VCU Training & Certification Opportunities for Employment Networks

November 2018

VCU

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance National Training and Data Center

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program (WIPA)

- The WIPA program was created as part of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999. Services began in 2000.

- There are currently 82 local projects that cover all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories.

- The WIPA projects are staffed by 400 Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWICs) who provide individualized work incentives counseling services to Social Security Disability beneficiaries.

WIPA Program Background

- WIPA, along with the Ticket to Work program, is a key component of Social Security's strategy to promote employment among beneficiaries and reduce dependence on SSI and Title II cash benefits.

- The WIPA projects serve about 35,000 beneficiaries per year.

- Social Security disability beneficiaries who are working or preparing for work are prioritized to receive WIPA services.

VCU National Training and Data Center (NTDC) Provides:

Training for WIPA CWICs and staff of community partner agencies who deliver work incentives counseling services:

- Initial Training & Certification
- Ongoing Professional Development Training & Continuing Certification
- Individual and Organization Level Technical Assistance

Training for other Employment Support professionals who require a base level of Work Incentives knowledge:

- New Introductory Web Course

CWIC & Community Partner Work Incentives Counselor (CPWIC) Initial Training and Certification

- Designed for professionals who deliver individualized work incentives counseling services to disability beneficiaries on a regular basis.

- A year long commitment to a training and certification process that requires a significant amount of time to complete.

- Must commit to full participation in all components of the training and two-part certification process.

- Certification activities involve actual case work with beneficiaries.

Initial Training and Certification Requirements

1. Pre-training conference call the week prior to class
2. Five-day face-to-face initial training
3. Part I of the assessment process – series of competency-based exams and assignments based on the Social Security approved National Training Curriculum.
   - Takes approximately 45 hours over a six-week period
   - Participants have access to TA throughout process
4. Part II of the assessment process – submission of three Benefits Summary and Analysis (BS&A) reports for disability beneficiaries in a 12-month period for review and evaluation

Additional Information on the NTDC Website

- Detailed information on the Initial Training Class:

  https://vcu-ntdc.org/training/initial/initial.cfm

- Detailed information on the Certification Requirements & Process:

  https://vcu-ntdc.org/training/initial/certification.cfm

- Initial Training Calendar:

  https://vcu-ntdc.org/training/initial/calendar.cfm

Access to the Initial Training & Certification Process

- Beginning this current contract year, the NTDC will provide a greater number of CWIC and CPWIC Initial training classes. The current calendar includes one class per month, through July 2018.

- Additionally, the NTDC contract includes an enhanced focus on serving community partners in the initial training & certification program. Employment Network staff are included in the highest priority community partner group.

Registration Priorities

1. WIPA Project Staff

2. Community partner staff who provide direct benefits counseling services to Social Security beneficiaries:

   <u>Priority 1</u>: Staff or managers of organizations or agencies who are an Employment Network, State VR Agency, Medicaid agency, or American Job Center

   <u>Priority 2</u>: Social Security Demonstration project staff

   <u>Priority 3</u>: Staff of all other community partner agencies and organizations

Registration Process

- Encourage EN staff who provide counseling services to register early. Register through the Initial Training and Registration page of the NTDC website.

- Select "EN Staff" as type of community partner, and confirm how often you provide work incentives counseling to disability beneficiaries.

- There is frequently a waiting list for the Initial Training classes. Final decisions regarding training acceptance are made by Social Security officials.

- There is no cost to participate in the training and certification process for those approved to attend. However, all approved participants are responsible for their own travel, lodging and meal expenses.

Community Partner Certification

- EN staff will be fully certified Community Partner Work Incentives Counselors upon successful completion of the two-part certification process.

- As a certified CPWIC, staff will have access to ongoing training and technical assistance, and resources provided by the VCU NTDC team.

- Beginning July 2016, all certified WIPA CWICs and CPWICs must complete annual continuing certification requirements. Participation in the continuing certification process begins the July following attainment of initial certification.

New Introductory Web Course

- *Social Security Disability Benefits, Work Incentives, and Employment Support Programs* Web Course

- Provides a basic introduction to the Social Security disability benefit programs (SSI and SSDI) and their associated work incentives, as well as an overview of the field of work incentives counseling.

- Designed for professionals who want a better understanding of Social Security disability benefits and the basics related to how work affects these benefits.

Target Audience Includes:

- Community partners who provide return-to-work services, including staff of ENs, state VR agencies, American Job Centers and other employment service providers;

- Staff of agencies or organizations who have regular contact with beneficiaries and are in a position to encourage work and financial stability planning and outcomes.

Introductory Web Course Content

- Two-week course consisting of six (6) lessons:
  - **Lesson 1**: The Problem of Unemployment Among Social Security Disability Beneficiaries – WIPA as Part of the Solution
  - **Lesson 2:** Introduction to Social Security Disability Benefit Programs
  - **Lesson 3:** Title II Disability Benefits and Work

Introductory Web Course Content (continued)

- **Lesson 4:** Understanding the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Program
- **Lesson 5:** Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Work
- **Lesson 6:** Supporting Beneficiaries to Take the Next Step Toward Employment

Introductory Web Course Details

- Approved by Social Security

- Offered 8 times each year. The calendar is available on the NTDC website:

    https://vcu-ntdc.org/training/initial/introcal.cfm

- Next offering: December 3 – 14, 2018

- Register online; to date all registrants have been approved to participate.

Goal to Increase VR and EN Participation

- During the last year, 768 professionals participated in the Introductory web course:
  - 27 percent were staff from local employment support agencies,
  - 18 percent were VR agency personnel, and
  - 12 percent were EN staff.

Based on our current capacity, we would like to significantly increase the number of EN and State VR staff who participate each year.

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