

Jennelle Bratcher: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to today's quarterly All VR Call. My name is Jenelle. I am the TPM Ticket Operations Manager. I will serve as today's moderator. We are very excited to host today's call using a platform where you get to see our lovely faces. It has been such a pleasure serving as a Ticket Operations Manager since transitioning the TPM contract a little over a year ago. Time really does fly when you're having fun. I'm very excited to work with you all again. I am pleased to serve as the moderator today. Please continue to reach out to me if you need anything regarding VR payments.

Before we begin with the agenda and presentations, I would like to review a few housekeeping items. First, the meeting is being recorded and transcribed. Please remain on mute at all times during the call unless called upon by the facilitator. Please feel free to ask a question in the MS teams chat section, which will be monitored. If joining via phone and you wish to ask a question, raise your hand utilizing star five. You will be unmuted. Then press *6 to unmute yourself. Please ask one question each time called upon by the facilitator. Additional questions or comments can be sent to VR dot helpdesk at SSA.gov. Those questions not answered during the live event will be forwarded to appropriate panelists for comment. If time permits, you will be allowed to raise your hand again after your question has concluded. If time permits, we will circle back around to you.

Closed captioning is available for participants who joined using the MS Teams application, or utilizing the separate closed captioning link provided. To turn on closed captioning in teams, go to the three ellipses at the top of the MS Teams window and click on more actions. Go down to the list to turn on live captions. When using the link option, paste the link in the browser, and it will open a separate window to view closed captions. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Today's agenda consists of welcomes from Rob. Chantel will cover the Affordable Connectivity Programs. Chantel will hold a brief Q&A session, and this will be for her section only. Erica will cover Outreach updates. Erica will hold a Q&A for her section as well. Shada will then cover 301 claims, Katie will cover VR payment workload transition updates, and Raquel will cover VR helpdesk, case processing email, reconsiderations, 610 denials, and FY 23 cost formula. When her section concludes, we will have an open Q&A session. Now I would like to welcome Rob, the Director of Office of Employment Support at Social Security Administration.

Robert Pfaff: Thank you for that outstanding introduction. Thank you all for joining us today. I have a little bit of work going on in the other part of my house, so bear with me if you hear any noise. First of all, I would like to thank all of you for joining us today. And I want to thank you for the service you provide for individuals with disabilities. We're glad you could participate. We have a lot of good topics to discuss today. First and foremost, I want to thank the presenters who are going to present today. Thank you for the time and efforts to put together your presentations. I also want to mention starting out that we are closing out the end of the fiscal

year and starting a new one. For the federal government, our fiscal year starts October 1 and September 30 of every year. This year, the one thing I wanted to point out as a notable accomplishment and really take a moment to thank the team is, the full transition of the VR cost reimbursement workload from SSA over to our Cognosante Ticket Program Manager. As you could imagine, there was an enormous amount of work and effort put into this. It really started as an idea several years ago. It took several years and consultation with many different parties, including General Counsel, and the office with acquisitions and grants, and some other folks, but at the end of the day, everything came together. It sometimes wasn't as easy as others, but we were able to train folks and get folks access to systems to make this all happen. So really a big achievement on behalf of all those who participated. I am thankful to the trainers, the behind-the-scenes folks who worked real hard to make this happen. I'm thankful to Katie for leading these efforts. I'm thankful to Jenelle and the team at Cognosante. Everybody works collaboratively to make this happen. I just want to extend my thanks and appreciation.

One thing of note, as we start FY 2023, the federal government does not have a budget as of yet. We are operating under a continuing resolution. This is not anything unusual. If you pay attention to these things the last couple of years, you know, usually sometime in the winter there is a budget that is passed sometime around the start of the new year. This doesn't impact your work. It doesn't impact your organizations getting payments. We are currently funded at, or slightly above, where we were funded last year while the executives and Congress and Senate, et cetera, decides what the final budget amounts will be going into next year. With that said, thanks again to all. A big accomplishment. I know we will talk a little more about transition later in the presentation.

Suffice to say, another achievement is that I hope I'm not stealing anybody's thunder, but I am sure I am, the pending is down from 8,000 to about 1,000 cases, roughly, right now. You know, it is a tremendous accomplishment and great customer service all the way around. That is all I have to say. I want to take a moment and turn it back over to Jenelle.

Jennelle Bratcher: Thank you so much for that helpful information and for the kudos as well. Now I would love to turn the call over to Chantel Virgil. She is the Outreach Specialist from the FCC, the Federal Communications Commission. We are delighted to have you today to cover Affordable Connectivity Program.

Chantel Virgil: Thank you so much for that introduction. I am with the Federal Communications Commission. It is quite all right if you are not familiar with the FCC. In short, our responsibility is to make sure that telecommunications devices and services are available to all. We're here to talk about the Affordable Connectivity Program, which is a program that helps many people around the country, households around the country, access broadband, affordable broadband. Let's jump right into it. We're going to talk about the Affordable Connectivity Program, better known as the ACP, because the federal government loves their acronyms. The Affordable Connectivity Program is a federal program that offers households, qualifying households, a discount on their monthly Internet bill.



Let's look at how much that discount it could be. Eligible households can receive up to \$30 off their monthly Internet bill. If that household is on tribal lands, then that discount can jump up to \$75 off per month of their Internet bill. That is the first part of the program. There is a second offer to this program, which is a one-time discount of up to \$100 off the purchase of a laptop, desktop, or tablet computer. There is one thing we need to point out when it comes to the discounts. Most people, when we tell them about the discounts, you may think they can go to the retail store and maybe purchase the device, and somehow that is how they get their discount. But that is not how this program works. Whichever discount you are receiving, whether it is the monthly discount off the Internet bill or a discount off of the connected device, that discount has to be accessed through a participating provider. That means all the providers that you might know of in the country, only some of them have decided to participate in the ACP program. Then there is a list of those participating providers you will be able to access through the program you will select if you are approved to participate in the program. Then you will choose the participating provider. You would contact them to begin receiving the benefits.

Now that you know how much of a discount you can receive, let's talk about how households can be eligible. I have already said one thing you need to pay attention to. This is not an individual discount. This is household based. The household will receive the benefit, depending on certain criteria that would make the household eligible. One way a household can be eligible is if the household income is at, or below, 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. I don't know about you, but I don't know whether my income meets the federal poverty guidelines. If you go to the website for the Affordable Connectivity Program, there will be instructions and details to determine whether or not your household meets the income requirements. Let's say it doesn't. Let's say your household does not meet the income threshold. That doesn't mean your household isn't eligible for the program. That means you just don't qualify through your income.

There are other ways you can qualify. Some of those ways is that one person in the household meets at least one of the following criteria. Such as, if one person in the household participates or receives SNAP or Medicaid, or someone in the household receives WIC or a housing voucher. The list goes on. Some of the more popular qualifications would be Medicaid or SNAP. If you have someone in the household that receives free or reduced school lunch or breakfast programs, then that household will qualify for the program. If there is someone in the household that receives a federal Pell grant for the current award year, that would make the household available or eligible to receive the Affordable Connectivity Program.

Now that we know what type of discount we can receive as a household, and whether or not we qualify, the next question is usually how you apply. There are two steps to applying. The first is to submit an application. You can do this in several different ways. You can go online to affordableconnectivity.gov and submit an online application. Of course, that is one of the ways we would encourage you to apply. However, if you do not have access to broadband or the ability to apply online, you can also print out an application or mail in the application. But make sure that, whenever you submit an application, whether online or you're mailing it, make sure you put in as much information that is being asked of you. That will help the program and

help your application be processed a lot faster. Once you get your approvals added, if you receive an approval status, then you have to connect with a participating provider. That means that you have to access that list of providers offering the ACP, and you have to select one of them, contact them. Even if it is a participating provider, you are already receiving service through, you have to contact the provider and say I have been approved for the ACP benefit. I would like to start receiving those discounts on my monthly bill. Your provider will have instructions for you to follow after that. That is the affordable connectivity program.

As you can imagine, all of the eligible households that this can help in the country requires a lot of outreach. If you, or someone you know, is interested in more information about the ACP, we do have to request a speaker. You can definitely contact us again and ask us for a general overview of the ACP, much like what I am giving you now. You can ask for a train the trainer for tips on how to navigate the application process. Or if you would like to host enrollment events, we would like to support you with that as well. If you want updates on what is going on with the FCC or any resources that may become available in the future, you will go to outreach at fcc.gov.

Jennelle Bratcher: Wonderful. Thank you so much for covering the Affordable Connectivity Program. We thank you so much for your time. Now we will hold a brief Q&A session for Chantel for any questions you have only regarding FCC Affordable Connectivity Program. You can ask those questions now. Please remember to raise your hand to ask a question if joining via the Teams application by clicking on the reactions icon at the top and choosing the raised hand option. If you're joining via phone, you press star five to raise your hand. Then you press *6 to un-mute. You may also ask questions in the MS teams chat as well. Now we will begin with any questions from the audience. Katherine, do we have any questions?

Katherine Jett: Yes, we have one. This is from a caller with the phone number ending in 2888. You can un-mute by pressing *6.

Caller: This is David in Virginia. Two quick questions. Is this program one that the funding is there, or does it get reauthorized each year? And then, if somebody is approved maybe I missed this, but do they get the discount each month on their bill? Or is it a one-time reduction?

Chantel Virgil: There is a monthly discount of up to \$30 off your monthly Internet bill. If the household is on tribal lands; the discount jumps up to \$75 off the monthly Internet bill. Then there is a one-time discount off the purchase of a device. As far as funding, we do have funding for the program. I'm trying to remember the exact amount we were given for this program. It is somewhere around \$3.2 billion, maybe even more. The funding has been allotted for the program. As far as we know, should go on into the next year. There is a recertification for folks depending on how they decide to qualify for the program.

Jennelle Bratcher: Thank you so much. Katherine, do we have any other callers?

Katherine Jett: We don't have any more, at this time.

Jennelle Bratcher: Thank you so much. Emani, are there any questions for Chantel in the chat?

Emani Cain: Yes, we do have one question. It is from Maureen. Are Hawaiian homelands also considered under the tribal program discount?

Chantel Virgil: If you would go to the [affordable connectivity.gov](https://www.affordableconnectivity.gov) website, I think you will find a clear answer to your question. It just depends on so many different things. There is a list to check to see if your location qualifies under the tribal lands discount.

Jennelle Bratcher: Thank you Chantel. Emani, do we have any other questions for Chantel at this time?

Emani Cain: Not at this time.

Jennelle Bratcher: Thank you so much. Chantel, thank you so much for your time and all this very helpful information. We do appreciate it.

Chantel Virgil: Thank you for having me.

Jennelle Bratcher: Now I would like to move the call along so we can discuss the Outreach updates with Erica Grado. Erica is the TPM Outreach Specialist.

Erica Grado: Thank you for that introduction. I am Erica Grado with Social Security Ticket to Work Program. The Ticket to Work Program Outreach Team promotes the Ticket to Work eligible beneficiaries in a variety of places. The WISE webinars are online events to explain the Ticket Program and Work Incentives through accessible learning opportunities. They are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Average monthly attendance ranges from 400 to 600 people depending on the topic. The next WISE webinar is Medicare or Medicaid coverage in the Path to Employment. It is hosted on October 26 at 3:00 p.m. Eastern. The presenter will focus on the myths and facts surrounding work, Medicaid coverage, Medicare coverage.

TPM sends sample media posts for service providers to share via our GovDelivery announcements. The upcoming WISE webinar topic include Medicare and Medicaid coverage and the Path to Employment on October 26. The presenter will provide an introduction to the Ticket Program to examine the myths and facts about work and Medicare and Medicaid coverage. We then have a presentation on November 16, "Working from Home with Ticket to Work." Our presenter discusses options for working from home as a Ticketholder and tips on how to succeed in remote positions. Then, on December 21, is "Setting Goals with Ticket to Work. As people start thinking about their goals for the new year, we will get them thinking about their employment goals for the year. This webinar focuses on SMART goals as they relate



to the Ticket Program and job search.

We schedule daily social media posts providing a variety of relevant resources like blog posts, fact sheets, WISE webinars, success stories. We also share important Social Security updates and other information from different federal agencies. Ticket to Work fact sheets provide information about the program and other Work Incentives. This month, for National Disability Employment Awareness month, we encourage you to share the fact sheet, "What is the Social Security Ticket to Work Program?" Ticket to Work success stories can be found on the Choose Work website and feature people who have achieved financial independence with the help of the Ticket Program. The worksite also includes stepping stone stories. These are for individuals who have made major progress towards financial independence but have yet to eliminate the reliance on benefits. One of our success stories feature Shirley. It took several years and a combination of strategies and treatments for Shirley to manage her narcolepsy and depression. When she did, she knew she was ready to return to work and the Ticket Program helped her reach her goal. Part of the employment team included a benefits counselor from America Works, who helped her understand how working would impact her benefits so she could focus on finding a job. Success stories are great way to see others like themselves succeed with the Ticket Program and achieve financial independence. You can help share the stories by promoting them on social media for sharing stories from the Choose Work site with individual Ticketholders from similar backgrounds.

Finally, we encourage you to connect with us to get the latest information, resources, and events in the Ticket Program. You can follow us on Twitter. Watching videos on our YouTube channel, and by subscribing to our email updates from GovDelivery in the Choose Work blog. You can contact us with questions about social media are asking for sample posts by contacting our email socialmedia@choosework.ssa.gov .

Jennelle Bratcher: That was all very helpful information. Now we would like to open a brief Q&A session. If you do have questions regarding anything that Erica has discussed, please raise your hand to ask a question. Click on the reactions icon at the top and choose the raised hand option. Is joining via phone, plant press *5 to raise your hand, then press *6 to unmute yourself. You might also ask questions in the MS Teams chat. Katherine, do we have any questions?

Katherine Jett: Yes, we do. We have Eugenia. Your video is active.

Eugenia Cox: Sorry. I had to hit unmute. I am not sure if this is a question for here, but I wanted to know how I would update the Ticket to Work Directory.

Jennelle Bratcher: I don't think Erica covered that. That would not be her section. But if you could, we are going to limit questions only to her section. But if you can put that in the MS Teams chat, we will make sure to get a response for you.



Eugenia Cox: Okay. Thanks.

Jennelle Bratcher: Katherine, do we have any other callers or anyone with her hand raise?

Katherine Jett: Yes maa, we have Kristin. You are on.

Caller: Those are wonderful resources that I use all the time with our Ticketholders. I just have a question. There are some wonderful YouTube videos. There are two in particular, but they are outdated. The SSI and SSDI and working are quick three-minute videos, which is a great introduction prior to the Ticketholders receiving individualized benefits counseling, but they are outdated. They reference SGA figures from 2021. This year I have been using them I was wondering if there is a plan on updating, and maybe widening the YouTube videos.

Erica Grado: That's a great question. At this time, we are going through and trying to update and give you the most accurate resources, including SGA and the latest information from Social Security. At this time, I can't tell you when YouTube will be updated, but we will try to do that for 2023 numbers.

Caller: Thank you. Appreciate it.

Jennelle Bratcher: Thank you so much for your question. Katherine, do we have any other questions?

Katherine Jett: We do not at this time.

Jennelle Bratcher: Okay. Thank you. Emani, do we have any questions from the chat for Erica?

Emani Cain: Yes, we do. We have two questions. The first one is from Jennifer. She is asking, can you speak more about the EN marketing campaign that ENs are able to enroll in that allows them to text beneficiaries.

Erica Grado: I personally cannot speak on this marketing campaign.

Jennelle Bratcher: I see that Rob has his hand up. I'm not sure. Did you want to speak to the marketing plan?

Robert Pfaff: I can. We offer ENs that have the capacity to conduct outreach to beneficiaries, limited PII for example, name and mailing address or telephone number, et cetera, so they can market their services directly to beneficiaries. They are marketing their services, but also telling them about the program at the same time. This is something we started in 2016. We have gradually increased over time. We checked with our General Counsel about being able to share this information with VR agencies, and we are told it would constitute essentially a direct referral

to VR, which is not permitted since the Ticket to Work statutory language was put into law in 1999. We cannot do the direct referral, which would be us releasing it to VR agencies. That is where we are with that. Thank you.

Jennelle Bratcher: Thank you so much for that Rob. Very helpful. Emani, was at the last question or do we have one more?

Emani Cain: We have one more question. This one is from Donna. She said, I have never seen advanced notice of WISE topics. Are they listed anywhere?

Erica Grado: We don't list the topics further ahead than one week prior. This is a first look at the next three months' Wise topics. We will begin planning our next fiscal year soon. But that is not listed anywhere.

Jennelle Bratcher: Thank you very much for that information. And thank you so much for your time today. Now we will move on to Shada, lead training coordinator for Social Security administrations VR team. Today she will cover 301 claims.

Shada Roper: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the fiscal year for Social Security administration. It is the last quarter for RSA. This is more of a refresher. Katie and Rob wanted me to ensure we are getting the amount of 301 claims as highly as possible, so it is not your average CRVR claim. Therefore, we're going to go through a brief refresher of what it is to submit a 301 claim for payment. I thank Lisa Kelly is not with us today to show what you see on your end when submitting claims through the Portal. When you are submitting a 301 claim, we ask that you process the claim submission as it shows on the screen. On your general tab, you would have an initial claim, and please. Once you have typed the type of claim, make sure the claim base is on medical recovery for 301. That is how we know not to seek SGA information.

On the next slide, the general information that you put in for your regular SGA claims where you have the VR enter date, the IEP date and closure date is necessary. We then use your SVR information on an average SGA claim where you would have your name, the contact information, the authorizer of the claim, the title of the authorizer, and the date we are authorizing the claim. On the next submission page, we do the claim information, the SSA benefit status, the Social Security number, if they're a Bic A or if they're receiving SSI only and is the beneficiary blind? Were there medical services provided? For the continuous period of SGA, as Lisa has here, we have 989 because there is no SGA, per se. The claim costs. Therefore, the amount for the direct costs, obviously, there is no longer tracking, and the total costs involved. In addition to the codes that we use. You will have to click the service code type if you're using RSA or SSA codes. We need to know that.

The expense code. RSA or SSA, once again. The service start date and service end date, and the amount you are requesting. The last portion, you have the itemization for the direct cost involved. Once you have completed this, we have a 301 mailbox. You can submit the

information to me at the VR 301 mailbox, or you can submit it to my personal email that most of you are familiar with. The VR will receive an email that consists of a letter that states what a 301 claim is, why this information is needed, and how you are to fax this information to us. The notice looks similar to this. Some of you who are familiar with filing 301 claims are familiar with the notice that you received from me. Once it has been submitted, the claim information will be here in our Portal. As you can see, it says claim basis type, medical recovery, 301 during the VR period. That is what allows our TPM contractors and everyone involved in the claim processing know I need to review this information as a 301 claim seeing that there is no SGA involved. The screens will come across a little bit differently, and I will process this using the information I have received from the Office of Disability Operations. That's it for now. I will pass it back onto Jenelle for questions. The questions can be asked at the end of the presentation when we address all questions for VR cost reimbursement. Thank you.

Jennelle Bratcher: Thank you so much. We really appreciate that information on 301 claims. Now we will turn it over to Katie Striebinger. She is the VR -- I'm sorry, Katie is the VR Branch Chief. She is going to be covering the VR payment workload transitional update. Katie, it is all yours.

Katie Striebinger: Good afternoon, everyone. I promise I will be brief. I know everyone has a lot of questions for Shada. I just wanted to talk through, as you heard in the welcome, a milestone for the SSA VR cost reimbursement program. VR payments are now being processed by Cognosante, the Ticket Program Manager contractor. We have already met the moderator, Jennelle Bratcher. She is the director of Ticket Operations for Cognosante. She and her team, you will hear more from on the next call, have an incredible partner as we have worked the last year to transition VR payments from our SSA staff to her team. You probably are thinking, how will this impact you and your agency? We hope you can already see the benefits. Your cases are being addressed as early as the same day you submit them, and while Cognosante will continue to handle the daily processing of VR cases, SSA will continue to perform oversight of the program. SSA will also continue to process reconsiderations as they come in. So do know that SSA is still in the mix and still handling your payments. We will keep you updated as we continue to transition various workloads. Like I said, we look forward to giving you more information and giving you a chance to meet more of our team on the next call. Jennelle?

Jennelle Bratcher: Thank you so much Katie. Now we're going to turn it over to Raquel Donaldson. She is the Senior Program Analyst for the VR team with Social Security Administration. She will be covering the VR help desk, case processing emails, reconsiderations, 610 denials, and FY 23 cost formula. Take it away Raquel.

Raquel Donaldson: Good afternoon, everyone. Just a few housekeeping notes. First, about the VR help desk. I want to piggyback off what Katie was talking about in regard to transitioning. I know currently, a lot of you will email the VR help desk with any questions or issues, but you can also email directly. That is fine. I'm asking that you try to get more into the habit of emailing the VR desk because everything is transitioning over. I am currently in the process of training.

Others at Cognosante will take over the VR help desk. I'm not going anywhere, but some of the responsibilities I currently have will be moving over to Cognosante as well. It helps for them to see some of your concerns and emails as well and how I respond to them also. Also, when you are emailing the VR help desk and asking questions regarding considerations or issues you have had with claims, providing more than enough information is always great. You always try to include, not just the claim number or the work case number or SSA reference number, it is all the same thing, but try to include the person's name and their Social Security number. It makes it much easier for me or whoever else will be doing this in the future to look up for you. Then we don't have to go back and ask for that information. That is what I have for the VR help desk.

Next is the case processing email that I'm sure everyone received last week. I am assuming that — it's up there now. The email. Social Security administration is pleased to announce there is no longer a backlog of the vocational rehabilitation cost reimbursement claims. As a result, some claims may be reviewed the same day. That is probably the issue. I will not read the whole thing. Anyone who is putting in or submitting or uploading claims and you're putting VRCR in the remarks or actually putting their earnings information in your remarks, keep doing what you are doing. Nothing will change for you at all. We are simply asking that if you know you are uploading earnings information, after you upload your claim, we are asking that you put remarks there saying basically the earnings information is coming right after this. This gives the technicians a heads-up that they won't process the case they don't see the earnings information immediately, and that is how you are receiving the 590. I received a lot of emails. If you're putting VRCR or in your comments for uploading the earnings information, but you're typing in the wages in the remarks comment, don't change that. Do exactly what you are doing. This email doesn't affect you at all. This is just for those who usually have to upload your claims and turn around and print out a fax cover sheet. We need to know that earnings information is coming. Keep in mind, even if you put in the remarks that earning information is coming, it needs to come within 24 hours; otherwise, the technician will still deny the claim 590. That is the information I have for you. I just wanted to clear up any questions or concerns in regard to the email blast that went out last week. If you still have questions, you can reach out to me at the VR help desk.

I believe the next topic is reconsiderations. Please keep in mind, when you're sending reconsiderations to the help desk, because you got denied and you're questioning it, provide me with more information. I got denied, why? I know a lot of people do a great job of going online and printing out reports to see denials daily. But sometimes it is good to wait for the notice of denial to actually come in, so you know exactly the information. If not and you still want to question why you're getting the denial and have reasons for reconsiderations, provide me with that information. For example, if it is SGA, if you are disagreeing with the 620. All that information should go in the email right then and there. If I receive emails that say it is denied, can you check and make sure it is right, that is something you probably should go ahead and submit a reconsideration on. Sometimes when the error is on the SSA side and we denied you, I have no problem with turning right around and creating a reconsideration for you and reworking the claim. That won't change.

The next thing is 610 denials. Sometimes you all have questions. It could be a 610 denial or 950 payment. If you are questioning why, you are thinking they should be paid more or something like that, it is always good to include a copy of the payment ceiling calculator. I need to know what you use as far as the SSI benefits or SSDI benefit amount. Nine times out of 10, what we have used is something different, and that is how we always respond to you. I will let you know what the response should be, or I will let you know the benefit amount.

Lastly, but never least, the fiscal year 23 cost formula. I wish I had great information for you now. I wish I had some balloons to celebrate that we already have it resolved as far as the cost formula is concerned. We do not; however, we are working quite hard. We have sent VR is that it been awesome in assisting us. We have included other offices, a budget and other things Social Security that needs to be included. Unfortunately, because RSA has changed the forms, it is a little bit different than just going back and putting in information. The wording is different. We're talking about grant awards as opposed to fiscal year awards. It has made it more complicated for us to come up with an entirely new cost formula. In October, I'm usually sending the update or cost formula information. Unfortunately, I don't have a timeline right now to tell you when to expect it. I always suggest that you do not hold onto your claims. They should be submitted when you see that you have the earnings there, the nine out of 12 months of earnings or the three out of four quarters of earnings. You should not hold onto those claims. They should still be submitted to SSA, to the Portal. It is our responsibility once we receive it if we see that it requires the fiscal year cost formula to process, then we will put that information in. We are responsible for placing it in diary. You will never be denied a 620 if it is because of a cost formula we are waiting for. I believe that is all I have. Any other questions. You know how to reach me at the VR help desk. I will turn it back over to Janelle.

Jennelle Bratcher: Thank you so much. That was so much helpful information. I'm sure if anyone has any questions, you can look in the chat and get the information on how to reach out to Raquel if you don't already know. Right now, we're going to open it up to the SSA Q&A session. Raise your hand to ask a question if joining via Teams application by clicking on the reactions icon at the top and choosing the raised hand option. If joining via phone, you can press star five to raise your hand, and once the facilitator un-mute you, press *6 to unmute yourself. You may also ask questions in the MS Teams chat. Ok Katherine, we are now going to open the floor for questions from callers.

Katherine Jett: We have a question from Eugenia. Go ahead Eugenia, unmute.

Eugenia: On the 301, really quick, I have been doing this 18 years and I have never received any notification of a 301 claim. I have no idea how to get one or who tells us if there was a medical recovery case. I have no idea on how to get those. That is a question I've been asking for a very long time. Processing them once you get them, I can understand that, but I never received any notification. Is there some place we go to look for these? Do we have to develop a relationship with our local disability determination services? I have no idea how to get my hands on one. That is my first question.

Janelle Bratcher: Let's let Katie or Shada have an opportunity to answer.

Shada Roper: 301 claims start in the local field office. It would come directly from the field office, which doesn't start with us. It then ends up in the Office of Disability Operations. That is the one that sends the information to the 301 mailbox to me to make me aware to send you an email to say there is a possible 301 involved. So, it would start with your local field office. This is the information given to disabled claimants once they file for a disability claim. Rob and Katie and I are in the process of working closer with our field offices to find out what is happening with our 301 claims. We have had more than we have had in the past. However, we do know there might be 301 claims hanging out there, but we are not sure if they have to do with the VR. We are not sure what the disconnect is from when a claimant is with a counselor, that it gets to you to process a claim. We're just provided this information from our Disability Operations Office. Once I have that information, that is when you get an email from me.

Eugenia: So, we would be getting notified directly from you. Okay. Hopefully, we will get one. There's got to be somebody who is medically recovered in the last 18 years. Okay. Hopefully, we will get some soon. My next question --

Jennelle Bratcher: Before you ask another question, let me check with Kathryn to see if we have any other questions.

Katherine Jett: No, Jennelle. There are no other questions at this time.

Jennelle Bratcher: Perfect. You may continue Eugenia.

Eugenia: Electronic signatures. I think we have asked this several times. When can we expect that in writing? Our policy people are wanting to know if Social Security will be okay with electronic signatures now that the world has changed, and we are doing more online services. So, if we could somehow find out if we are going to be getting that in writing. The other thing, Timely Progress Reviews. Any idea when those are going to start happening? We have been warning our staff that they will come someday, and we don't know how it will hit, but for us, it's going to hit. We have some 2000 Tickets assigned. We don't know who will get what when. I'm just trying to prepare folks.

Jennelle Bratcher: Let's take it one question at a time. We're going to start with electronic signatures. I will turn it over to either Katie or Rob to answer that question.

Katie Striebinger: I honestly did not realize you were waiting for some updated guidance. I could take that back and keep you updated on that. The other one, TPR, Timely Progress Reviews. We are at the same place we were before. If we are about to start one or make a movement in that direction. We will let all providers know as soon as possible, but we have no indication right now. I don't have any news for you on that.

Eugenia Cox: I did hear from our WIPA services that we no longer have to have clients call directly to the helpline to get a referral. Is that true?

Katie Striebinger: I have not heard that guidance. Can I get back to you on that one? I have not heard that change. And we do not have anybody on this call that can speak to that. I don't have anyone here from the WIPA team.

Eugenia Cox: When we're talking to clients on the phone about tickets and needing more benefits planning, I do a referral, but I've been referring them back to the Ticket to Work helpline. Now I am hearing we don't need to do that, that they can call directly, so that would be great. That is all my questions.

Katie Striebinger: We will give you updated guidance on that.

Jennelle Bratcher: Now I would like to ask Emani if we have any questions in the chat for our SSA team.

Emani Cain: Yes, we have two questions from Shelley. Previously, we received an activity report by state. There was no report received for September or October. Are we still going to receive those?

Katie Striebinger: This is Katie again. If you would like a copy, you can let us know. We can get you a copy. But we are no longer automatically sending it out.

The information in that report is the same information available in the Portal. If there are discrepancies, it is a great tool to check that out. But you should be able to see the same information in the Portal.

Jennelle Bratcher: Thank you Katie. Emani, next question.

Emani Cain: Next question is from Shelley. Will the options of retrieving the claim determination letters from the Portal ever be available? It would allow for expedited turnaround.

Katie Striebinger: Can you be clear? Are you talking about the notice you get when you receive a payment?

Jennelle Bratcher: Shelley, if you would like to provide more information, you can press *5, and then we will have the ability to unmute you. Then you can press *6 to unmute yourself. I don't know if she is on the phone or if you need to raise your hand.

Raquel Donaldson: I think what Shelley is talking about are the C3 and C7 notices with late start of SGA justification, and/or, if we are asking for a breakdown of the direct costs. I believe

that is what Shelley is talking about. If that is the case, I would love for them to be available in the Portal. I know it is not right now.

Katie Striebinger: That is not a planned functionality for the Portal.

Raquel Donaldson: Honestly, I will say this to Shelley and everyone else, receiving the actual letter should not slow you up from processing and getting the justifications together. If you are looking into the diary and the diary provides you with what notice has been sent to you, what we're looking for, whether it's late start of SGA, we are always asking for a signed copy of the IPE and case notes as well. If it is a breakdown of direct costs, that is exactly what we are asking for. We need you to provide us with each direct cost, the amount and dates for that. I never suggest anyone waits until the snail mail gets to you to send that information back to us. That is also because that information is readily available to you in the Portal. So, when I receive emails that say, I just got this meal a week later, can I get a waiver for that — nine times out of 10, the answer will be no, only because we know there are other ways you can find out about that information if you go right to the Portal. It is there. You have the VR on the West Coast, so it will take longer for them to get a claim or notice that it would take someone in the Maryland VR.

Katie Striebinger: I would add now that we talk about same day case processing, your case is not sitting in a queue for three months before we get to it. That means that you should, we do hope, that you are all going into the Portal more often and checking. We are on top of this workload. I know that we got here faster than anyone thought we would. We do encourage you to use the Portal and get in there and make sure you're checking everything. The clock starts with 30 days. If you have any problems with the Portal or need help getting into the Portal or adding users to do things, please reach out to the VR help desk. That is why we are here. The Portal is a fantastic tool. If you are not familiar with it or need help with some of the features, we are happy to walk you through what you need to do.

Jennelle Bratcher: Thank you for all the helpful information. We do have one more hand, but it is 2:02 p.m. Do we want to take more questions, or should we conclude the call for today?

Katie Striebinger: We can take it.

Katherine Jett: We have Eugenia.

Eugenia Cox: I just wanted to make sure that Katie is saying we won't get a quarterly report of all the states and the denial rates and all that stuff anymore?

Katie Striebinger: That is not the intention at this point.

Eugenia Cox: I know we can get information about ourselves, but the whole point on that was for us to compare how we are doing with other states to see what progress we are making. I didn't realize we were going to stop doing that.

Katie Striebinger: We were using that report, if you remember, because we had 10,000 pending cases and the overall denial rate was high. If you remember, it was three or four years ago. We were trying to use that report to help you see how your denial rate was. Overall, we have seen such a vast improvement of all agencies. We don't really need that tool anymore to communicate. But if that is something that you are interested in, we can bring that back. But it would not be until we have completed the transition. It would be — we would probably redo it and improve it, seeing how things have changed.

Eugenia Cox: Okay. Thank you.

Katie Striebinger: I would say, if we were to revamp it, if there any suggestions for improvements. We kind of took an old report that used to come in the mail. We used to mail it to you know. Then we try to automate it and make it a little better to keep on top of the denial rate. You know, if there are suggestions for something that would make a better and useful, I think most are checking to make sure that everything is how they expect their numbers to look. We are open for suggestions on how to make improvements. We have a wonderful contractor here helping us with all of it, including reporting. We're open to suggestions.

Eugenia Cox: We're having the peer meeting after this and can talk about it. Thank you for being open to possibly continuing with something like that.

Katie Striebinger: The past one had a purpose. It is a great thing that the denial rate has dropped so significantly.

Jennelle Bratcher: I would add to that as well. I know you said you're going to look at what you would like to see in it, but also consider how you would like to see it. We can't make any promises. But we can try to make tools that will be a little more dynamic. No promises whatsoever. But just understand that you can think outside the box and present Katie and her team with all options.

Eugenia Cox: OK. Thank you Jennelle.

Jennelle Bratcher: I know that Katie and her team love to receive anything that you can dream of. Not saying it could happen, but you just never know. If you don't put it out there as a wish, it can't become a possibility. Thank you all so much. Today has been a phenomenal call. It has been great seeing faces and hearing voices that we haven't had the ability to do in quite some time. I would like to let you know; the screen says you will receive the next all VR date soon, but that is now. Hot off the presses, the next call will be January 10, 2023. That will be the beginning of the new year. Thank you all for your participation. We've had a great call. Until the next call.