

EN Essentials

Transcript: Employment Network Payments Refresher
February 14, 2024

Derek Shields: Welcome to today's EN Essentials training. My name is Derek Shields, and I will be serving as today's moderator. We can move to the next slide, please.

If this is your first EN Essentials training, please know we designed the content for individuals seeking to enhance their Employment Network's performance and compliance. This is focused, of course, on Ticket Program policies. The learning events build upon the initial EN Foundations training and feature resources and best practice strategies and other helpful information.

Like today, that could be a refresher for some, or it could build out some new information for others. Before we begin on today's topic, Employment Network Payments Refresher, and review our agenda and the presentation itself, I'd like to review a few logistics and some housekeeping items. Now to the next slide, please.

On this slide, we have our agenda. We start out with our logistics and introductions. And then we're going to go through a review of payments terminology, followed by four key resources. And if you're not familiar with these, these will assist you with understanding how to be successful with payments.

Next, into some key strategies for managing payments, and then we'll end with a Q&A session. With this in mind, I did want to cover a few of those logistics. Next slide, please.

First, it's very important to understand that TPM is recording and capturing the transcript from today's meeting, and we'll make it available on the Your Ticket to Work website that's under the Learning Events section for EN Essentials at YourTicketToWork.ssa.gov.

Next, it's important to also note that per the Ticket Program Agreement in Part 3, Section 11, Subsection 1, EN staff are not permitted to record this meeting nor capture the transcript. Once we get into the Q&A area, please understand that we encourage your questions. You can use the MS Teams chat throughout to ask those questions, and our team members are ready to address those. You can also use MS Teams chat during that final Q&A session. You may also send your additional questions or comments to us at the ENOperations@YourTicketToWork.ssa.gov inbox. And, of course, closed captioning is available and working for participants who are using the MS Teams application or by using the closed caption link provided in the GovDelivery announcement for today's call or dropped into the chat.

To turn on closed captions in MS Teams, go to the three ellipses on the top of the MS Teams window, click on the More menu option, scroll down the list to Language and Speech, and then

click on Turn on Live Captions. Also, when using the link option for captions, please paste that link into your browser, and it will open a separate window to view closed captioning there. Okay, next slide, please.

As I mentioned, my name is Derek Shields, and I'll serve as the moderator. I'm the EN Development and Training Manager with the Ticket Program Manager. I'm also, of course, delighted today to be joined by a Payments expert from the Ticket Program Manager, Ms. Nicole Black. Nicole is a Payments Manager with TPM, and I also, had the delight to work with her when she was in our Development and Training Department. And with that, let's move to the next slide, and I'll turn this session over to today's presenter, Nicole.

Nicole Black: Thank you, Derek. Welcome, everyone. Happy Valentine's Day. So, thank you for joining us for the EN Payments Refresher Part 1, and we're going to start it off going over some Payments terminology. I want you guys to keep in mind these questions are going to be rhetorical, So, you don't need to answer them. They're just questions where you're going to think, huh, do I know the answer to this? So, next slide, please.

The first question is, what do the acronyms TWL and SGA mean? Next slide, please. So, TWL means Trial Work Level, and Trial Work Level allows the Ticketholders to test their ability to work. So, for 2024, the Trial Work Level is \$1,110 per month, and Trial Work Level amount is used for Phase 1 Milestone payments under the Milestone Outcome System. SGA, it stands for Substantial Gainful Activity. The 2024 SGA rates for blind is \$2,590 per month, and the non-blind SGA rate is \$1,550 per month. SGA rates are used for Phase 2 Milestones and Outcomes payments. So, typically, Trial Work Level and SGA rates, increase each year, and this is based on the National Average Wage Index. Next slide, please.

Second rhetorical question is, what are the two types of payment methods for ENs? Next slide.

So, ENs must choose between two payment methods in order to receive payments. Option 1 is the Milestone Outcome payment method. Under this method, an EN can receive payment while the Ticketholder is still receiving a federal cash benefit, and there are three different phases to this outcome, the Milestone Outcome payment method.

The first one is for Phase 1s, and that's when earnings are at Trial Work Level or above, and there are four milestones available. Phase 2 Milestones are when earnings are at SGA level or above. So, for your SSDI or your Title II beneficiaries, there's 11 milestone payments. And then for your SSI or your Title XVI beneficiaries, there are 18 milestone payments. And then finally, we have the outcome payments, which are applicable if earnings are at SGA level, and this is after suspense of benefits due to work and earnings. So, for your SSDI Ticketholders, that's 36 payments, and your SSI Ticketholders, that is 60 payments. Next slide, please.

The second payment option is the Outcome-only payment method. With this method, ENs receive payments when the Ticketholder is no longer receiving a federal cash benefit. So, when their earnings are at SGA level only, and this is only after the Ticketholder is in suspense of benefits due to work or earnings. Under this method, SSDI Ticketholders have 36 payments available to them, and then SSI beneficiaries have 60 payments. Next slide, please.

The third rhetorical question is, what is the difference between a claim month and attainment month? Next slide. So, the first one is the claim month. The claim month is the month that a Ticketholder's work or earnings are used to satisfy the conditions of a payment request. And the attainment month is the month in which a Ticketholder attains the earnings necessary to meet a Phase 1 Milestone requirement. And we have some examples of this to share with you. Next slide.

So, for this example, we are looking at submitting for a Phase 1 Milestone payment. With this, the Ticketholder must make at or above trial work level earnings for three months within a six-month period. So, if a Ticketholder achieves trial work-level earnings in January, February, and June, those three months will be considered the claim months. June, however, would be considered the attainment month because that's when the Ticketholder achieved the milestone in order for the EN to be able to request that payment. So, when you're submitting the payment request, you would submit the payment request for June, the attainment month. Next slide, please.

For this second example, we're looking at submitting for a Phase 1, Milestone 1 payment, and the Ticketholder must earn at or above trial work level earnings for one month after the Ticket assignment date. So, in this example, the Phase 1, Milestone 1 has a claim month and attainment month of January. But when you transition to the Phase 1, Milestone 2 payment request, you will be able to use the Phase 1, Milestone 1 to satisfy the conditions for the other Phase 1 Milestones. So, in this case, January was a claim month for both Phase 1, Milestone 1 and 2 because the Ticketholder was able to achieve those earnings in January, February, and April. Next slide, please.

Now we're going to do a little bit more to apply that example. I would recommend if you are following along and you're not comfortable with requesting Phase 1 Milestones, to go ahead and take out a piece of paper and jot down this information as we work through the next few slides. So, we have Joe. In September of 2022, Ticketholder Joe was assigned to your Employment Network. And Joe has been out of work due to his disability for over two years. So, Joe has had some good luck come his way, and Joe has obtained a job working at a bakery, and he's earning \$2,200 a month.

So, in January of 2023, he earned his first month of income to meet Trial Work Level requirements. But he had a setback, and in February and March, he was unable to work due to his disability. But he got back on his feet, and he was able to start working again in April and May. And he was able to achieve the same payment rate as he did in January, and that's \$2,200 a month. So, keep these two questions in mind. We're going to go over them. The first one is going to be, are you eligible for a Phase 1, Milestone 1 payment? And if so, what is that claim month going to be for your Phase 1, Milestone 1? And the second question that we're going to cover is, are you eligible for a Phase 1, Milestone 2 payment? And if so, what are going to be the claim and attainment months for that request? Next slide, please.

So, to circle back to the first question it was, can you submit for a Phase 1, Milestone 1 with that example? And the answer is yes. And that's because Joe earned over the minimum Trial Work

Level earnings required for a Phase 1, Milestone 1 payment. And he's still receiving his Social Security benefits. He's considered to be in current pay status. And the second part to this question is, what would your claim month be for that Phase 1, Milestone 1? And it would be January because that is the month that he made his earnings and you were able to request that Phase 1, Milestone 1. So, this is based on the rule that Phase 1, Milestone 1 payments are for one month of earnings after Ticket assignment. Next slide.

Now, we will answer the second question, which was, can you submit for a Phase 1, Milestone 2 payment? And the answer to that is yes as well. And this is because Joe has earned over the minimum Trial Work Level earnings for three out of six months. And if you recall, that was January, April, and May. So, if Joe had the earnings in January, April, and May, what would be your claim month and what would be your attainment month? So, your claim months are that January, April, and May, with the attainment month being May. Next slide, please.

Okay, now that you know that Joe is ready, he's working, and it's time for you to start thinking about requesting payments, we're going to first tell you what resources you need to get started. Next slide, please. Some of the things that you want to have handy when you're requesting your payments would be the EN Payments Checklist, your Payments at a Glance, the 18-Month Look-Back Tool, and your Proof of Relationship form. Next slide.

So, first up, we have the EN Payments Checklist. This document reviews key exclusions and requirements for each payment type, as well as many common payment issues. And you can find the EN Payments Checklist on the [YourTicketToWork.ssa.gov](https://www.yourtickettowork.ssa.gov) website under Resources, Resource Documents, and then under Payment Resources. Next slide, please.

Then we have our handy Payments at a Glance. I strongly encourage each and every person who is requesting payments to always have this document handy because it is very helpful to keep everything straight, especially when you're requesting your Phase 1 Milestones. So, this document is updated annually, and it shows payment rates for the Outcome payment method and the Milestone Outcome payment method system. This is also, located at the [YourTicketToWork.ssa.gov](https://www.yourtickettowork.ssa.gov) website under Resources, and you would select Resource Documents, and then Payment Resources. Next slide, please.

The other thing that people should really have handy when they are requesting their Phase 1 Milestones is that 18-Month Look-Back Tool. We will go over a few examples of using this document a little bit later on. One thing I'd like to add or share is that some people are overwhelmed by this tool, but it's really pretty simple to use, and it's a good way for you to have a baseline of what to expect as it relates to any payments that may be owed to you. And the key takeaway with the 18-Month Look-Back Tool is only put information in there that you actually have accurate data for, meaning your Ticket assignment date. If you know the date of disability onset, you can enter that. If you know that there is a successful VR closure, you can enter that. And then based on your intake conversation with your Ticketholders, hopefully you'll be able to determine if they had Trial Work Level earnings at any time prior to your Ticket assignment date and the 18 months preceding the Ticket assignment.

To locate that 18-Month Look-Back Tool, again, go to the YourTicketToWork.ssa.gov site under Resources, Resource Documents, and then Tools for Success. Next slide, please. All right. So, we go to our Proof of Relationship form. ENs must submit Proof of Relationship with the Ticketholder when requesting Phase 1 Milestones 1 through 3. Proof of Relationship can be established by submitting paystubs, which is the gold standard, or by completing a Proof of Relationship form. You can locate this Proof of Relationship form at the YourTicketToWork.ssa.gov website by selecting Resources, then go to Forms, and then to Payments. Next slide, please.

Okay. So, we're ready to request payments, and now we need to manage everything that we have going on as it relates to payments for our Ticketholders. Next slide, please.

So, when you are preparing to submit a payment, there are some key things that you should have handy. That's your Ticket Portal credentials, your payments Resources to reference what we discussed earlier, your Proof of Relationship for Phase 1 Milestones 1 through 3, evidence of earnings, which would include your paystubs, an employer-prepared earnings statement that is signed by the employer, and/or the work number report. Next slide, please.

So, there are three ways to get paid. This slide represents the two best ways to get paid. So, the first one is the Ticket Portal. In utilizing the Portal, you can view pending and processed payment requests. It's the fastest way, and it's the recommended way to actually manage your payments. Payments that are requested through the Portal are processed within 30 calendar days of receipt.

The second way to get paid is through ePay. SSA processes these payments quarterly. And this Phase 1 Milestones 4, Phase 2 Milestones, and Outcomes are all paid via ePay. Phase 1 Milestones 1 through 3 must be requested through the Portal. And when we are processing ePay payments, these payments are processed in order of Social Security number, not by provider ID. So, ENs may not see all of their payments processed at the same time. Next slide, please.

And the third way to request a payment is manually through the manual payment request form. You would submit the manual payment request if your EN has been terminated or if there is a technical issue using the Portal. This form can be faxed or mailed in, and it's Form SSA-1391. When you submit the form, it should be accompanied with evidence of earnings and proof of relationship if you're requesting Phase 1, Milestones 1 through 3. Next slide, please.

Okay, So, to be eligible for ePay. That's important in order to be able to receive payments via ePay. However, ENs are not eligible for ePay if they have not passed their annual Services and Supports review or if they are on hold or terminated. Additionally, Tickets that have been unassigned are not included in ePay. And if there has been an initial personally identifiable information or PII violation, your EN will be removed from ePay for three months or one ePay file. During this time, ENs must submit their payment request via the Ticket Portal. Next slide, please.

All right, back to the 18-Month Look-Back Tool. We recommend you use the 18-Month Look-Back Tool with your Ticketholder to help gauge which Phase 1 Milestones you may be eligible for. Keep in mind that TPM will complete their own 18-Month Look-Back Tool using earnings available in SSA's database. So, the Ticketholder may be eligible for fewer Phase 1 Milestones than anticipated. For example, there may be Trial Work Level earnings one month prior to Ticket assignment date, and if that's the case, that would exclude your Phase 1, Milestone 1. So, if applicable, after a Phase 1 Milestone has been requested, TPM will automatically deny all ineligible Phase 1 Milestones due to 18-month look-back or VR involvement.

That means if there's a successful closure within 18 months prior to the Ticket assignment date or cost reimbursement, those Phase 1 Milestones are not eligible to be received. Next slide, please.

So, when we continue to request Phase 1 Milestones, like I said earlier, the gold standard is the pay stubs because you kill two birds with one stone. You are submitting your proof of earnings and you are validating that you have a relationship with this Ticketholder. That way, everything is covered. However, we do know sometimes that does not work out. And when you have to reuse the Work Number report, the Employer Prepared Earnings Statement, or if earnings are already established in the system, a PoR form needs to be submitted as well. So, ENs must complete and submit the PoR form when submitting for Phase 1, Milestones 1 through 3 if those earnings are based on the work number. The Employer Prepared Earnings Statement, again, it has to be signed by the employer or for earnings that are already established in the Portal. ENs must then document all of the services provided on the PoR form for the milestone period and provide the specific dates for all services provided. And then an EN can use their own form to document services with date, but the form must be signed by the Employment Network.

When you're documenting this information and submitting it, we need it to be detailed so that we can understand what that communication was. It was, I had a phone call with Joe and we discussed his need for job coaching. I had a call with Joe. He's doing great on the job. And Joe said that he does not need any additional assistance from me at this time. Just simply saying, I sent Joe an email, I sent Joe a text, or I left Joe a message does not suffice. We need to understand exactly what that communication was so that it validates your interactions with that Ticketholder. Next slide, please.

So, there are some exclusions for Phase 1 Milestones, and we're going to go over some of those denial codes. So, the first one would be Denial Code 12, which is for prior earnings. Denial Code 12 is not eligible for payment due to look-back earnings. This code applies only to Phase 1 Milestone requests, and it indicates that TPM found evidence that the beneficiary had monthly earnings at or above Trial Work Level during the 18-month period immediately prior to the Ticket assignment month and after the date of disability onset. Next slide, please.

Two more denial codes that could exclude Phase 1 Milestones are related to the VR. That would be Denial Code 7 and 8. Denial Code 7 states that payments made under VR for same period. So, this code indicates that the VR agency received a cost reimbursement payment for this beneficiary. Therefore, no Phase 1 Milestones can be paid. Denial Code 8 states that due to

VR services, Phase 1 Milestones can't be paid. This code indicates that there is evidence in SSA's database that the beneficiary had a record of a successful case closure within 18 months prior to Ticket assignment date with a state VR agency. Again, if this is the case, no Phase 1 Milestones can be paid. Next slide, please.

Now we are monitoring these payment requests that have been made, and you're trying to keep up with everything that you've done. Before you submit a new payment request on a Ticketholder, you want to go through a few of these screens within the Ticket Portal just to make sure you have everything aligned or that you're up to date with what's going on with your payment request. You want to view the list SSA beneficiaries currently assigned to me. Then you want to view Ticket payments already made to me. And then you want to look at all pending Ticket payments for me. And as a reminder, you would also, want to make sure that you're verifying that all payment requests are being made in order. Next slide, please.

So, for your Phase 2 Milestones, we are working with SGA earnings or above, because SGA earnings are required for all Phase 2 Milestones. If we go back to our example with Joe, the claim months from Phase 1 Milestones cannot be used to request Phase 2 Milestones. So, for example, even though Joe had earnings above SGA in January of 2023, since those earnings were used to satisfy the Phase 1, Milestone 1, they cannot be used again to submit a first claim for the Phase 2 Milestones. And also, another thing to keep in mind is that Phase 1 and Phase 2 Milestones are no longer available once a Ticketholder reaches Outcome status. Next slide, please.

So, when we're in the Outcome payments period, this means the Ticketholder is in suspense of pay or benefits due to work or earnings, and they have earnings that are at SGA level or above. Once a Ticketholder reaches the Outcome phase, the remaining Phase 1 and Phase 2 Milestones cannot be paid. Any eligible milestone payments remaining can be paid out during a reconciliation payment, and that would happen after the 12th Outcome payment has been processed. So, even if a Ticketholder moves back into current pay status, you are not in a position to go back and request the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Milestones. You will have to wait for that Ticketholder to be in suspense again due to work or earnings and pick up at your Outcome payments. And another best practice is to, as an EM, to encourage your Ticketholders to report their wages. Next slide, please.

So, another method or another thing that you can do to track your payment status is to make sure that you are using a Portal that is preferred because that does have real-time updates. However, if you need additional assistance, the EN Payments Help Desk is an excellent resource. They can assist you with tracking payments that have been submitted for greater than 30 days from when you submitted them. When you send these requests, be sure to include the reference number or the work case number that's associated with the payment request in the Portal. And you can send that email to ENPaymentsHelpDesk@YourTicketToWork.ssa.gov. Or you can call 866-949-3687 and please allow five days for a response from the Payments Help Desk. Next slide, please. And with that, I will turn it back over to Derek.

Derek Shields: Thank you very much, Nicole. We appreciate you going through the refresher content and providing some best practice strategies, along with a review of the terminology, of course, too.

Before we enter our Q&A period, I just wanted to bring up at this point a reminder that we are ready for that, but we also, need to correct something I said earlier. TPM is recording this session, and we're capturing a transcript from today's meeting, and we will make that available on the Your Ticket to Work website. When I mentioned earlier that per the Ticket Program Agreement, I had an incorrect section. I need to correct that. It's in Part 3, Section 11, subsection I, the letter I. So, that's Part 3, Section 11, subsection I. And per that TPA agreement, EN staff are not permitted to record this meeting nor capture the transcripts. But we do provide that for you as a follow-up on the website, and we'll make sure that that becomes known to you when it is available.

As somebody asked recently, the PowerPoint, audio, and transcript will be posted on that EN Essentials Learning Events page as well. So, you can get the PowerPoint that Nicole just went through, along with a recording of everything she said, because if you're not as familiar with some of this Payments content, it will be helpful for a replay, of course. Okay, thanks for that.

Let's go now to the next slide, and we have a few reminders about how to participate in today's Q&A. Of course, you can ask questions in several ways. Using the MS Teams chat is encouraged, and many of you have. We've had about 20, 25 questions or so to be submitted through chat, and we appreciate Jalen and our team being able to respond to many of those throughout the session. You may also, of course, ask a question over the phone. To do that, it's a two-step process. You can press star 5 to raise your hand, and we will unmute your phone. Then we need you to press star 6 on your side to unmute yourself before trying to speak. Again, that's a two-step process via the telephone. If you'd like to do that, choose that option.

For participants that are joining on the Teams app, you can ask a question by using the raise your hand feature. If you identify yourself with the raise your hand, then our team will be able to call on you. You can identify yourself by your name and your EN name. We're looking for a first name and your EN name, and then identify your question, and we'll proceed. So, with that in mind, you have some options.

If you prefer, you can submit a question to our email box, ENOperations@YourTicketToWork.ssa.gov. We'll forward that over to our colleagues for their response as well. And with that, let's check in with questions. I know Brittney and Katherine on our team have been tracking that. Let's start out, Brittney, with any questions that have been submitted via chat that you would like to bring forward for Nicole's attention. Brittney?

Brittney Boyd: Sure. I have a question from Amanda. She asks, what are the benefits of choosing the Outcome payment method?

Nicole Black: Hi, Amanda. So, the benefit of choosing the Outcome payment method is that if you are eligible to receive all of the payments that are available to you, depending on the Ticketholders, if they're Title 2 or Title 16, it's a little bit more that you are paid out. However,

what you have to keep in mind is in order to start to receive those payments, you will be working with the Ticketholder for a significant amount of time before you actually start to receive payments because they do have to be at SGA level or above, and they have to have their benefits suspended due to work or earnings before you can start to request payments through the Outcome-only method. Did that help?

Derek Shields: She may post in chat, but she did say hi to you in chat, so, we might get a confirmation shortly there as well. In the meantime, yes, Amanda commented back to you, Nicole: Yes, it did. Thanks. Thank you, Nicole.

Nicole Black: You're welcome.

Derek Shields: All right. We'll stick with Brittney for a second before we go to the raised hand. Brittney, any other questions that you would like to bring up for Nicole?

Brittney Boyd: Sure. We have a question from Rhonda. If we use the 18-Month Look-Back Tool and know that we are ineligible for Phase 1 Milestones, why do we have to submit and be denied before moving to Phase 2?

Nicole Black: Thank you for your question, Rhonda. Hi, how are you? So, that is unfortunate. I shouldn't say unfortunate. That's just the process. All payments must be requested in order, and you would just need to request one payment for it to be denied, and then the team internally knows at that point, after they complete their own 18-month look-back, to manually request and deny the remaining Phase 1 payments so that you can then move forward and request your Phase 2 payment that's available to you at that time. Did that help?

Derek Shields: We'll see if we get a response in chat. Thanks, Nicole, for describing the process. Yes, thank you, Rhonda says.

Nicole Black: All right, you're welcome.

Derek Shields: Thank you, Nicole. Let's switch over to Katherine. Katherine is monitoring the hands to ask live questions by voice or video. Katherine?

Katherine Jett: Hi, Derek. We have Justin who has a question. Justin, you are unmuted if you'd like to ask your question.

Audience Member: Thanks. It seems like I always have a question for these calls. Hi. So, I had a quick question in regard to how overpayments work. I just wanted to confirm because I recently had -- there was an error with a payment thing, and I'm looking at the Ticket Portal now, and it does say 100% paid. This is, I think, a correction to the overpayment like paying it back. 100% paid, payment amount is zero, and there was no denial code. Is it safe to assume that that payment went toward paying back the overpayment?

Nicole Black: I will say, Justin, that I do not want to assume on that one because I'd have to take a closer look to the case to know specifically what happened and why.

Audience Member: Okay.

Nicole Black: What I would ask you to do is shoot this question over to the Payments Help Desk and ask them to refer it to me, and then I'll look at it for you.

Audience Member: Okay, cool. I'm sending it off to who again?

Nicole Black: To the Payments Help Desk.

Audience Member: Payments Help Desk to Nicole Black. Okay, cool.

Nicole Black: Yes, ask them to send it to me, and just be sure to include the reference number so that I can research it for you.

Audience Member: Okay, cool. And then, this is the thing regarding that whole Phase 1. The way I like to think about it, at least personally, is that VR agencies need their own funding. If they don't get funding from other sources, Social Security is the one who pays for it, right? That's why they get the Phase 1s, at least in my opinion, but I don't know if that's fully correct.

Nicole Black: Yeah, it's a little bit more complicated, but we have to make sure that the VRs are compensated for the work that they provide to the Ticketholders as well.

Audience Member: Yeah, okay. Thank you So, much. I appreciate it.

Nicole Black: You're welcome. Thank you, Justin.

Katherine Jett: Thank you, Justin. I'm sorry, Derek. We have Michael. Michael, you're unmuted if you'd like to ask your question. Hello, Michael. Okay, I'll circle back to you, Derek.

Derek Shields: Thanks, Catherine. It looks like we might have some connectivity issues with Michael in that question. I see his hand is raised again. Do you want to try it one more time, Michael?

Katherine Jett: Michael, if you would, just click the microphone above to unmute, and you can ask your question.

Derek Shields: All right, we have another raised hand. Do you want to try that?

Katherine Jett: Sure. We have Magali. You are unmuted. You can ask your question.

Audience Member: Good afternoon. I was wondering if there is a way of deleting a payment request before it gets to your hands. And let me give you an example. Sometimes I have submitted payment and I realize I made a mistake, and I have to resubmit the payment. But I have to wait until you guys evaluate the mistake I made So, you could deny it instead of me just deleting it before it gets to you guys. Is there a way of doing that? I don't know if you understood what I'm saying.

Nicole Black: Hi, Magali. Thanks for your question. And I will defer to Katie because that is something that deals specifically with the Portal, and I am not sure if that is an option.

Audience Member: Okay.

Katie Streibinger: Hi, good afternoon. No, that is not an option in the Portal. Nicole, I was going to suggest, you know, it is your process. But I would think it would probably be faster if they just emailed the help desk and let them know, you know, go find the work case number that it created in the Portal and just email them and let them know it's a mistake. And they can go ahead and take care of that based on your email. But I definitely defer to Nicole on what she would like you to do.

Nicole Black: Thank you, Katie. That's what I was thinking. I just didn't know if that was an option. So, since it is not an option, Magali, if you realize that you have submitted a request in error, reach out to the Payments Help Desk, and they will notify us that we should go in and deny the claim so that you can resubmit the request.

Audience Member: Okay. Thank you.

Nicole Black: Thank you.

Katherine Jett: Thank you, Magali. And I'll turn it back over to you, Derek.

Derek Shields: Thank you, Magali, and thank you, Katherine. It looks like the question coming in is from Michael, that he wasn't able to ask through his raised hand, was submitted and Jalen has responded in chat. So, speaking of chat, let's have Brittney come back and see if we have other questions or if any of the questions have been repeated, and we wanted to draw any of those frequently asked questions to Nicole's attention. Brittney?

Brittney Boyd: I have one question from Pat. How, when submitting a claim, can you know if a Ticketholder has had a submission in the last 18 months?

Nicole Black: Hi, Pat. I think I'm following you. Brittney, restate it.

Brittney Boyd: Sure. Let me see if I can change the wording. When submitting a claim, how can you know that a Ticketholder has had other submissions in the last 18 months?

Nicole Black: I'm going to have to defer to Kim and/or Katie, because I am not sure if you can actually see anything like that in the Portal.

Kimberly Cutler: Hi. This is Kimberly. So, I guess I'll just need to be clear. When you say submissions in the last 18 months, I assume you're talking about prior earnings. Because when I hear 18 months, I think about the 18-Month Look-Back Tool. Katie may have to chime in too to see what's available in the Portal. But this is where it comes with that conversation with your Ticketholders, right, you know, having that meeting with them, asking them about prior earnings, and putting that information in using the 18-Month Look-Back Tool. Unfortunately, if you do not have that information, I would encourage you because you have to process or request your payments in order.

So, when you request your Phase 1, Milestone 1, because you see that you have Trial Work Level earnings, I would request that you submit your payment, and then we will do our due diligence on the SSA TPM side because we may have earnings information that you do not

have. So, we will go ahead and complete the 18-Month Look-Back Tool based on if you submit information and/or what we have.

in SSA's database. And if we have the earnings information, we will proactively deny the Phase 1s that you are not eligible for. You will be able to see that information in the Portal. And then you would be able to request your next payment based on what we have denied or if we have denied any information. So, again, the best way to get that information is have that relationship with your client. You're going to need that relationship because you're requesting Phase 1 Milestones 1 through 3. So, you're going to need to have proof of relationship with your client. So, the best way to get it is to have that conversation.

I don't know what the Portal will show exactly, Katie. If there's additional information, please chime in. But if not, that is where you would most likely be able to find the information about prior earnings.

Katie Streibinger: This is Katie. Right, you can't see anything about earnings in the Portal, but what you can see is that you can go in and you can see if they previously worked with another provider, either a VR or an EN. It will show you that. So, that can kind of lead you to think, , perhaps I should ask them if they had any prior earnings, right, because they were working with someone else. If you're talking about the 18 months, had you requested it or has something been requested in the past, when you go to the list of your current clients, you can see the last payment request for them. So, if you're not sure if you've requested a payment in the last 18 months, you can see that as well. So, yeah, not knowing exactly what you're trying to ask with your question, I think we tried to cover all our bases here. Hopefully that will guide you to the next step.

Derek Shields: Hey, Katie, thanks for that, and thank you, Kim. I'm just going to read out what Mary Lynn has posted, how to find past payments, if that is the question you ask. You can see all past payments in the Portal by going to your list of current assignments and find the person and then look at payment history. Any comments on that, Katie?

Katie Streibinger: No, that is correct, and I encourage anyone who, you know, has access to the portal, if you've recently been given access to the Portal, please make sure you use the Ticket Portal User Guide. It is a great resource. It shows you ways to get to different information for your Ticketholders. There is a lot of information in there if you click around and you follow the user guide. You can see a lot more information that you don't think you have at first glance. So, thank you for that, Mary Lynn.

Derek Shields: Thank you, Katie. Thank you, Mary Lynn. So, thanks for the chat questions. Keep them coming in. In the meantime, I think we have another raised hand for a live question. Katherine?

Katherine Jett: Hi, Derek. Yes, we have Justin. Justin, you're unmuted. You may ask your question.

Audience Member: It's me again. Hi.

Audience Member: I wanted to get some clarification. Earlier I asked about when we were talking about Phase 1, Milestone 1 and Milestone 2 for the overlapping of months thing. So, Jalen had said that if Phase 1, Milestone 1 was Trial Work Level, then it can be reused as counting for each month, right? So, Phase 1, Milestone 1 could be January. Milestone 2 could be January through March. Milestone 3 could be January through June and January through September. But are there any more clear rules? Because the whole idea of, if it's Trial Work Level, yeah, of course it's Trial Work Level. You wouldn't be able to count that month if it wasn't Trial Work Level. Is just kind of an obvious kind of a situation or what's going on there? And then a second follow-up question regarding me making a payment or making a payment request for a month without realizing that overlap was allowed.

Nicole Black: Okay. I'm going to see if I can unpack that. So, you're wanting clarification as to how the payment months can be -- how the claim months can be used for your Phase 1 Milestones 1 through 4 for the duration.

Audience Member: Yeah, correct. Just to make sure they can be overlapping. That was never really clear until just now, you know.

Nicole Black: Okay. So, yes, that's a really good question. And so for your Phase 1 Milestones 1 through 4, when I mentioned having out that Payments at a Glance, this is why I say it's important to have it out, because you're seeing lined out the months that are applicable for each of the phases. And that 12 months is a rolling 12-month period, because not every scenario is going to be where that Ticketholder is hitting Trial Work Level or above each and every month consecutively. Sometimes if a month falls off or they're not making those earnings, you have to pick back up, and then you will not be using those months again. And I probably just confused you.

Audience Member: That makes sense. I'm just talking about in the easy example of, you know, the person's working SGA, no issues, they're working continuously with zero problems whatsoever. You are able to use months that are overlapping with no issue.

Nicole Black: Yes.

Audience Member: Awesome.

Nicole Black: And that's specifically when you're using Phase 1s. You cannot do that, however, for Phase 2s.

Audience Member: Phase 2s. Makes sense.

Nicole Black: Yep.

Audience Member: Okay. So, question for you, then, in regard to that.

Nicole Black: Okay.

Audience Member: I had built for successfully a Phase 1, Milestone 1 for January, as an example again.

Nicole Black: Okay.

Audience Member: And then I did Phase 1, Milestone 2 for February through April, and that was also approved.

Nicole Black: Okay.

Audience Member: Why would I not have gotten a denial code and gotten yelled at saying go back and do January through March instead? Because I've been denied for other ones that were seemingly even more unclear as to the denial reason, but that one just went through no problem.

Nicole Black: So, I would have to say that for this, again, I would need to look at the case specifically to see why it was paid the way it was. And if you want me to take a deeper look so I can give you a better explanation, send that to the Payments Help Desk as well. I can look at it and then provide you with a better explanation.

Audience Member: Okay. Beautiful. Thank you so much for listening.

Nicole Black: You're welcome.

Derek Shields: Thank you, Justin, for the questions. Go ahead, Katherine.

Katherine Jett: I don't see any other raised hands, Derek, at this time.

Derek Shields: Thank you very much. Let's swing back over to Brittney and check on chat. Again, we appreciate the questions coming in from chat. Our colleague, Jalen, has been active in there providing answers. Brittney, anything that you want to bring out that hasn't been responded to or just to point out?

Brittney: Yes, we have a question from Wendy. Can a Ticketholder be put in outcomes when they are still in their Trial Work Period?

Nicole Black: Great question, Wendy. And, yes, ma'am, if their Trial Work Level is above SGA and their benefits are suspended due to work earnings, that can transition you directly to the outcomes phase. And at that point, after as long as they're consistently working and you're consistently receiving your outcomes payments, once you hit outcome payment number 12, then any remaining phase 1 or phase 2 payments that are on the table that are available to you will then be paid out at the reconciliation. Did that help?

Derek Shields: Thank you, Nicole. We'll see if we get a follow-up chat post there. In the meantime, I'll go back to Brittney for another question.

Brittney: Yes, I have a question from Lisa. If we unassign a Ticketholder, are we still eligible to get Ticket payments from previous milestones in process?

Nicole Black: If you unassign the Ticket or if the Ticketholder unassigns the Ticket?

Brittney: If they unassign the Ticket, the EN.

Nicole Black: If the EN unassigns the Ticket, I will need to... Kim, you may be able to do this quicker than me because I would need to reference the RFA. But you'd be eligible for payment in the month preceding the Ticket unassignment up until that point. Did I get that?

Kimberly Cutler: Sorry, Nicole. You just reiterated the question for the EN, right?

Nicole Black: And then I said they'd be eligible for that payment up until the month prior to Ticket unassignment.

Kimberly Cutler: Yes, that is correct. If an EN unassigns the Ticket, they are eligible for payment up to the month before unassignment. But because the EN unassigned it, which means, you're no longer providing services to that client, you would not be eligible for payments after the month of unassignment. So, as long as it's prior, if you unassign the Ticket in February, then your last month that you'd be able to bill for would be January. If the EN unassigns it, yes.

Nicole Black: Thank you.

Derek Shields: This is Derek. There's a bit of a follow-on question in chat that I'm just going to tag on. Justin says, I thought partial payments could be made to two different EN-VR, should someone reassign to another program. So, not exactly the same question, but if it's unassigned and reassigned, can partial payments exist?

Nicole Black: Justin, yes, you could be eligible for a split payment. However, the difference is if the EN unassigns the Ticket or if the Ticketholder unassigns the Ticket. If the EN unassigns the Ticket, you're only eligible for the month prior to Ticket unassignment. And if the Ticketholder unassigns it and then it's reassigned, there are situations where you could be eligible for a split payment.

Derek Shields: In that month of Ticketholder unassignment, a split payment could happen in that situation. Thank you.

Nicole Black: You're welcome.

Derek Shields: There's another follow-on, I believe. Tina asks, what if they are self-employed and unassigned? It doesn't say if it's an EN unassignment or a Ticketholder unassignment, but it's self-employed and unassigned. Do the same rules that you just covered apply, or does something change?

Nicole Black: The same rules apply. However, verification of earnings is what makes that a little bit different because we are not able to make any payments for self-employed Ticketholders until their earnings are actually verified in SSA systems.

Derek Shields: Thank you, Nicole. Appreciate that.

Nicole Black: You're welcome.

Derek Shields: And Justin says, awesome, got it. And Tina confirms, yes, EN unassignment, and he has aged out. And Tina now responds, thank you. Very polite bunch we have with us today.

Nicole Black: Thank you, guys.

Derek Shields: Yeah, So, let's go back to Brittney. I know the chat's still active. Brittney, any other questions that you wanted to call out?

Brittney Boyd: Yes, the only question it looks like that hasn't been answered is, how accurate is the ePay system?

Derek Shields: Let's circle back to that in a second. I'm sorry. I meant to do this. Wendy did comment. She didn't ask the last question about unassignment, but she asked a question prior to that. It might be hard, Nicole, for you to remember the question because we've been going through so many. But Wendy's reply is, what about the 9-month Trial Work Period where Ticketholders are told they can earn as much as they want?

Kimberly Cutler: Nicole, can I take a stab at that?

Nicole Black: I was about to tap you in. Yeah, go for it.

Kimberly Cutler: Yeah, I think the issue is the Trial Work Period versus Trial Work Level. My understanding, and this could be old, but, of course, in order for a month to count as a Trial Work Period month, they have to be at Trial Work Level earnings. So, what I wanted to note was when you ask about -- I think the previous question was, can a Ticketholder go basically into suspense status during the Trial Work Period? And what Wendy has followed up with, she's basically saying, what about the Trial Work Period when they can make as much money as they want? One of the things I wanted to say from a payments perspective is, we process based on what's in the system, right? What's in SSA's database. So, if you have a Ticketholder that's in the Trial Work Period, like you said, they can make as much money as they want. That's on the other side of the wheelhouse, right? In our wheelhouse, we're just looking at what's in SSA database. And if we see that this Ticketholder has earnings, we check their benefit status. So, if their benefits are in suspense due to worker earnings, then that's what triggers us to process an Outcome payment, of course, as long as they have SGA level earnings.

So, I would think, and Operations may get me for this, but I would think that if they're in the Trial Work Period, right, and they're making as much money as they want, but it's not, they have that nine-month period, that it wouldn't show in suspense on our side. But that may be a question better fit for EN Training Operations, because for us, we're just going by what's in the system. So, if it's in suspense and we get it and it's at SGA level earnings, it's in suspense due to work or earnings, we're going to make the payment. If you, the EN, know that, wait a minute, Jane is still in her Trial Work Period, so her benefits should not be in suspense, then that's something that you would have your Ticketholder follow up with maybe the field office.

So, I wanted to clean that up. We're basing it on what we see. Your understanding is they're in the Trial Work Period, so it shouldn't be suspended. But if it is in the system, we're going to make the payment. If you feel that that's not correct, then I would have the Ticketholder follow up with their local field office about their benefits status. Hopefully that answered your question, Wendy.

Derek Shields: We got a thank you in caps from Wendy, so I believe that was helpful and a yes, it did help. So, thank you, Kim, for that response. We are coming close to the top of the hour. We did have one other question that Brittney brought up, but we circled back to Wendy. Let's go back to Brittney for that last question, please.

Brittney Boyd: Yes, the question was how accurate is the ePay system?

Nicole Black: All right. Thank you for that question, but I need a little bit more with that. And when you're speaking to the accuracy, at what level are you looking for the accuracy?

Derek Shields: Might be a question -- this is Derek. If we can't get that in chat, we're going to run out of time most likely. But, Nicole, if somebody wanted to submit that question through email, would that be something that could be followed up with more details?

Nicole Black: Absolutely.

Derek Shields: Okay.

Nicole Black: That's what I would recommend.

Derek Shields: Yeah, and there's a question about, like, where does somebody find the ePay payments in the Portal? If somebody is a Portal user, then the Portal User Guide would provide more information about that, and we saw that that has to be requested earlier. So, we do have some continued questions coming in. We are nearing the top of the hour, and I'm going to have to proceed to close today's EN Essentials.

However, we do have ways to keep asking your questions, of course, and we're going to share those with you in a moment. If we could go to the next slide, please. And in the meantime, perhaps Jalen will continue to be able to answer some of your questions in chat, too. We want to, of course, thank you and leave you with some resources for your consideration. We've spoken about these. We've dropped links to them in chat, but there are some key ones, and you can find them on the service provider website. They're back in chat now with direct links. You can go to the Resources section inside of Resources.

The first two links on the left side are Forms and Resource Documents. Under the Forms area, you will find the Proof of Relationship form, and then under Resource Documents, you will find the EN Payments Checklist, the Payments at a Glance, and the 18-Month Look-Back Tool. All four of these were referred to, and we had a bit of a walk-through from Nicole on these important resources. So, check those out and be familiar with those. And then to our next slide, please.

We do have some upcoming events that I'd like to call out. On February 28, we have our next Work Incentive Seminar event, or WISE event, and registrations are coming in. We encourage you to participate and cover some of our frequently asked questions for this WISE event.

On March 13, we have our next EN Essentials. We welcome back our Payments team for taking a deeper dive into payments, Part 2, and we encourage your participation.

March 19 will be the first quarterly All-EN Call of the Year. We invite you to put that on your schedule and attend. And the next quarterly All-EN Payments Call, with this team that we have guesting with us at Essentials, will be on May 7. So, mark that and continue to bring your payments questions to them there.

All of this is on the Service Provider website under the Calendar of Events for All EN Calls and the Essentials Calendar. Check that out.

I would like to take a moment to thank Nicole and Kim and Jaylen and our colleagues from Social Security, including Katie, for participating today as payments experts to provide the training information and answers to your questions. For reaching back out to us, if you have questions or feedback on EN Essentials, you can reach us at ENOperations@YourTicketToWork.ssa.gov. We do appreciate hearing from you and encourage you to submit your ideas there. And on behalf of the team, we thank you for your time today. This EN Essentials learning event has now concluded.