



Ticket to Work (TTW)

Background

The Ticket to Work (TTW) is a voluntary employment program designed for people who receive Social Security disability benefits and want to work. It offers them expanded opportunities to obtain services and support to work and achieve their employment goals.

The TTW program was created by the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 – legislation intended to remove many barriers, such as losing health care coverage, which influence people’s decisions about trying to work. The goal of the ticket program is to increase self-sufficiency for beneficiaries with disabilities and increase their opportunities and choices through employment, vocational rehabilitation, and other support services.

Requirements

The basic eligibility requirements to participate in the TTW program are:

- Current beneficiaries of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) age 18 through 64;
- Current beneficiaries of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits age 18 through 64.

Opportunities of the Ticket to Work Program

Employment – Social Security issues beneficiaries a ticket that may be used to obtain employment support services from an expanded pool of employment providers called Employment Networks (ENs). An EN is an organization (State or local, public or private) that enters into a contract with Social Security with the intention of coordinating and delivering employment services, VR services, and/or other support services under the Ticket to Work Program. These services are provided by the EN to Social Security beneficiaries who have assigned their Tickets to the EN which has accepted the Ticket. An EN may not charge a person for services provided. Beneficiaries who choose to work with an EN, including a state VR agency, may be exempt from initiation of a medical continuing disability review, if they are meeting certain goals toward becoming economically self-sufficient.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) –Social Security provides funding to State VR agencies to support them in their efforts to help prepare people with disabilities for jobs and teach job skills. In their partnership with Social Security, the services State VR’s provide must result in the individual’s return to work for at least nine continuous months at a substantial earnings level as determined by Social Security.

Private and Public Support Service Providers – The TTW program is meant to encourage partnerships and opportunities for meaningful cooperation between agencies which assist people with disabilities to work. A person with a Ticket may choose between being served by a provider approved by SSA to function as an EN or being served by the State VR agency.

Beneficiaries Benefit from the Ticket

- Beneficiaries can choose to use their Ticket because the TTW program is free and voluntary
- No need to worry if a Ticket is lost since the actual Ticket is not required to participate in the program

- The TTW program helps people to access vocational rehabilitation, training, and placement services
- A combination of work incentives can be used to explore work options and still receive benefits
- If a work attempt is unsuccessful, beneficiaries can get back on Social Security benefits

How does work affect my check benefits?

First, you should know that if you go back to work, you will NOT automatically lose your disability benefits. The Ticket to Work and special rules called "work incentives" allow you to keep your cash benefits and Medicare or Medicaid while you test your ability to work. For the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) program, there is a trial work period during which you can receive full benefits regardless of how much you earn, as long as you report your work activity and continue to have a disabling impairment.

The trial work period continues until you accumulate nine months (not necessarily consecutive) in which you perform what we call "services" within a rolling 60-month period. We consider your work to be "services" if you earn more than \$700 a month in 2009. For 2008, this amount was \$670. After the trial work period ends, your benefits will stop for the months your earnings are at a level we consider "substantial" -- currently \$980 in 2009. For 2008, this amount was \$940. Different amounts apply to people who are disabled because of blindness. The monthly SGA amount for statutorily blind individuals for 2008 is \$1,640.

For an additional 36 months after completing the trial work period, we can start your benefits again if your earnings fall below the "substantial" level and you continue to have a disabling impairment.

If you receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) your work may affect the amount of your check. However, we do not count the first \$65.00 of earnings in a month plus one-half of the remainder. This means we count less than one-half of your earnings when we figure your SSI payment amount. You may still qualify for other work incentives, such as Ticket to Work, and continue to receive Medicaid.

Call 713-988-1211 to schedule an appointment to learn about your employment opportunities.

