained by contacting the Social Security Administration or looking on the SSA web site).

### **Student Earned Income Exclusion**

If an individual on SSI is a student under the age of 22, he/she can exclude up to \$1,290 in earnings in a month. The maximum annual exclusion is \$5,200 (2001 figures). These amounts are adjusted annually for inflation.

### **Blind Work Expenses**

If a person receives SSI and is blind, expenses needed to earn income (not necessarily related to the disability) can be excluded from the income determination for SSI purposes. Examples of these expenses: transportation to and from work; federal and state income taxes; Social Security taxes; union dues; translation of materials into Braille; guide dog expenses; etc.

## IRWE's & PASS's: What's the difference?

### IRWE and PASS Calculations for people on SSI

- IRWE: A person using an IRWE will have their SSI check increased by half the amount of the expense (up to the maximum SSI benefit)
- PASS: A person using a PASS will have their SSI check increased by the full amount of the monthly expense (up to the maximum SSI benefit)

### Why the difference?

- IRWE amounts are subtracted from countable income. This amount is in turn divided by two, since SSI checks are reduced \$1 for every \$2 earned (after the first \$85, which isn't counted at all).
- The amount of a PASS is simply added on to the person's SSI check.

### So why use an IRWE?

- IRWE's apply to both SSI and SSDI. PASS's can be used only for SSI. For people on SSDI, the financial benefits of an IRWE can be substantial (see example below).
- IRWE's are not time-limited.
- IRWE's are easier to get approved (IRWE's are approved by the local Social Security office; PASS's go to a national office).
- IRWE's will pay for items which PASS's won't.
- IRWE's are much simpler to administer.
- **Most importantly: IRWE's can considerably increase the income of people on SSDI whose income exceeds the SGA limit of \$740 (\$1,240 for individuals who are legally blind).** [SGA amounts are 2001 figures and are adjusted annually for inflation.]

***Example:** A person receives an SSDI check of \$400 per month. They begin to work at a job that pays \$800 a month. Since their earnings surpass the SGA limit, they will lose their SSDI check after 12 months of employment, and their new income will be just the \$800 salary. However, if the person has an IRWE of transportation expenses of \$70 per month, Social Security would "count" only \$730 of the salary. Their new monthly income would be as follows:*

Income from job:	\$800.00
IRWE (transportation):	<u>- 70.00</u>
Countable Income:	= \$730.00
SSDI	<u>+ 400.00</u>
Income with IRWE	= \$1130.00
Income without IRWE	= \$800.00

*Therefore, by using an IRWE, the person has increased their income by \$330 per month.*

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## Tips for One-Stop Staff to Assist Customers in Managing Social Security Disability Benefits

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- Management of benefits is an issue that public VR programs constantly deal with. The expertise and resources of VR on this issue can be of great assistance to the entire One-Stop system. As a One-Stop partner, VR can provide resources and expertise, building the capacity of the One-Stop system to assist all customers in managing benefits.
- Contact the Social Security Administration and obtain copies of publications that might be helpful to staff and customers. Place copies of these publications on display, and provide them to customers who have questions about social security disability benefits. (Popular brochures are contained in the resource listing at the end of this chapter.)
- Find out whom One-Stop customers and staff can contact at the local Social Security office for assistance with benefit questions, and help customers connect with them.
- Find out what additional resources are available locally to assist customers with management of benefits. The Social Security Administration is currently in the process of funding a network of Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach (BPA & O) specialists throughout the country. At a minimum, find out the contact information for the BPA & O project(s) in your state (information is available at: [www.ssa.gov/work](http://www.ssa.gov/work)). As noted, the state VR program may also have or be aware of additional resources to assist with benefits management.
- If you are going to help a customer determine the impact of employment on their benefits you need to know:
  - ◆ Which program are they on? (SSI, SSDI, or both)
  - ◆ How much is the monthly benefit?
    - ◇ If the customer is unsure, you can request this information in writing from Social Security, with a signed release from the customer and payee if applicable (a payee receives checks in the customer's name). A sample letter to request information is at the end of this section.
  - √ Inform the customer about Work Incentives (IRWE's, PASS's, etc.), and make suggestions on how they could be utilized
  - √ Remind the customer that income and job status (employment starts and stops, new job, job loss) must be reported to Social Security on a timely basis
  - √ If the customer is on SSI, and will remain on it when they start working, remind them that their assets must stay below the \$2,000 limit (\$3,000 for a married couple). Otherwise the individual can lose both SSI and possibly Medicaid (asset limits for keeping Medicaid are higher in some states).

*Note: An additional \$1,740 can be put into a burial account which does not count towards the limit.*

- The Social Security Administration has staff available to provide training on benefit issues. Consider having Social Security offer periodic information and training sessions to customers and staff as part of the activities at the One-Stop Center.

- Training on Social Security benefits may also be available from other sources such as: state VR, disability providers, Independent Living Centers, disability service providers and advocacy organizations
- Consider obtaining software that can help customers determine the impact of employment on their Social Security benefits. The Employment Support Institute has developed one such software package, WorkWORLD, designed to assist individuals with disabilities in calculating the impact of employment on Social Security and other benefits. One-Stops may wish to obtain a copy of this software to assist individuals in managing their benefits. Information is in the resource listing at the end of this section.

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# Dealing With Social Security

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## Tips for One-Stop Customers and Staff

- Develop a good relationship with your local Social Security office.
- Arm yourself with information:
  - Learn about the various programs, and develop an understanding of the impact of employment on benefits.
  - Use the Social Security publications as resources. Do not rely exclusively on what the Social Security representatives tell you verbally. Some Social Security representatives deal mainly with retiree benefits, and only sporadically with disability benefits, and therefore their knowledge may be limited.
- Do not assume that the information that Social Security has is correct. The income information they have for individuals can be inaccurate, particularly for individuals whose income is inconsistent from month to month. Miscalculations can often occur if an individual gets paid every other week, and Social Security calculates monthly income from a month when the person received three paychecks (i.e., the first, third and fifth weeks).
- Discuss the best method for reporting earnings with the local Social Security office. This is particularly important if a recipient's earnings vary from month to month. SSI & SSDI beneficiaries should keep good records concerning work history, wages (pay stubs), and benefits received.
- Make and keep copies of everything sent to the Social Security Administration. Send important letters (e.g., appeals) certified letter, return receipt requested.
- Keep a written record of all phone calls to the Social Security Administration - who you spoke to, date and time, information given and received. Always follow up any substantive phone conversations in writing.
- Respond quickly to all letters from the Social Security Administration
- If an individual goes into the hospital, and will be in for at least a month, the Social Security Administration should be notified immediately to help preserve benefits.
- An individual has the right to appeal any decision that the Social Security Administration makes.
- Up to 60 days are allowed to file an appeal
  - If you appeal within 10 days of receiving notice, the SSI/SSDI check will not be affected.

*\* Sample form letter to obtain benefit information from social security. It is suggested that this be mailed to the local office along with a self-addressed stamped envelope.*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Social Security Representative:

The **Any County or Town One-Stop Career Center** is providing employment services for the individual listed below. We are requesting that you provide us with the following information concerning the benefits for this individual. Attached is an authorization for release of the information from the individual and payee.

Please complete and return in the enclosed addressed and stamped envelope. Thank you for your cooperation.

Carlos Smith  
Employment Counselor – Any County or Town One-Stop Career Center  
(617) 555-1234

**Beneficiary's Name:**

**Address:**

**Social Security #:**

**Under which program is this beneficiary currently receiving benefits?**

\_\_\_\_\_ Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) ---- Monthly Benefit Amt. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) ----- Monthly Benefit Amt. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Form Completed By:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Office:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

I give permission for the Social Security Administration to disclose to **Any County or Town One-Stop Career Center** the information listed above.

**Beneficiary's Name:**

**SS#:**

**Beneficiary's**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Payee's Name:**

**Payee's**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# TWWIIA - Questions and Answers

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On December 17, 1999, President Clinton signed the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (TWWIIA). This law includes several important new opportunities for people who receive Social Security disability benefits who want to go to work.

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## I. The Ticket to Work Program

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### What is the Ticket to Work Program?

The Ticket Program is something new in the Social Security Administration (SSA). The program offers SSA disability beneficiaries greater choice in obtaining the services they need to help them go to work.

### When does the Ticket Program begin?

Some beneficiaries begin to receive Tickets in 2001.

### Is the Ticket Program starting everywhere at the same time?

No. During the first year of operation, 2001, the program is available only in certain States. The first states participating in the program are: Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Vermont, Wisconsin. In the next couple of years, SSA will expand the program to other parts of the country. The program will be operating in the entire country by January 1, 2004. So, people will receive their Tickets at different times.

### How will I know where the Ticket Program is available?

SSA is announcing our plans in many different places where people who receive Social Security disability benefits get information about SSA, including Social Security's Internet web site, [www.ssa.gov/work](http://www.ssa.gov/work)

### What does a Ticket look like?

The Ticket is a paper document that has some personal information and some general information about the Ticket Program.

### How does a person with a disability get a Ticket?

SSA is working with an organization the law calls a Program Manager. The Program Manager, Maximus, Inc. of McLean, VA is helping SSA to manage the Ticket program. Maximus will help SSA send the Ticket in the mail with a letter explaining the program.

### The responsibilities of Maximus include:

- recruitment of employment networks.
- facilitation of access by beneficiaries to employment networks.
- ensuring availability of adequate employment services.
- ensuring reasonable access to services for people with disabilities.
- operating a toll-free telephone number to answer questions about the Ticket Program.
- overall administration and oversight for ongoing Ticket Program operations.

### **Where does a person with a disability take his/her Ticket to get services?**

You take your Ticket to what the law calls an Employment Network. The Employment Networks are private organizations or public agencies that have agreed to work with Social Security to provide services under this program. One-Stop Centers are among the entities that can accept the “ticket” if they are an approved vendor. (Additional information is contained in section 11, “Disability Services.”)

### **How does a person with a disability find out about the Employment Networks?**

The Program Manager, Maximus, will send people with disabilities a list of the approved Employment Networks in their local area when SSA sends you your Ticket. Employment Networks may also directly contact people with disabilities to offer their services. This information also will be available on the SSA web site and in other places.

### **How will people with disabilities choose an Employment Network?**

People with disabilities can contact any Employment Network in their local area to see if it is the right one for them. Both the individual with a disability and the Employment Network have to agree to work together.

### **Can people with disabilities change Employment Networks?**

Yes. People with disabilities have the right to stop working with one Employment Network and begin working with another one. Before the individual makes this decision, however, the person with a disability should make sure he/she fully understands how the Employment Network plans to help you to work.

### **How can I get more information about the Ticket program?**

You can contact the Program Manager:

Maximus Corporation

Voice: 1-866-YOURTICKET (1-866-968-7842)

TDD: 1-866-TTD2WORK (1-866-833-2967)

Web site: [www.maximus.com/ttw/index.htm](http://www.maximus.com/ttw/index.htm)

You can contact the Social Security Administration:

Voice: 1-800-772-1213; TTY: 1-800-325-0778

E-mail: [ttwwiia@ssa.gov](mailto:ttwwiia@ssa.gov)

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

SSA will have pamphlets and other written material available at local Social Security offices. Information about the Ticket program is also available from many other private and government organizations that help people with disabilities.

### **If people with disabilities get a Ticket, do they have to use it?**

No. The Ticket Program is voluntary.

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## II. Expanded Availability of Health Care Services

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**Does the new law include changes in health care coverage?**

Yes. Starting October 1, 2000, the law extends Medicare Part A (Hospital) premium-free coverage for four and one-half years beyond the current limit for disability beneficiaries who work.

**What about Medicaid?**

The law includes several important changes to Medicaid. For example, it gives states the option of providing Medicaid coverage to more people ages 16-64 with disabilities who work.

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## III. Removal of Work Disincentives

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**If people with disabilities go back to work, do they automatically lose their disability benefits?**

No, the new law has not changed SSA's work incentives rules. For more information about Social Security's work incentives you should: call our toll-free number at Voice: 1-800-772-1213; TTY: 1-800-325-0778 contact your local Social Security office; or visit our special web site at [www.ssa.gov/work](http://www.ssa.gov/work)

**If disability benefits stop because a person with a disability goes back to work, will he/she have to file a new application if they can't work anymore?**

Starting January 1, 2001, if benefits have ended because of work, a person with a disability can request that SSA start your benefits again without having to file a new application. There are some important conditions:

- The individual has to be unable to work because of his/her medical condition.
- The medical condition must be the same as or related to the condition the person with a disability had when SSA first decided that he/she should receive disability benefits.
- The request to start benefits again must occur within 60 months of the date the individual was last entitled to benefits.

**Will the individual with a disability have to wait for SSA to make a new medical decision before receiving benefits?**

No. SSA will make a new medical decision, but while SSA is making the decision, the individual can receive up to six months of temporary benefits

**If SSA decides that they are unable to start benefits again, will the individual have to pay back the temporary benefits?**

No.

**Will SSA still review my medical condition?**

Starting January 1, 2001, SSA will not review the medical condition of a person receiving disability benefits if that person is using a Ticket. Starting January 1, 2002, under certain conditions, SSA will not review the medical condition of beneficiaries who have received Social Security Disability Insurance benefits for at least 24 months. SSA will provide more information about medical reviews in the future.

*This information is based on fact sheets and other material provided by the Social Security Administration and from Maximus, Inc.*

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# TICKET TO WORK AND WORK INCENTIVES IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1999

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## Social Security Administration Fact Sheet

President Clinton signed the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 on December 17, 1999. This law:

- increases beneficiary choice in obtaining rehabilitation and vocational services;
- removes barriers that require people with disabilities to choose between health care coverage and work; and
- assures that more Americans with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in the workforce and lessen their dependence on public benefits.

The provisions of the law become effective at various times, generally beginning one year after enactment. They are described below.

### Establishment of the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program

- The program is being phased in nationally over a three-year period beginning January 1, 2001, with the first Tickets issued in 2001 in the following states: Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Vermont, Wisconsin.
- Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability beneficiaries will receive a “Ticket” they may use to obtain vocational rehabilitation (VR), employment or other support services from an approved provider of their choice.
- The Ticket program is voluntary.

*[Editor’s note: One-Stop Centers are among the entities that can accept the “ticket” if they are an approved vendor. Additional information is contained in section 11, “Disability Services”]*

### Expanded Availability of Health Care Services

- The law includes several enhancements to Medicaid and Medicare effective October 1, 2000.
- States will have the option to provide Medicaid coverage to more people ages 16-64 with disabilities who work.
- States will have the option to permit working individuals with incomes above 250 percent of the federal poverty level to buy in to Medicaid
- The law creates a new Medicaid buy-in demonstration project to provide medical assistance to workers with impairments who are not yet too disabled to work.
- The law also extends Medicare coverage for people with disabilities who return to work. It extends Part A premium-free coverage for 4 1/2 years beyond the current limit for Social Security disability beneficiaries who return to work.

### Expedited Reinstatement of Benefits

- Effective January 1, 2001, people whose Social Security or Supplemental Security Income disability benefits end because of earnings from work, can request reinstatement of benefits if they subsequently become unemployed.
- Beneficiaries must be unable to work because of their medical condition.

- They must file the request for reinstatement with Social Security within 60 months from the month of their termination.
- While Social Security is making a new determination, beneficiaries may receive up to six months of provisional benefits, including Medicare and Medicaid, as appropriate.
- If Social Security decides that the medical condition no longer prevents the individual from working, the provisional benefits paid would not be considered an overpayment.

#### Continuing Disability Reviews

- Effective January 1, 2001, Social Security cannot initiate a continuing disability medical review while a Social Security or SSI disability beneficiary is using a Ticket. Cash benefits may be subject to termination if earnings are substantial.
- Effective January 1, 2002, work activity by a Social Security disability beneficiary who has received Social Security disability benefits for at least 24 months cannot be used as a basis for conducting a disability review. However, the individual is still subject to regularly scheduled medical reviews. Again, cash benefits may be subject to termination if earnings are substantial.

#### Work Incentives Advisory Panel

The law established a Work Incentives Advisory Panel within Social Security composed of 12 members appointed by the President and Congress. The Panel advises the Commissioner and reports to Congress on implementation of the Ticket program. At least one-half of the Panel members are required to be individuals with disabilities, or representatives of individuals of disabilities, with consideration given to current or former Social Security disability beneficiaries.

#### Work Incentives Outreach Program

- The law directs Social Security to establish a community-based work incentives planning and assistance program for the purpose of disseminating accurate information related to work incentives. Social Security is establishing a program of grants, cooperative agreements or contracts to provide benefits planning and assistance, including the availability of protection and advocacy services, and outreach.
- The law also directs Social Security to establish a corps of work incentives specialists within Social Security.

#### Protection and Advocacy

The law authorizes Social Security to make payments to protection and advocacy systems established in each state to provide information, advice, advocacy and other services to disability beneficiaries.

#### Demonstration Projects and Studies

- The law extends Social Security Disability Insurance demonstration authority for 5 years. Under the law, Social Security is required to conduct a demonstration project to test reducing Social Security Disability Insurance benefits by \$1 for each \$2 that a beneficiary earns over a certain amount or amounts.
- The implementation dates and locations for this demonstration will be announced.

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# Social Security Resources

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## Social Security National Toll-Free Number:

Voice: 1-800-772-1213

TTY: 1-800-325-0778

Call between 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM any business day

## National Office Mailing Address

Social Security Administration - Office of Public Inquiries

6401 Security Blvd.

Room 4-C-5 Annex

Baltimore, MD 21235

## Regional and Local Offices

Regional offices for the Social Security Administration are located in:

- Atlanta,
- Boston
- Chicago
- Dallas
- Denver
- Kansas City
- New York
- Philadelphia
- San Francisco
- Seattle

Social Security has local offices throughout the United States. Addresses for regional and local offices are located in the “Blue Pages” or under U.S. Government, in the phone book. Regional and local offices can also be found through the Social Security Administration web site.

## Web Site

The Social Security Administration has a very comprehensive and user-friendly web site, with extensive information, publications and forms available. In addition to the main web site, specific sections are dedicated to disability issues.

- Social Security Online: [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)
- Employment Support Programs: [www.ssa.gov/work](http://www.ssa.gov/work)
- The Office of Disability Home Page: [www.ssa.gov/disability](http://www.ssa.gov/disability)

Each of the regional offices also has a web site, which can be accessed through [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

## Social Security Publications

The Social Security Administration has an extensive number of publications on issues related to disability benefits. Some of the publications available include:

- Understanding Social Security (Publication No. 05-10024)
- Social Security Disability Benefits
- SSI (Publication No. 05-11000)

- What You Need To Know When You Get Disability Benefits
- Working While Disabled (Publication No. 05-10095)
- Working While Disabled... How We Can Help
- Red Books on Work Incentives for People with Disabilities
- A Guide to Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS)
- Graduating To Independence (for ages 14-22)
- How Social Security Can Help With Vocational Rehabilitation
- Medicare (Publication No. 05-10043)

All publications are available free of charge through the web site, the local Social Security office, or by calling the toll-free number.

#### Benefits Planning Projects

SSA is in the process of funding a national network for Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach (BPA & O). As of January, 2001, sixteen states have received awards, and SSA is in the process of funding BPA & O Projects in additional states. A listing of the currently funded projects (as of 1/01) is available at: [www.ssa.gov/work/ServiceProviders/statebystate.html](http://www.ssa.gov/work/ServiceProviders/statebystate.html)

#### Ticket to Work Program Manager

Maximus Corporation

Voice: 1-866-YOURTICKET (1-866-968-7842)

TDD: 1-866-TTD2WORK (1-866-833-2967)

Web site: [www.maximus.com/ttw/index.htm](http://www.maximus.com/ttw/index.htm)

#### Benefits Management Software

The Employment Support Institute has developed WorkWORLD, software to assist individuals with disabilities in calculating the impact of employment on Social Security and other benefits. One-Stops may wish to obtain a copy of this software to assist individuals in managing their benefits.

Employment Support Institute

Attention: WorkWORLD Support

Virginia Commonwealth University School of Business

1015 Floyd Avenue; P.O. Box 844000

Richmond, VA 23284-4000

Voice: (804) 828-2665

E-mail: [WorkWORLD@vcu.edu](mailto:WorkWORLD@vcu.edu)

Web site: [www.workworld.org](http://www.workworld.org)

*MicroMax* is a software program which can determine individual eligibility for 45 public benefit programs, including SSI, SSDI, Food Stamps, TANF, and others. *MicroMax* is a project of Community Catalyst, a national non-profit organization. Additional information is available from:

MicroMax

30 Winter Street

Boston, MA 02108

Voice: (617) 338-6035

E-mail: [micromax@earthlink.net](mailto:micromax@earthlink.net)

Web site: [www.micromax.org/federal.html](http://www.micromax.org/federal.html)