

Operator: Good day, and welcome to the Social Security's quarterly all VR call. Today's conference is being recorded. At this time, I will turn the conference over to Mr. Robert Pfaff. Please go ahead, sir.

Robert Pfaff: Thank you, and good afternoon or good morning to all of you, depending on where you are located. Thank you for your time and thank you for joining us today for this quarterly VR call. We do have a couple of things that we'd like to share with you.

First and foremost, is that after much administrative sort of delay, we did make award and are moving forward with the transition of the Ticket Program Manager contract from Maximus to Cognosante.

Activities are currently underway and have been underway since the beginning of September to transition over. As you can imagine, there's a lot going on in that regard, a lot of things that we have to do procedurally.

And so a lot of meetings are occurring between the various teams, but I can tell you that, thus far, the communication has been — and the communication and the cooperation, I will add, has been excellent among all parties.

We're thankful for everyone's professionalism. One thing that I will note is that the new program director for the contract is Jocelyn Greenidge. Jocelyn could not be with us today, but we will introduce her to you at our next call. Jocelyn, again, is leading all the efforts within the Cognosante side and will be the point — the primary leader for the TPM contract.

I want to hand it off to Katie to sort of share some additional perspectives and details pertaining to the transition itself. So Katie, would you like to share a few thoughts in that regard?

Katie Striebinger: Sure. Thanks, Rob. Good afternoon, everyone. We just wanted to let you know that we plan to make the transition of the day-to-day workload of VR payments processing seamless, and we are working closely with our new Ticket Program Manager behind the scenes to make sure that we provide you with excellent customer service.

That's our ultimate goal. We're going to continue to provide oversight of the program and no one that you're used to talking to currently is disappearing.

When we have more information, we will be providing you updates, you know, via our normal email channel. And we will have a lot more information for you on our next VR call in January.

So do make sure you are prepared for that and put that on your calendar when you get the date at the end of this call. But like I said, we will, you know, continue to keep you apprised as things move forward with the transition.

We're still in the early stages. And, you know, stay tuned. So I'm going to hand it over to Raquel who is going to go over the VR items for you. Raquel?

Raquel Donaldson: Thanks, Katie. Good morning. Good afternoon, everyone. I just have three quick updates for you. For the fiscal year '22 cost formula, yes, it is that time again. I just wanted to let you know that you should be receiving an email from me by the end of this month in regard to the cost formula.

As you all are aware, RSA has switched up the documentation required. So you're no longer using the RSA-2 that has been switched over to the RSA-17.

So with that being said, I need to create an entirely new cost formula for fiscal year '22. I just absolutely want to thank the Maryland VR for assisting me and giving input and feedback on that. But again, you should receive documentation from me, an email, Of course, with all the requirements and the steps by the end of this month. And that's all I have.

If anyone has questions in regard to the cost formula, you know, you can email the VR Helpdesk and I'll be more than happy to respond.

The next item is the 650 Denials. Just a quick reminder if you're receiving a 650 Denial on any of your claim, and you have not heard from me first. Unfortunately, there is still a system error.

So if you get a 650 Denial, that you're not aware of, please email the VR Helpdesk and I will definitely look into that for you. I apologize for that, but unfortunately, until we can get that fixed, this is what we have to do.

Lastly, the claims placed in diary. I just want to encourage all of the VRs to — most of you do, to look at your pending claims. If you have questions in regard to those placed in diary, we still have several, but were waiting for documentation from the VRs.

And I know it's much harder with everyone working from home and documentation being placed elsewhere for you all to get back to us, which is why we're still continuing with the extension. There's no expiration date in regard to placing your claim into diary. That has not changed whatsoever. But I still want to encourage everyone to look at those.

If you have questions, if you don't see a note indicating what that diary is for, what we're waiting for, please again, email the VR Helpdesk. And I will get on that and respond to you.

And that is absolutely all that I have. So I'm going to pass it on to Cara Caplan, who's going to speak on the VCU training. Cara?

Cara Caplan: Good afternoon. Thanks, Raquel. And good afternoon, everyone. So we have received numerous inquiries from VRs about the process for getting individuals into the Virginia Commonwealth University, CWIC and Community Partner Initial Training class.

So the — I just wanted to let you guys know, the primary purpose of this class and training is to provide training to our work incentive planning and assistance awardees. That's first and foremost.

But when there is extra space, we do allow some Ticket to Work community partners to attend. The community partners we currently consider for class attendance are employment network staff that have favorable suitability determination, and vocational rehabilitation agency staff that have a favorable suitability determination.

Our resources designated to train these individuals are limited and specifically focused on our direct partners. These are the entities that we have oversight with and that we can assure are suitable to work with our beneficiaries.

We do recommend if VR vendors and fee-for-service contractors want to partake in the VCU training that they consider applying to become an employment network. Many of these vendors already deliver services to people with disabilities and could be excellent employment networks. And that is all I have. I think we are opening it up for questions now.

Raquel Donaldson: Yes. Thanks, Cara.

Operator: Thank you. If you wish to ask a question, please signal by pressing, "star," "1" on the telephone keypad. And if you use your speakerphone, please ensure that your mute function is turned off. Again, press "star," "1" for a question. We will now pause for just one moment.

Okay. And our first question comes from Eugenia Cox. Please go ahead.

Eugenia Cox: Hi, this is Eugenia. I just wanted to find out who was going to be maintaining the SSA secure portal?

Katie Striebinger: Hi, Eugenia. This is Katie. This is SSA program, so it is owned and maintained by SSA.

Eugenia Cox: So they do have the claims on there, so will the new TPM be able to access the portal to see what we see so when we have an inquiry about something in the portal, would it go to SSA or would it go to the new TPM?

Katie Striebinger: So if you think of the way the portal works, if you think about it, when you go to log into the Ticket portal, right? You're logging in as an employee of a State VR agency, right? And you can see records that are pertaining to your agency and your workload.

We cannot allow anyone else in there, but you and the other authorized employees from your agency, so no. So no outside individual including SSA or the TPM contractor will be able to log into the portal.

Operator: Once again, it is a star 1 for question. The next question comes from Lynda Kosnik. Please go ahead.

Lynda Kosnik: Good morning, good afternoon, everybody. This is Lynda from the State of Arizona. I don't know how I'll get an answer to this, but I'm having a problem with submitting my monthly reports into the portal. And my question was just are there any other states that are having the same problem? It started, for me, last month. So it's been September, October.

I haven't reached out to the VR Helpdesk yet. I've been mostly working with our data department, and they can't locate anything that's wrong with the files that they're sending me. I'm just wondering if anybody else is having that problem. Thanks.

Raquel Donaldson: Hi, Lynda ...

Katie Striebinger: Hi, this is ...

Raquel Donaldson: ... this is Raquel.

Katie Striebinger: Okay, go ahead.

Raquel Donaldson: I'm sorry. This is Raquel.

(Crosstalk)

Lynda Kosnik: Hi, (Rochelle).

Raquel Donaldson: I just wanted to definitely suggest that you do send an email to the VR Helpdesk just so that someone in system support can possibly, you know, do some troubleshooting and figure out what's going on, especially if you're not finding anything on your end. I don't want you to go another month, and not be able to submit your monthly report.

Lynda Kosnik: All right. Sure. Now, when I contact them, should I send them the report as well?

Raquel Donaldson: You can. You can, but just start off at least by sending an email to the VR Helpdesk. And I'm sure it'll probably be (Alexis) who will follow up with you and anything that she needs, she'll request from you.

Lynda Kosnik: That sounds great. Thanks so much. I'll do that today.

Raquel Donaldson: Thanks, Lynda.

Lynda Kosnik: You're welcome. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Operator: Next question comes from Eric Schmidt. Please go ahead.

Eric Schmidt: Hi, everybody. I just had a quick, I don't know if it's a question or comment but it's in regard to the VCU CWIC Training. I believe, I already may have sent this your way, Rob.

But I just wanted to put it in your guy's ear, we have a number of providers, and they're pretty large-scale providers that have been providing services to beneficiaries for a long time. And they're not at all interested in becoming employment networks, but they provide that, you know, a very valuable service to beneficiaries through this.

And if they wanted to add an additional staff person, right now, they have absolutely no way to do that other than going through Cornell. And so I'm just trying to find out, if there's any way, just to put it in your ear, I'm not going to, you know, say that this is the only way to do it.

But if there's any way that may be a state agency could recommend or provide clarity to SSA that, yes, this is in fact a vendor of fee for service benefits planning.

And if a letter from an agency could be used in along with suitability clearance instead of becoming an EN. Again, I'm not saying that has to be, you know, an answer right now, but just something to put in your guy's ear, because we're running into this already with providers trying to come to us to say how are we supposed to get our new staff trained? Just to put it in your ear. Thank you.

Robert Pfaff: Yes, Eric, thank you for that. I — we did receive your email that was the basis for Cara's summary of the VCU training and entering into that training and so forth. The — we will plan to circle back and speak with you a little bit more about this in-depth. So I'll put something on the calendar. And we can discuss this a little bit. But there's, you know, obviously, multiple issues and so we're happy to discuss.

Eric Schmidt: Great. Thank you very much.

Operator: It appears there are no further questions at this time.

Raquel Donaldson: All right. That was pretty quick for a call. I just want to thank everyone who took the time out to be on the call. Our next call will be Tuesday, January 11, 2022, of course, at 1:00 pm Eastern Standard Time. You all will hear from me in requesting any agenda items that you would like or questions or problems. But at this time, everyone, Happy New Year, I guess. Thanks for calling in.

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