

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Social Security Quarterly All EN Call. Today's call is being recorded. At this time, I will turn the conference over to Robert Pfaff. Please go ahead.

Robert Pfaff: Thank you. And thanks to everyone for joining us today. We hope you're having a safe and happy and healthy summertime. And we appreciate the time that you take to participate in these calls. A couple things that I will start off with. First of all, in terms of leadership changes, you may be aware of this, but for those who may not be — President Biden appointed Kilolo Kijakazi as our Acting Commissioner for the Social Security Administration. In her place, Stephen Evangelista, who was serving as our Assistant Deputy Commissioner, will now serve as our Acting Deputy Commissioner.

Our second bullet point is for the employment summit that we have scheduled. Just a few updates on that. We continue to work through the plan for the summit. We had originally targeted late September as the day to execute the summit. During some deliberations on our side, we identified that we needed some more time to reach out to employers and our federal partners. And as a result, we moved the date, the targeted date for the summit, back to November 17th and 18th of this year.

Just for those who may not be familiar, the goal of this summit is to connect the Ticket to Work Program, and the Employment Networks and VR agencies that are working with job-ready beneficiaries more directly to employers who are looking to fill job vacancies. So the summit will cover a variety of ways that this currently happens in terms of employers sharing what their needs are, from their perspective, and our Ticket to Work Employment Networks and VR agencies, discussing how they reach out and engage employers to help get their clients place. So we're looking forward to that a lot of work and phone calls, as you can imagine, are going into the planning and preparation for this.

The next thing I'll cover is our Ticket to Work Program audit by the Government Accountability Office or GAO. We had an exit conference with GAO on Thursday, July 29. And really what that means is GAO has been in the process for many months of requesting information about the Ticket to Work Program, essentially auditing what we do and taking a close look at the program itself in terms of how much money we spend, in terms of overall participation, and so forth.

The exit conference was essentially a meeting for us to go over some of the findings that GAO has made. These findings are not final as yet, and they identified some additional information that they're looking to collect from us before they issue their final report. But

what I can tell you is that a report is forthcoming. These reports are important because they are looked at across government in terms of how federal agencies are running their programs. Are they being efficient? And what areas are identified that are working in or need improvement. So this is an important report.

And I will say also that GAO has looked previously at the Ticket to Work Program, but it's been many years, I believe the last report is stems from around 2011 or 2012. So this will be a great opportunity to talk about a lot of the enhancements that we've made programmatically. And we're looking forward to the release of that report. When it's released, we will certainly let you know.

The next thing and one additional thing that I'm going to add that wasn't really listed in the agenda is an update to let you know that we are working with the Office of Communications within SSA on an email campaign. And essentially what this would look like is we would like to email to get eligible beneficiaries who have a my SSA email account. And so we're talking about a potential to reach a lot of beneficiaries. We are currently working on some proposed language to send out to these beneficiaries to basically inform them of their eligibility to participate in a Ticket Program, and to make them aware of our Ticket to Work call center, and also our Choose Work website. And it's through both of those mechanisms that they can find help or reach out to an Employment Network or VR agency.

We also plan and are hopeful that we can share with them information about the fact that they — that the beneficiaries who were Ticket eligible may be contacted by Ticket to Work authorized Employment Network, to market their information and let them know of their participation in a program. We're hoping that this messaging will help address a lot of the concerns that beneficiaries share when they're being contacted by ENs, during our marketing business process or for those ENs participating in the marketing business process.

So more to come with that. We will certainly announce when we launched this campaign but we're looking at doing this fall, hopefully, fingers crossed. But we will certainly let you know when those efforts begin. So that's all of my updates. And without further pause, I'll go ahead and turn it over to Patrice McLean.

Patrice McLean: Thank you so much, Rob, and good afternoon or good morning, everyone, depending on where you are. I'm here to present an update on the benefits planning query pilot. Many of you are familiar with our benefits planning query or BPQY pilot. We discussed it several times on All EN calls in the past. And that's been more than

six successful years of producing and distributing BPQYs in this pilot. We are notifying everyone that we ended the pilot project on July 16 of this year.

We implemented this initiative as a proof of concept in 2015. And we converted it to a pilot after we successfully proved that we could securely transmit BPQYs to a select number of service providers. Through this pilot, we've provided more than 65,000 BPQYs to Employment Networks, VR organizations, Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Projects and protection and advocacy for beneficiaries of Social Security offices. And as a result, these employment support providers were able to obtain BPQYs securely, timely and at no charge.

While we conducted the pilot, we also conducted an evaluation of the pilot. Through that evaluation, we identified a positive impact on beneficiary earnings associated with the timely distribution of the BPQY. We share those results with our executives. We also identified some recommendations for improving the BPQY and the BPQY process. And we did that in large part with the assistance of several employment networks, WIPA organizations, VRs, et cetera who are willing to provide assistance, input and feedback on the BPQY they received and how they could be made better.

As you're aware, disseminating BPQYs is not a core function of the Office of Employment Support. And since we could only distribute BPQYs through the pilot to a small number of ENs, VRs, WIPAs and PABSS, due to limited staffing resources, and we're unable to expand that distribution to all of those employment support providers. We discontinued the pilot and also directed the pilot participants to obtain BPQYs through other, more normal procedures.

We understand that ending the pilot impacts the daily business processes of those who were receiving BPQYs through the pilot. We want to make as much information available as possible. There are several ways to obtain a BPQY. We'd like to draw your attention to our work incentives website, which provides links to other helpful resources such as the red book, which is — which you can find that www.ssa.gov/redbook; again, that's www.ssa.gov/redbook.

The BPQY section of the red book includes information on how to request and receive BPQYs, and who to contact such as your local Field Office, what the toll free SSA number as well as the forms required to request a BPQY.

Social Security provides BPQYs to beneficiaries, their representative payees and their authorized representatives of record upon request. Beneficiaries can request BPQY by contacting their local social security office or calling Social Security's toll-free number 1-

800-772-1213. Again, that's 1-800-772-1213 from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may call our TTY number at 1-800-325-0778. Again, that's 1-800-325-0778 and they have the same office hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

If someone other than the BPQY wishes to receive, to request the BPQY, they must submit an SSA 3288 form, which is a consent for release of information. The form must be signed by the beneficiary. This will authorize the release of Social Security records. Their release must contain the beneficiary's social security number or the claim number.

Copies of the 3288 are available at www.ssa.gov/online/ssa3288. And you can find these links in today's chat. Again, that's www.ssa.gov/online/ssa3288. Beneficiaries and employment support providers can use the Social Security locator to find their local field office. And you can follow directions in the red book to submit the required release form if applicable to obtain the BPQY. SSA field offices now accept BPQY requests via mail, fax or desktop fax. The link to the Web site that you can go to, to find your local social security office is www.socialsecurity.gov/locator, again, www.socialsecurity.gov/locator.

Finally, beneficiaries can access their earnings information by creating a My SSA account. They can go to ssa.gov/myaccount to register. And once registered for a My SSA account, beneficiaries have access to their online statement, which provides immediate access to their earnings record and access to view — access to view, print and save their social security statement.

Please encourage your clients to register for a My SSA account again at ssa.gov/myaccount. We hope you find this information helpful. And as we ended the pilot, know that we continue to work towards solutions to improve the BPQY process. For those of you who are — who were participating or who provided feedback, thank you so much for your cooperation. We can't emphasize the impact that your participation has had.

And we could not have completed this project without organizations like yours. Thank you for working with us to complete this initiative. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact ordes.bpqy.poc@ssa.gov. Again, that's ordes.bpqy.poc@ssa.gov — and now, I'll turn over to Cara Kaplan who will share additional EN updates. Cara?

Cara Kaplan: Thank you, Patrice. Good afternoon, everyone. I just want to give you a couple updates on what's going on. So first on July 1 of this year, SSA awarded a new cadre of 74 WIPA cooperative agreements, you can find a list of the WIPAs and their service areas on the SSA Web site at www.ssa.gov/work/wipa.html. We do have several

WIPAs that are brand new and we are working on onboarding them but we do have veteran WIPAs who are backfilling for them. So every beneficiary is getting served who are asking for WIPA services.

We are continuing with our EN enhancement project. We started phase three in May of this year and as you know Part 3, Section 9 of your TPA states that ENs are required to take at least one Ticket assignment within the first calendar year of the TPA award and maintain at least three active ticket assignments during each calendar year thereafter and receive at least one Ticket payment during the second calendar year following your TPA award. And three payments each calendar year thereafter.

We're also — you are required to have people working with PII to maintain suitability and have a favorable suitability determination. We have several ENs that are not abiding by any or all of these three requirements. We have sent cure notices to those ENs and are working with them. Please make sure you're familiar with the requirements of the program as SSA takes it very seriously to date from all the phases because of ENs not adhering we have terminated 81 ENs for this reason alone.

Also, SSA and TPM is going to meet with the administrative ENs on September 14. So please look for an invitation to that meeting if you are an existing administrative EN. And I will turn it over now.

Jayme Pendergraft: Thank you, Cara. Good afternoon, everyone. This is Jayme Pendergraft. And for today's outreach update, I first want to share about some of our success stories. Our Ticket to Work success stories are real stories about actual Social Security Disability beneficiaries. We encourage you to share stories on social media or in your newsletters to show positive outcomes from the Ticket Program.

And you can find those success stories on the choose work Web site at <https://choosework.ssa.gov/success-stories> or just head over to the homepage and you can navigate right to the success stories tab at the top. We can't develop success stories without all of you. We encourage ENs to submit information about success stories and steppingstone story candidates. And I will just explain the difference briefly.

Our success stories feature people who have achieved financial independence with the help of the Ticket Program, while our stepping stone stories feature people who have made a major step on the path to financial independence but have not yet eliminated their reliance on benefits.

So those are stories about somebody who maybe had a job for a little while or has gone to school to get new training, things like that, but they haven't quite gotten off of their social security benefits yet. You can send candidates for either type of success story, to stories at choosework.ssa.gov.

Another great tool in our library, our Ticket to Work fact sheets, and you hear me talk about this every time that our fact sheets provide useful information about the program and other Work Incentives. And our most recent Work Incentive is, what is social security's Ticket to Work Program? And as you can tell from the title, it just kind of defines what ticket is, how to get started with the program, eligibility, and some other helpful information for you to have at your fingertips. And we really encourage you to get one particularly out into the hands of beneficiaries to get them introduced to the program. And Adelle will be chatting out the link to that fact sheets in the chat.

We do still continue to host our monthly WISE webinars. These are online events that are held for people who qualify for the Ticket Program. And there an opportunity for folks to learn about the Ticket to Work Program and other Work Incentives through a fully accessible learning experience. Our webinars are typically on the fourth Wednesday of every month from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. Eastern time. And every month you should be getting GovDelivery messages from us, asking you to help, raise awareness about the Ticket Program by promoting these webinars.

We include our sample social media messages in those gov delivery messages. So we do encourage you to share on social media as well to help us get our beneficiaries registered and get them some information about the program.

Our next webinar is actually a little different this month, it's called understanding Ticket to Work, how to help your clients and the people you serve. And this webinar is basically for non-Ticket Program service providers. So it's for people who interact regularly with people who may be beneficiaries, so it could be your disability organization. But it could also be doctors, teachers, a variety of folks who might encounter people who qualify for the program. And it tells them how they can talk a little bit about ticket and how they can connect with service providers.

So that webinar will be on Wednesday, August 25, from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Eastern and Ray Cebula from Cornell and myself will be the presenters. You can register online at choosework.ssa.gov.wise.

And you can also — we send out the gov delivery announcement yesterday afternoon, I believe. So you do have those social media messages available to you.

And we encourage you to invite anyone you work with who might be interested.

And if you do get questions from beneficiaries about this webinar, and when there might be a webinar that's for them, we will go back to our kind of regularly scheduled programming in September. And if they want to view a webinar that might be a better fit for them, they can always take a look at our past webinars at our WISE on Demand page. And Adelle will send out the link for that as well.

Lastly, I want to encourage you all to stay in touch on social media. We do – we are very active on Facebook and Twitter. And our Facebook is @choosework, Twitter is @chooseworkssa. And we encourage you to engage with us there, share some of our posts, let us know what you're doing. And certainly watch out for resources as that is where we share everything. And with that, I will hand it over to Adelle.

Adelle Barr: Thank you. Thank you, Jayme, and everyone for all the great information. So it looks like we've reached the point where we can open this up for questions and answers. (Keith), if you can help us out with that.

Operator: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen on the phone, if you'd like to ask a question you may do so by pressing star one on your telephone keypad. Please make sure that mute function on your phone is turned off so the signal can be read by our equipment. Star one for phone questions. We'll pause a moment to assemble the phone queue. You may also submit a question via the web with the online tool.

Adelle Barr: Okay, (Keith), I actually have a few of those. So while we wait for anyone to queue up on the phone, I do have a couple of questions.

The first question is, why does SSA want to charge beneficiaries \$149 to issue them a BPQY? Then others are given free of charge.

Patrice McLean: Good afternoon, Adelle, and thank you to whoever asked that question. I can respond. As long as the Benefits Planning Query or BPQY is provided for return to work purposes. So if you're an EN, and you need the BPQY so that you can counsel that individual on how their benefits will affect – how earnings will affect their benefits or for any return to work purpose, there should not be a charge for the BPQY.

So if you're having that issue, we would ask that you gather the name of the field office that you're working with. If you have a name of an individual who specifically that you're working with, and the date of your request, and send that to EN service@ssa.gov, we at times will reach out to our partners in operations to sort of resolve those issues so that those field offices do not charge for BPQYs once they also return to work purposes.

There are other purposes for the BPQY that are not related to return to work and there can be a fee for BPQY in those instances. The Office of Employment Support does not manage BPQY – we manage the policy but not the operations of providing BPQYs. So we refer those issues to our partners and operations.

And they can assist. So if you're having that issue, and you're requesting a BPQY for return to work purposes, please send the name – the date of your request, as well as the field office that you are trying to work with to EN service@ssa.gov, they'll refer it to me, Patrice McLean, and I'll get in touch with operations to have that issue corrected. Thank you.

Adelle Barr: Thank you, Patrice for helping out with that one. There's another BPQY question. We are having great difficulty getting local field offices to provide us BPQYs. We then elevate to AWIC, who sometimes are helpful, but sometimes also ignore our requests. What is your recommendation for an EN?

Patrice McLean: Thank you, Adelle, and thank you to whoever asked that question. So we don't want to create a separate process of obtaining BPQYs where anytime there's a problem. We bring it to ORDES and then we bring it to operations. But if you are repeatedly having issues, and you need to escalate that to us, if AWIC is not successful and if the AWIC has not responded then you can send that to enservice@ssa.gov.

But I do want to emphasize that we are asking that you only send those up in extreme circumstances, understand that our field offices are opening up and there are limited staff in field offices to respond to BPQYs. So there are going to be times where it takes a little bit longer than other times to receive the BPQYs. So we'd ask that you give the field office some time to respond.

But if you're having repeated errors and issues where you're not receiving BPQYs, in a moderately timely way, in a moderately timely fashion, that you send that up to EN service to provide as much detail with regard to the field officers that you're working with so that we can talk to our peers in operations. We do this only on a limited basis. So we're asking

again that you only escalate the very extreme circumstances, where did not receive BPQYs timely on a repeated basis. Thank you.

Adelle Barr: Thanks again, Patrice. (Keith), do we have any questions on the phone?

Operator: We do have a phone question. We'll take that phone call from Hamid Abajian with HH Employment Training of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, please go ahead.

Hamid Abajian: Yes, yes, I hope you can hear me great. So I myself, I am deaf, with deaf employment with EN. Anyway, so I work within the deaf community, of course, Hard of Hearing. But there was a mention about, what is it, outreach information that's always going out about Ticket to Work to the program, so specifically talking about this through like social media, that sort of thing so just as an example.

But in the real world, the fact is, a lot of those in the deaf community don't have a, what's the word I'm looking for, they don't have strong contacts within social media, within outreach, they don't see that, it gets overlooked a lot in the community.

So I suggest, you know, a lot of them will catch information with your programs, mostly through if possible, if someone could reach out to like, like a Sorenson Relay community just like what I'm using right now with the interpreter. There's another company called Purple, there's Sorenson communications, if you could develop a relationship with them, reach out to them, and give them your program information, tell them about your program, they can get the news out as well on Sign Language onto a video and send out the information of the Ticket to Work Program.

Again, you know, independence, that sort of thing. So I'm just throwing that out there, that there's a way that you can reach out to Sorenson Communication, Sorenson Relay. They have a way to reach out much more of the deaf community and get that information out to them.

Again, like I said, they can use sign language, to communicate with them through a video and send it out through their Sorenson newsletters. They have information, they have links in sign language, so that way it'll reach the deaf, Hard of Hearing much quicker and much easier on a daily thing where social media, you know, outreach, Facebook, Instagram, there's not enough information for them.

If it's voicing, if there's talking, they can't get that information unless it's used in sign language, just as a suggestion, and just wanted to throw that out. You know, sort of like a word to mouth kind of thing, not through social media, but more through the Sorenson through, not vocational rehabilitation but through a video relay and word of mouth, it would get a lot quicker within the deaf community.

If you, you know, do it through like interpreting services or through deaf agencies. If you can get the information out to them, then they can get the information out to the deaf community. I think they get out a lot quicker and a lot easier for the deaf community to do it that way instead of, you know, doing it like Facebook. You know, if you could just look up Sorenson, S-O-R-E-N-S-O-N, video relay or Sorenson communications, and there's again another company called Purple Video Relay.

Like I said, again, if you give them your information, if you can reach out to them to those agencies, those corporations, they can, you know, put all your information out on the sign language onto a video and they can reach out to a lot more. And a good bit of our base, client-based are deaf and hard of hearing, so just wanted to throw that out there. Thank you so much.

Jayme Pendergraft: This is Jayme Pendergraft, I just want to say thank you very much for that suggestion. We'll definitely look into it. It's been a little while since we've reached out to Sorenson and other agencies. I do also want to share that, particularly for our webinars, we do have a guide for how people who use relay services can participate. And of course, everything is also closed captioned. So I do also encourage you to help share all those webinars as well. But thank you very much for that suggestion.

Hamid Abajian: Thank you so much. And yeah, and don't forget about Purple, that's another company as well, Purple 3, I think it is. Those two are really, you know, popular companies that use a lot. They, you know, their clientele obviously is deaf and hard of hearing. So yes, yes, I just want to throw that out there. Thank you, again.

Jayme Pendergraft: It's Jayme. Thank you.

Hamid Abajian: Thank you. Thanks, bye-bye.

Adelle Barr: That's wonderful that we help each other out that way.

Well, Jayme, I have a question for you. What information is needed to submit a success story? And assuming that there is a special release needed to share the story, so if you can help out with that question?

Jayme Pendergraft: This is Jayme. Sure, thing. So as I mentioned, you can send an email to stories at choosework.ssa.gov. And basically, we're kind of just looking for some background information on the person. What their current situation is, please do not send any PII, of course. And once we get the story, we'll follow up with you for some additional information and start moving the story forward. So I hope that helped answer your question.

Adelle Barr: Thanks, Jayme. And we do have a shout out and that is for the Downtown Indi SSA office. I just want to shout out for Michael Kirkham. He is a rock star collaborating with me to get BPQYs. So that's awesome, always good to share some good news.

Back to BPQY, Patrice, I know we've discussed that before, but just for this particular audience, what about having the BPQY available through my SSA?

Patrice McLean: That is a great question. And it's a great recommendation and one that we have been discussing here at SSA. It is, at this time, a little easier said than done. But as I mentioned, we're always looking for ways to improve the BPQY as well as the BPQY process.

Our goal is to have the BPQY available on my SSA, or not sure yet how to work that out, especially for third party providers who cannot access my SSA on behalf of their clients. So there are a lot of things we would have to work out. So we are still in discussions. Not sure exactly if and when that will happen. But thank you so much for the recommendation. Know that we are very much discussing it here at SSA.

Adelle Barr: Thanks, Patrice. I'll do a quick check in with (Keith), any questions on the phone?

Operator: No phone questions at this time.

Adelle Barr: No problem. I still have a few questions here. Is there any difference between the POR, the proof of relationship and the POC, the proof of contact and are there any new forms?

Robert Pfaff: I'm not entirely clear on the question.

Adelle Barr: So let me see. So it seems to be about the proof of relationship. Is there a difference — so my guess would be that, yes, it's different. So, they're trying to see if there's a difference between the POR and the proof of contact. And are there any new forms? Do we have a proof of contact, a POC?

Cara Kaplan: I think what they're talking about is the POR.

Adelle Barr: Right. The first list is —and they're asking, what's the difference between the POR and the POC?

Cara Kaplan: Well, the POR is a form. The POR is proof of relationship. So that is when you are submitting for phase one milestones, one through three, if you do not have access to the ticket holders pay stub, then you must submit a proof of relationship in order for us to pay you. Proof of concepts, are the pilots, so they're completely different entities, so.

Adelle Barr: Oh, my apologies. Well, I'm not sure if they meant concept, but it's written as contact. So, if they chime in, I think that was helpful describing what the POR is, and if they want to chime back.

Cara Kaplan: It maybe the same, it may be the same thing to be honest with you. I think initially, people were calling it proof of — the POC, and it was getting confused with other, with the proof of concept. So I believe they're looking at something very old. And it's the same exact thing, but it's proof of relationship.

Adelle Barr: Right, thanks, Cara.

BPQY is the topic for all EN Call. What is the reasonable amount of time to receive a BPQY report?

Patrice McLean: That's a great question. But it's going to vary from office to office. There are some field offices that respond to BPQYs within five days, and then there are somewhere you might wait, you know, two or three weeks before they're able to respond. So I would say look for a pattern with the field office that you're working with, and sort of gauge it from there. We can't compare field offices to each other. Because there are some that are busier than others.

I will say that at this time, our field offices should be able to respond via virtual fax. And so we're hoping that over time, as they get more familiar with that, that the response time for BPQYs will go down. But again, there isn't a general across the board response time for all field offices, but I would say to look for a pattern from your field office. And that's also a good question that maybe you can ask your local AWIC if you have – if you are aware of who your local AWIC is to find out what the expectation – what you can expect from each of the field offices in your area.

Adelle Barr: Thank you, Patrice.

Speaking of the SSA offices, there was a question here that some of the offices are trying to charge a fee for the BPQYs. I know you mentioned it before. But what language should we use if we're billed to let them know that it should be provided at no cost for benefits counselors or EN?

Patrice McLean: That's a great question as well. And you would just let them know that this BPQY is being requested for return to work purposes. And as such, there should be no cost per SSA policy that if the BPQY is for return to work purposes, there should be no cost. That's what they should be looking for here is return to work purposes. That's the language I would provide.

Adelle Barr: Thanks again Patrice.

(Keith), a quick check in on the phone?

Operator: We have no phone questions at this time.

Adelle Barr: Okay. Well, maybe it's our summer. We're in summer mode looks here. Let me see if we have any more in the chat. Well, I do not have any more questions in the chat. And one more for the phone queue?

Operator: No questions at this time.

Adelle Barr: Okay. So it looks like you're going to return from ...

Operator: We just got a follow up from (Hamid). Please go ahead.

Hamid Abajian: Yes, thank you again. Yes, about the BPQYs. I just want to just clarify, just make sure, so you're saying return to work. So like, let's say like, if someone's terminated or laid off or fired or so to speak, so we need to reach and find out, we'll fight to them to get, you know, like we're trying to explain that we're trying to get them reinstated or, what's the word I'm looking for, reconciliation.

Is that is that what that process? Is that the BPQY or is it through — I'm just trying to clarify that why are we asking for that? Is it, you know, because they were laid off on their job or is it — because I know you were saying, so for example, we request that we have to say that it's a return to work, is that why we're asking for that BPQY?

Patrice McLean: I so a BPQY is a benefits planning query. It's a document that provides information on disabled individuals current benefit amount, their current benefit status, whether or not they're in current pay or if they've been suspended or even terminated, it also provides some earnings information, as well as their use of work incentives, such as how many of their trial work months they've used and whether they're within their into their extended period of eligibility.

So the benefits planning query is used to counsel individuals on their return to work. So that while you're working with them, you can tell them, you know, the impact that earnings will have on their current benefits. So, some employment support providers so familiar with the BPQY, request that using that SSA 3288 consent for releases of information form, so that they can learn more about their beneficiary to assist them with their return to work.

So it gives you some information on the previous earnings and work history.

Hamid Abajian: Got it.

Patrice McLean: And so once you have a benefit ...

Hamid Abajian: Perfect, thank you. Thank you.

Patrice McLean: No, problem.

Hamid Abajian: Sorry, just sort of back to work, back to work, so I just wanted to clarify, I just wanted to make sure, so yes, that does definitely explain it. So it just helps, you know, like the effect of theirs that they go, you know, when they're ready to go back to work, what they should expect, like TWL, TWP, how to process and all of that stuff. So this is – okay, so thank you for clarifying. This just explains everything. I really appreciate that. Thank you.

Patrice McLean: No problem.

Operator: You have another question in the queue from Sandra Abbott, with Abbott Financial Services.

Sandra Abbott: Yes. Good afternoon, I have —excuse me two questions. One is when you're trying to connect to an AWIC, your district AWIC regarding an issue and then after a few attempts that you don't receive any type of response? What would be the next step?

Patrice McLean: That is a good question. I can definitely reach out to our peers and operations for more guidance on that. I'm not sure exactly who you'd reach out to after that. So I'll see if we can get some guidance and share it with all of our ENs, perhaps through a message. Will you – are you – do you have access to the chat so that I could perhaps, we could perhaps take your information and respond to you regarding issues with, contacting your AWIC?

Sandra Abbott: Yes, ma'am.

Patrice McLean: Okay, if you could send your name and email address in the chat, I'll be able to find out some operations, what you would have to do and then share that information with you.

Sandra Abbott: Okay, and then my second question is, I know VR receives referrals from the Ticket to Work Help Desk, is that same service available or will be available to EN?

Robert Pfaff: So, I'm not clear on – when you say referral from the Ticket to Work Help Desk, could you maybe give us a little more detail about that?

Sandra Abbott: Yes, if a person – if a beneficiary call them, and they may have questions in regards to, you know, the Ticket to Work or they're looking for someone, you know, organization to assist them, my understanding is that the Help Desk will refer these beneficiaries to their, you know, to the VR organization that's closest to that person?

Robert Pfaff: So ...

Patrice McLean: I think I can help with that Rob.

Robert Pfaff: Yes, sure.

Patrice McLean: Okay, go ahead. Sure, so we have a find help tool that we use online and also, our — I believe our help line also assists individuals with finding the employment support providers that are in their areas or if they want, you know, virtual assistants, they can help with that as well.

But they don't only send they don't only share information on VR, it all depends on – if you go to our find help tool on the [choosework.ssa.gov](https://www.choosework.ssa.gov) site, you'll be able to see that ticket holders or potential ticket holders can do a guided search to look for individuals who are able to help them and look for organizations that can meet their needs. Those search

results as long as – as well as the ones provided through our helpline are not just VRs, they are local VR organizations WIPA organizations ENs and also PABSS organizations.

So it all depends on what that individual is searching for. And also, you know, what locale they're looking in. But our choose worksite, the find help tool as well as a helpline provides information on the resources that are available to them based on either their location or whether they're looking for virtual services, and that whether they have special needs such as individuals who can serve individuals with visual impairments or hearing impairments, cognitive impairments, et cetera, et cetera. So the same thing that's happening for the VR is happening for ENs WIPA and PABSS as well.

Sandra Abbott: Okay, thank you.

Patrice McLean: Sure.

Operator: No further phone questions at this time.

Adelle Barr: Thanks, (Keith). I do have one from the chat. We still get BPQYs from many field offices that are sent via mail, is there a recommendation to local offices to provide them via fax, instead, you know, to help reduce the time it takes between request and receipt of the BPQY?

Patrice McLean: Again, this is Patrice. The field office really can respond in whichever way is most feasible for them. So they don't have to respond via fax. And it's possible that not all Field Office employees have access to eFax. So there's not a mandate that every office responds via eFax. I just know that most offices at least have the opportunity to.

If you'd like you can reach out to your local field office and when you make the request, specify that you'd like it to receive the BPQY via eFax if they have that availability, but there isn't a mandate that they must respond via desktop fax.

Adelle Barr: Thanks again for that Patrice.

Patrice McLean: Sure.

Adelle Barr: Well, I think we're all clear here in the chat. (Keith), I'll check in with you.

Operator: We do have a couple phone questions. We'll take our first from Lori Popejoy with Goodwill and Olympics. Please go ahead.

Lori Popejoy: Thank you, and good morning to all or good afternoon depending on where you're at. I have a question I just want to verify. We do have consistent issues with receiving BPQYs and so what I want to clarify or verify is that if we're not able to get a response from our local offices then we go on to the AWIC, is that correct did I get this messed up?

Patrice McLean: Yes, your AWIC we can be a great resource for obtaining BPQYs or helping you to obtain them from the field office. So yes, you can reach out to your AWIC for assistance with BPQYs as well.

Lori Popejoy: Okay and thank you for that. And then the other thing is, I remember from many years ago, it seems to be like I said we haven't had been BPQYs with over a year and a half, two years. Is the information more updated now or is it still that little caveat that this is the information social security has on file, but it may be different than what really happened, is that true?

Patrice McLean: So BPQY ...

Lori Popejoy: ((Inaudible)).

Patrice McLean: Yes, so you – once you have a BPQY, and of course, I want to make sure that we don't turn this into a BPQY policy call. We can – what we presented today was specifically about the pilot ending, so I can't answer this specific questions about the BPQY but in general, the BPQY will have information that is, as it is in SSA system.

So if you're working with someone who receives SSDI, or they're receiving disability, and you can see that the last work report, the last work continuing disability review was done

in 2010 for some reason, and you know that they've worked since then it is possible that we just haven't conducted another review on that person.

So you'll have to use your judgment to take a look at the work history that's on file there and as well as when the last decision was made, which you should see on the BPQY and sort of deduce whether or not there could be more information that we just haven't received yet based on when you know that individual last worked.

Lori Popejoy: And that thank you. I really appreciate that. And I just want to ask because we do go over with our clients the BPQYs and if they have questions, who should they turn to? Or as we go through and they don't understand we can't clarify what they just contact the social security line?

Patrice McLean: Yes, they should contact the 1-800-772-1213 number for assistance with understanding their BPQY or reaching out to their local Field Office using the field office locator links that provides, you know, local phone number for their field office. They are trained to be able to assist individuals with understanding everything that's on there.

Lori Popejoy: Okay, well, I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

Patrice McLean: Sure.

Operator: We have a follow up from (Hamid). Please go ahead. Please check your mute button we're not hearing a response.

Hamid Abajian: Sorry. Yes, so two quick questions. Sorry about that. Starting with the first question, I know there was a mention about having three new clients per year on that. You mentioned that earlier, I think it was like try to have at least three new per year. Is that correct? Did I hear that earlier correctly?

Cara Kaplan: I think Patrice, I ...

Patrice McLean: Yes ((inaudible)).

Cara Kaplan: Go ahead. I was going to say ...

Patrice McLean: No problem. I would defer to Cara but yes, per your ticket program agreement, there is a requirement that you – that there is a minimum number of tickets that you have to have and take on each year, so I would refer you to your ticket program agreement for those guidelines.

Cara Kaplan: And just to reiterate what Patrice said, it's Part III, Section 9 of your TPA for all of those requirements.

Hamid Abajian: Okay, okay, great. Yes, I'll look at that. Also, let's just say for this year, so for example, 10, you know, 10 – I ended up getting two new clients this year. But then let's say next year, there's zero new clients. Is there a discretion after that? Because like I said, this year, I've had 10 and I want to say next year, there's none. I mean, that's technically I mean, I guess, is that acceptable no the requirement or do you have to follow by each year? I mean, like a, I guess, like a rollover, maybe? I don't know what I'm trying to ask. But yeah, so it has to be a minimum per year. There's not an average like, if one year I get this many and then this year, I get none.

Cara Kaplan: No, it's not like that. It's – you must maintain three, it's not that, you have to get three new ones every year. It's a minimum number you have to have.

Hamid Abajian: Okay, so like an average, I guess. So that would be acceptable. Because like I said, I'm just concerned because like I get 10, this year 10 new clients and then let's say next year, I get zero. I just wanted to make sure that that was okay.

Patrice McLean: I mean, I think you find it helpful to Part III, Section 9 it spells out exactly what we're requiring from you. So it's – we're asking you to maintain a certain level, not necessarily that you have new ones, although we are happy to see you have new tickets. But I really think you should take a look at Part III, Section 9 of the TPA, as Cara mentioned, because it spells out exactly what we're looking for.

Hamid Abajian: Okay, okay. All right, thank you so much. I've got that. I will definitely look at that. Also, one more quick question, the situation I hate this, but what is it the SGA, just the general disabilities, you know, blind wheelchair handicap that sort of thing in general, with the SGA, I know that's what is it, 1310.

But now for like visual impairment, it's like 2190 for the SGA. So what doesn't make sense to me, what I hate is that when those that are blind, that call in and need our services, and I, you know, they're blind, and I ask them is that SGA is like, you know, 2190.

But, you know, human nature just causes me to try to avoid providing services, I'm sorry, to the blind, I just, I feel upset as an human nature, because SGA is just as too much 2190. It just doesn't seem like it's a fair between them and then a disability where it's 1000. It seems like less, it just doesn't seem right. That has happened, unfortunately, sometimes where I've had someone ...

Patrice McLean: Hamid?

Hamid Abajian: Yes.

Patrice McLean: This is Patrice, I apologize, I don't mean to cut you but what you're asking is a very specific policy question, which is outside of the scope of this call. So if you'd like you can send your question to EN.service@ssa.gov and we can refer it to the right policy area. But unfortunately, we're just about out of time. And, again, we want to make sure that we're answering questions that are within scope of the call, which is not necessarily policy on SGA for blind as much as we understand what your saying.

Hamid Abajian: Sorry.

Patrice McLean: No problem. I'll turn back over to Adelle.

Adelle Barr: All right, thank you for that. I do have one more question from the chat. I recently read the OIG report on the processing of mail, at SSA offices? Is there a plan to address this? We've been counseling beneficiaries of faxing in versus mailing address.

Patrice McLean: Adelle, can you repeat that question one more time, please.

Adelle Barr: I said, sorry, I have to clear my throat. I recently read the OIG report on the processing of mailings at SSA offices. So is there a plan to address this? And we've been telling beneficiary the faxing in versus mailing?

Patrice McLean: Yes, as you know we're – because of the COVID-19 pandemic, our field offices are not as fast as they were in the past. So where there is an opportunity to fax things in, I definitely would recommend that you do that. But again, that is also outside the scope of this call, but in general, anything that you can fax as opposed to mail in, we highly recommend that. And for the for the ticket office, we are highly recommending against mailing anything at all.

Adelle Barr: Okay. Appreciate that. Well, it seems like we've approached the 2 o'clock hour and the chat seems to have been cleared. Any closing remarks?

Patrice McLean: This is Patrice. I just want to thank everyone for joining us. I know Adelle, you're going to mention when we'll have our next call. But again, we hope that you found the information that we've provided helpful. And we hope that you'll join us next time. And Adelle will you let everyone know when the next call will take place?

Adelle Barr: Oh, absolutely. I just reiterate, thank you for everyone's time and all that great information provided today. Our next call will be on November 16. Thanks again everyone for joining and enjoy the rest of your day.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, this concludes today's discussion. We appreciate your participation. You may now disconnect.

