Please stand by for realtime captions.

Good day and welcome to the quarterly VR called. Today's conference is being recorded. At this time, I would like to turn the conference over to Jennelle Bratcher. Please go ahead.

Good afternoon. My name is Jennelle Bratcher and I am the branch chief of the VR team for the office of employment support for Social Security administration. I'm excited everyone is able to join us for the quarterly all VR call today. We were equally excited to see everyone who attended last week at our in house training. Everyone that was not able to attend the April training, we will be soliciting for training at headquarters for some time in the summer so you can look forward to receiving a delivery notice very soon with more information to come. We hope you can attend and bring any questions you have with you. I would like to turn this call over to Raquel Donaldson to introduce are very.

Thank you and good afternoon everyone. We definitely have a special guest with us today. I'd like to welcome Laura Mezzanotte from the OR DP data exchange and Laura is on the call to talk to us about the state verification exchange system, otherwise known as SVES

The state verification system allows agencies to get title II and title 16 information as well as verifications of people’s name, date of birth and Social Security number. The agencies use this. I'm not really sure what you are looking for in this. I'm actually the developer of the system, so what are the questions you are looking for?

Laura, what we are going to do right now is open up the lines for the VRs with any questions they may have in regards just to SVES and we would do that just for a few minutes. Once we are done with that if you wanted to recap anything you can, or if you wanted to jump off you are welcome to do so. Operator, can open the lines for questions at this time?

Ladies and gentlemen, if you would like to ask a question, please press star one on your telephone keypad. If you using a speakerphone please make sure your mute function is turned off to allow your signal to reach our equipment. Again, star 1 to ask a question. We will take the first question from you Eugenia.

I think the question a lot of the state VRs have is not necessarily what it is but how did they get it if they don't currently have it? We are part of the Department of Human Services, which does the food stamp program so we are able to login under an agreement with the state Department of Human Services and actually get the data. There are some VR agencies that are independent that don't have access currently to the SVES system that would like to know how they would get it. Do they have to go through directly to their SVES contact to get the data? Would you be able to tell them who has the agreement with you in their state, questions like that, about access of the data?

The first thing is what is a VR ?

Vocational rehabilitation. We help people with disabilities go back to work. It is a voluntary state program. Every state has a state location VR program and we actually use it for multiple reasons.

One is we work with Social Security under the Cost Reimbursement program and one of the things we are required to do is verify Social Security benefits. The main reason we use the state verification exchange system is to verify benefits but what is called presumptive eligibility for our services, which is a federal requirement, but we are federally required to verify benefits if somebody states they are on Social Security disability.

So you are associated with like housing and what have you?

We are currently housed in the Department of Human Services but some states are independent. Some are with the Department of Labor. We are a state agency. We are governed by the Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration. We are mandatory a participant of programs through Social Security.

These particular agencies that do get this information out they don't pass the data on to you all?

That is just it. Somebody states more one don't know who they go to, to get the access. The need to know who currently has the main access. Usually it is the human service agencies of the state. If that is the case, is there a contact they contact to get the access to do an agreement which is what we have to be able to access the data and then they get access directly from that agency. Do they have to get the access directly through you as a contact?

I'm going to take a look at the state because you said you work at the state of Oregon. We have two systems that come into you. It looks like we have two agencies so I'm not really sure what agencies because I don't have the state agreement in front of me. Raquel, we may have to table this question because this is going to go above and beyond me. I thought you were having questions with the actual system and the data you are getting back, but it looks like in order to get information, we need to look at agreements and see what we can do to get you all on board with this. I wish I would've known this ahead of time. I am going to get with the ORDP group and they are going to get with the people who have your agreements and if you can provide me, are you saying all 50 states need this information?

Laura, there are 74 active state VR agencies. Some have more than one, where Eugenia is, she is in Oregon. Some states have more than one VR agency so there is 74 active total right now. The questions I forwarded to you was in regard to the staff getting access to the system and basically explaining in each state of the tran25s who can have access and the process for getting access to the SVES.

The VR is the volunteer representative?

The VR is the vocational rehabilitation office.

We are required to be in every state.

I am making notes. I'm going to have to pull more people into this and get them brought up to speed. You are way past me. I am the developer and I know the system and I can help you get logged in and explain the results and everything like that. When it comes to other parts of it, I don't have the ability to do that. Let me get a hold of them and we will try to set up a meeting with you all early next week. With that be a possibility?

Laura, you can reach out to me whenever you are ready and we will work something out possibly to follow-up on the next all VR call.

And that is you, Raquel?

Yes.

I'm going to get a call in to everybody. I wish I could be of more help to this but I need people from policy and I need people from ORDP to get involved in this one. We must've had a misunderstanding of what we are looking at and now that I have spoken to you I know what you are looking for and we need more people in this meeting.

No worries. I appreciate you being on the call and I apologize to all the tran25s to all of this. I'm going to actually throw it back to Jennelle.

Laura, thank you for your time. If you want to set up the meeting, please use Raquel as the point of contact and copy me as well.

No problem. I will talk to you soon.

Another hot topic everybody has been wondering about, the discontinuation of form 113. We are going to discuss RSA 911. We have been working with RSA, David and Christopher and their team and trying to get their assistance in deriving the appropriate data elements we need to pull from the RSA 2 and the new RSA 911 so we can give you a form close to what you used to use for cost formula purposes for next year. We are still in the midst of those meetings so we can't give you any definitive answers on when that form will be available and when we will have those data elements parsed out but just know we are working on it. It is a continual process. We know this information has to get to you guys by September and we want to ensure we deliver on time. Just know that information will be coming soon and we're working on it and you will have the information for your cost formula is by September.

We also want to discuss our claims backlog. We are dealing with staffing limitations mostly due to attrition, which is normal. But it is causing some processing delays. We developed strategies to try to mitigate our growing processing delays, which include overtime. It is very limited but we do have a little bit of overtime and we are thinking of developing either special cadres to try to process the cases pending over 60 days or coming up with other unique ideas where we can try to get as many cases processed as quickly as possible. I do, however, want to remind everybody we had a long-standing [Indiscernible]. We do want to stress the importance of you all adhering to this communication policy, even during times like this when a claim’s processing time may be taking 60 days or a little longer. When you reach out to us before we hit that 60-day threshold, it bottlenecks our system and it causes us to have to stop processing cases to look in the system to see where we are. It may only takes away a few minutes. It could very well take a day depending on the volume of the people who have to manually go in and check the status of each claim. Only reaching out if the claim reaches over 60 days is going to help us to keep the flow going and process as many as we can. We are working diligently to have this situation mitigated so we can get ourselves down to a really good processing time. We will take questions later in the call.

Now we can turn it to Katie for systems update.

Good afternoon. I have some good news for you. We had a system release on March 30that corrected the problem that has been occurring since back in 2015. If you notice—recently, you are seeing more errors in the files you are submitting. It is because we have to close the loop on some logic that was allowing you to open cases when the beneficiary was not in current pay, which is not correct. We have fixed that logic and you should see errors thing your Ticket wasn't assigned because the beneficiary was not in current pay status and that is correct. That has been fixed. We have been working for a long time to get that fixed. If you notice anything odd, please continue to send into the helpdesk. There is a chance we missed a scenario where you don't understand the message you are getting back. Please reach out to the VR helpdesk. I do want to let you know there is a team you may notice in your files. We get questions about the status and XM were going to start. As of right now I don't have any news on that front. We are working out a business process and getting materials together. We will not start any new TPRs until we have given you training on how to do things. Right now the TPR remains the same. Before we do anything we are going to send you training and information materials before we start anything new. That is all I have and I will give it back to Raquel.

Thank you, Katie. I'm going to turn it over to Shada, she wants to discuss a few things regarding training.

Good afternoon everyone. We had our two-day training last week as Jennelle mentioned Thursday and Friday. It was awesome. We thank all of those who could attend. As Jennelle mentioned, we are soliciting for this summer. We are requesting that it has to be a minimum of at least four people for us to have this training. Please send any request you have to the helpdesk or you can email linda.custis@ssa.gov. And myself shada.t.roper@ssa.gov. We are asking you to confirm your attendance two weeks prior to the training date and we will get back to you with agendas and all kinds of information you would need upon arrival. Please get this request to us as soon as possible so we can plan accordingly. Summer is the time where we have a wide range of people in and out, especially the trainers. Once again, thank you to all those who attended. It was very informative and we appreciate you coming on this campus and learning more about our process here at SSA for cost reimbursement. Thank you.

Thank you, Shada. I just have a few things to go over with you all. I wanted to apologize first of all for the mishap in regards to the SVES call. I promise we will get that straightened out and get you well-informed in your questions answered in regards to that. I was hoping it was going to be done today but clearly not. We are going to table that for now. Anyone that has questions I will definitely follow up with you all after the call today in regards to that and hopefully I can get some answers for you. If not I can get you contact information so that will definitely happen today.

A couple of reminders in regard to reconsiderations. When you are submitting the reconsideration into the portal, please remember to put notes in the comments section just in regards to when you initially submitted the claim, put those dates in there. It definitely helps the technicians. It is kind of a red flag because when you upload your reconsiderations, it doesn't show as a reconsideration. Sometimes it is blank or for whatever reason it was the initial claims. If you could put your remarks in there, for those who already do so, thank you. It definitely helps shave down the errors. If you know you have received is 620 denial for untimely filing and this is a reconsideration, most of you do this but feel free to email the VR helpdesk. The information you guys provide me is awesome with the letting me know this was submitted on this date initially and denied and this time I'm getting a 620 denial and to check this. I try to follow up as soon as possible and as quick as possible.

In regard to the VR helpdesk and what is being emailed, there are not many guilty of this, but when you have questions it is much easier and more sufficient for me if you could put all of your questions together like on one spreadsheet. There was a lot of you who already do this so I may be preaching to the choir, but for those when you are reviewing your denials, if you email me each time you have a denial, a separate email, that takes up the VR helpdesk and takes longer for me to go through and constantly stop and open up each individual one. I don't mind if you do it on a monthly or weekly basis or whatever is best for you, but it is easier if you compile all of your questions into one email. Unless it is an individual incident where it might be a Social Security issue or one particular issue. Again, I don't mind those but if you're going through all of your denials and your emailing one email per denial or one question per email, that is really time-consuming so if you can compile everything together, that would be appreciated.

When you are doing your uploads, it is your responsibility as soon as you have completed your uploads to check for any type of upload error. Sometimes to email me a month or two after the fact saying you can't find the claims, the first thing I will ask is to go back to you upload to see if there are any errors. If you are finding there is an error and a couple months after the fact, more than likely you will not get a waiver for untimely filing because that is a part of your responsibility to check that when you are uploading initially. If you are coming back a month or two later, as soon as you upload you should be up to see those claims. If not the same day, then the next day you should be able to confirm that uploaded 20 claims. If you are finding there are issues or whatever number you are uploading the first thing you should be doing is checking your upload errors. We already discussed this with our branch chief and she definitely backs us with this -- that we will not be doing waivers for those types of untimely filing claims. If you have any questions in regards to that, email me at the VR helpdesk. Lastly I have a quick email I was asked to read by Cara Caplan, the Branch Chief for Contracts and Grants. This is really for the VRs but since we are on the call I will read it. Please remind the VRs when they assign the Ticket as cost reimbursement and close the case, they cannot reassign the same beneficiary to the VR as a Ticket case. She has included the regulation. It is – unfortunately, the system does not prevent this but she wanted to remind you of that. Right now it looks like they are going through all the cases and they will be recouping the Tickets overpayments. If you have any questions, please feel free to email the VR helpdesk.

That is all I have. Candice doesn't have anything. At this time, operator we will open the lines for any questions and answers you may have.

As a reminder if you would like to ask a question, please press star one on your telephone keypad. We will take her first question from Kyle.

I had a question about SVES actually. It had to do with not seeing the correct benefits information on there. I referenced first the Ticket portal and I see there is a Ticket assignable but there is no benefits showing in SVES. That was the question I had earlier.

What I am going to do is get contact information for all of you to ask these questions, if these questions cannot wait until the next all VR call. Hopefully, Laura and other people from her team will be on that call so I will get contact information and send it out to you hopefully today and if not, tomorrow. I apologize. If anyone else has any questions in regard to SVES, please email the helpdesk that you would like contact information because it this moment we don't have it and we will table any questions in regards to that.

If you find your question has been answered, you may remove yourself from the queue by pressing star two. We would take our next question from Anne.

Raquel, I emailed you. I don't need to go into it on here. It was a simple question.

I will respond to you when I am done.

It is no hurry. It is simple.

No problem.

We will take our next question from [Indiscernible]

Good afternoon, I am new so my question may have been answered. The question I have is when we submit a claim and we have a cost estimate we anticipate would be the reimbursement, why is it different from one that would be paid? Or is there a way we can determine the cost of reimbursement?

Is this a question Drew has as well?

Yes.

Drew, when you receive your cost reimbursement you are not sure why the amount is lower than the amount you submit?

Yes.

The first thing you should be doing is reviewing your notice of determination. When you get that notice, there is the net payment period. All of your direct costs would need to fall within that net payment period. The net payment period is from January 2010 to October 2018. All of your direct calls would have to fall within that period. If it does not you don't get reimbursed. Also you have your gross payment period as well. If there is a specific claim that you have a question in regard to, you may have on your claim. Let's say the beneficiary came in and started with the VR and the enter date was January 2012. However the, the beneficiary did not start receiving benefits until 2015. Anything before the point where the beneficiaries are receiving benefit, you will not get paid on that. That is something else you would have to look into.

If there is a specific claim you are looking at where you requested the amount and the amount you received back is significantly lower and from reviewing your notice of determination you can't figure out why, please feel free to email the VR helpdesk.

Is there a way to pull the information to determine how that is calculated?

Is in the VR provider handbook.

Raquel, thank you for that explanation. I was going to suggest to both of you that when we send out the solicitation for you guys to attend the next two-day training. You may find it very efficient because all that information about explained the net payment period and the gross period and helping you determine what is payable and allowable payment versus what is not, you will get all that information if you attend training so that is something you may want to think about.

Okay, thank you.

We went out take the nest question from Eugenia.

A question on the RSA 911 for the newest cost formula. We update the worksheet for the cost formula. We you let me know what the changes and updates were so I can redo the Excel spreadsheet everybody is using right now?

I will be updating both once we get that information and I will send you a copy.

Do we have an update on the quarterly benefits earnings report?

Just to let you know, we are working on it. I think this was mentioned at the state directors meeting so it was mentioned on that level that we will be trying our best to roll it out as something new. We briefly talked about it. We don't have much to offer at this moment. We are still in the development phases but something will be coming soon. Thank you.

On the reconsiderations, when we put it in the comments section, it is a reconsideration and we don't have an SSA reference number because it is older than what we would submit claims on the portal, it does show up in the reconsideration but then it is also denied for untimely filing and we have to go back and inquire again. Is there a reason even though we do put an explanation in the comment and it is accepting it as a reconsideration that they are not looking at the data? Is it because it doesn't have an SSA reference number?

The SSA reference number has nothing to do at that. It could honestly be an oversight. If and when that happens to you, -email it to me and then you would normally get the corrected information.

Okay. My last question on the thing you mentioned on the VREN. My question is if we do a cost reimbursement on somebody like back in 2003 and we are a VREN and come back in 2019 and close that person originally unsuccessfully and we have never been paid on that individual, we can't come back and assign the Ticket? Under Ticket to work?

That I don't know. If you could email that to the helpdesk so I can forward it to Cara Kaplan and her team.

We know if it has been paid successfully.

I believe Raquel has a regulation in front of her that is in the regulations. Do you have like the bottom sentence?

I think I do. It says you also may not assign your Ticket to a state VR agency if the agency previously served do and elected the cost reimbursement option and close your case. Is that the statement?

That is the statement. It has nothing to do with your case closure was successful or unsuccessful. You are not allowed to assign the case as a Ticket under the Ticket payment option so we are going to go through and look at people's cases and notify you of the cases we identified that have been incorrectly assigned.

That is huge. That is probably all the cases we assigned. I will pull the regulations myself because I have gone over the many times because I know you can originally find the Ticket under Ticket to work and change it back to cost reimbursement.

The entry you are talking about is when you have the option for the first 90 days, you can assign a Ticket and underwent payment type and change it to another. You have 90 days. Once you choose it you can't then go back [Indiscernible] a Ticket open from 2008-2010 and come back in 2012 --

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I understand what you are saying. We have had this discussion for many years now. I will talk to you off-line about it and we can go over it but I have all the documentation from all the previous discussions on this.

You will be getting an email from us with the cases that need to be corrected.

This is Jennelle, I don't want to keep going back and forth but I went to reiterate there has not been a change. This regulation language is still the same so I don't want any confusion so we will definitely take this off-line.

There are no further questions in the queue.

And if we have no further questions we want to thank everyone for their time. Right now the third quarter all VR calls dance it Tuesday, July 9, 2019 it 3 PM. If anything changes we will let you know ahead of time. Thank you again for everyone's time and again I do apologize for the mishap with the SVES and we will get that straight for you.

This concludes today's call. Thank you for your participation. You may now disconnect.

[Event Concluded]