Operator: Good day and welcome to the Social Security's Quarterly All EN Payments Conference Call. Today's conference call is being recorded. At this time, we would like to turn the conference over to Kimberly Cutler, please go ahead.

Kimberly Cutler: Thank you so much, sir. Good afternoon, everyone and welcome to our first quarterly all EN Payments call of 2022. I am Kim Cutler, the TPM EN Payments Manager and I am the host of today's call.

The purpose of today's call is to provide clarification on processes and procedures related to payments. So, we do have a few agenda items that we are going to cover today. We are going to go over some announcements that we want to share.

We are going to share the 2022 Trial Work level, SGA, Blind/SGA amount and the 2022 Ticket payment rates. We also have some ePay stats. We do have a few ePay reminders. We are going to cover the 24-month aged claim rule. And then, of course, we are going to make sure you are aware of different resources that are available to your EN. Once we have completed all the agenda items, we will open for questions and answers.

All right. So, one of the first things we want to provide is an announcement to all service providers. SSA did send out a GovDelivery message on January 10th alerting ENs of the Security Awareness Form requirement. So, on this call, we wanted to provide a reminder that the deadline for submitting the annual Security Awareness Form Certification using Form SSA-222 and the addendum is February 28, 2022.

Please note that failure to complete and return these documents by the due date will result in your EN Ticket Portal access being blocked, a hold placed on your EN and possible termination. All EN staff must review, sign, and keep a copy of the form on file at your EN location.

Now, in addition to signing the individual forms and keeping them on site, the Signatory Authority or suitable contact must complete a copy of the attached addendum form that lists all staff who have completed the form for your EN. Then you must submit that addendum via email. And here, on this slide, you can see where you need to submit that information to, which is SecurityAwarenessTraining222@yourtickettowork.ssa.gov.

And again, you want to submit that by the deadline of Monday, February the 28th. Make sure that you include your DUNS number in the subject of the email, and there is another note stating if a single person runs your EN, in which case you may submit a signed copy of the Security Awareness Form- SSA-222 via email. The addendum is not required.

Your EN – we will need to sign and submit the addendum electronically. Please note that SSA will not accept a scanned version of the form. So, again, there was an email that went out January 10th, letting you all know about the Security Awareness requirement, so we just wanted to provide this reminder that the deadline is February the 28th.

So, we are going to move on to our next line here where you can see the 2021 end-of-year stats. So, I just wanted to note that during the year of 2021, that over $97 million was paid out in Ticket payments. There was a total of 153,759 payments made. We processed 68,830 denials. And I just wanted to provide you all with the most common denial reason, which was denial reason 02, which is beneficiary receiving federal cash benefits.

And I just wanted to note that this this code indicates that the EN has submitted a claim for an Outcome payment and the Ticketholder is in current pay status in Social Security's records. To receive Outcome payments, a Ticketholder must be in a suspense or non-pay payment status due to work and earnings.

Please note that to receive Outcome Payments, a Ticketholder must be in a suspense or nonpayment status due to work and earnings.

Another quick reminder we wanted to add regarding this denial is once a Ticketholder enters the Outcome period, meaning, they are no longer receiving a federal cash benefit due to work and earnings, then Phase 1 Milestones and Phase 2 Milestones are no longer payable. Now, any missed Phase 1 Milestones or Phase 2 Milestones will be paid at reconciliation after the 12th Outcome.

So, I just wanted to provide, kind of a breakdown what that denial reason means because that is the one that was the highest number of denials during the year last year. That is the year-end stats for 2021.

Here, on our next slide, we now have the 2022 Trial Work Level and Substantial Gainful Activity amount. So, the Trial Work Level for 2022 is $970. The Substantial Gainful Activity amount is $1,350 and then the blind SGA amount is 2,260. So, that is your 2022 Trial Work Level and SGA amounts.

We also have the 2022 payment rates. So, on this slide, you can see the breakdown of those payment rates based on the entitlement, based on the benefits that the Ticketholder is receiving. So, for the Milestone Outcome method payments, for SSI payments, for Phase 1 Milestones, that payout amount is $1,544. For Phase 2 Milestones, it is $262. And for Outcomes, it is $262 and that is for SSI payments.

For SSDI payments, Phase 1 Milestone payouts is the same. It is 1,554 for Phase 1, Phase 2 Milestone payouts would be $463, and Outcomes would be $463 as well. Those are the rates under the Milestone Outcome Payment method. So, if you are an EN that is under the Outcome-Only method, then for SSI, your payouts would be $487. SSDI is $862.

And we just wanted to note that the pay rates should be updated in SSA's database the first of next month. So, we just want to make you are aware that these are the 2022 Trial Work Level and SGA amounts and the 2022 payment rates.

Okay. And I just wanted to let you know that the last ePay file was complete in November of 2021. And here, we have some processing totals from that last ePay file. So, there were a total of 13,083 total claims processed. We paid a little over 4,000 SSNs and the total payout amount for the last ePay file was a little over $6 million. So, those are just the stats from the last ePay file, but I wanted to let you know that the next ePay file is coming soon.

And so, on the next slide here, we have a few ePay reminders. So, just remember that EN – you may submit payment requests through the Ticket Portal instead of waiting for ePay, so you do not necessarily have to wait for the ePay file. You can submit your payment request via the Portal and Phase 1 Milestone 4 is now paid via ePay, but ENs must still submit payment request for Phase 1 Milestones 1-3 through the Ticket Portal with Proof of Relationship.

Also note that unassigned Tickets are not included in ePay. So, if the Ticket has been unassigned from your EN, that SSN will not be included on the ePay file. And ENs must have passed their Annual Service and Support reviews to be eligible for ePay.

And the last reminder is that the ePay file is processed in order of SSNs, not DUNS. Once we start processing the ePay file, your EN may receive a lot of payments because of the order of the SSN but then you may not receive payments for another day or two, so we always stress that the ePay is processed in order of SSNs and not DUNS.

And like I stated earlier, we, TPM and SSA, we are going to start processing the next ePay file soon, so we wanted to provide these reminders. And, once we start processing the ePay file, SSA will post an announcement in the Portal. So, you will be able to see once we start processing that next ePay file.

Now, the next couple of slides, what we want to review is the 24-month aged claim rule. We just want to make sure that everyone is on the same page and understands how we apply this rule when processing payments. So, an EN shall request a payment no later than 24 months following the month the Ticketholder's work and earnings meet the criteria for SSA to make the payment. SSA will not accept payment requests for periods outside this 24-month window.

And so, what we are going to do on the next couple of slides is we are going to move into some examples. So, for Phase 2 Milestones or Outcomes, if an EN requests a Phase 2 Milestone or Outcome Payment, for a claim month more than 24 months old, the payment is no longer available for that claim month. So, the EN can request the same Phase 2 Milestone or Outcome, but you will have to make a request for a claim month that is within the 24-month window.

So, here, we have an example. EN ABC submits a payment request for Phase 2 Milestone 1 for the claim month October 2019. So, the case will be denied, and you are going to see a denial reason, request received more than 24 months after the claim month. You will also see the comment. So, you are also going to see the comments. And the comment will read per the TPA's conditions for Receipt of Payments rule, this Phase 2 or Outcome whichever payment you are requesting, claim month is outside the 24-month ENs must request Ticket payments.

So, if you do submit for a Phase 2 Milestone or an Outcome Payment and it is denied due to this reason, then the EN would have to resubmit for Phase 2 Milestone 1 claim month that is within 24 months of the requested claim month.

So, I just want to make sure that for Phase 2 Milestones and Outcomes, if you submit for a payment request and your claim month is outside of the 24-month window from when the time the Ticketholder earns the money, the case will be denied. And you will have to resubmit for that Phase 2 Milestone or Outcome Payment with a claim month that is within 24 months. So, I wanted to make sure we provided an example and clarification for those payment types.

Moving to the next slide, we are talking about claim months more than 24 months old for Phase 1 Milestones. If an EN requests a Phase 1 Milestone payment within 24 months following the month the Ticketholder's work and earnings meet the criteria for SSA to make the payment with Proof of Relationship that passes review and per SSA record, the correct attainment month for the payment is outside of the 24-month window.

What I wanted to emphasize here is that your – the ENs are requesting payment within the 24 months and the reason I mentioned that you submitted it with the Proof of Relationship, you must remember that when requesting payments for Phase 1 Milestones 1-3, you must provide Proof of Relationship.

So, that is why I wanted to mention that if you are submitting for Phase 1 Milestone 1, it is within the 24-month window and you have submitted Proof of Relationship that passes review, but SSA record has a correct attainment month that is outside of the 24-month window.

So, you submitted your request within 24 months but SSA's record shows an attainment month that is earlier than that and it is outside of the 24-month window. What will happen for that case is SSA will deny the request, requested claim month as an incorrect claim month. But in addition, SSA will now create a work case for the correct attainment month, and they are going to deny it as an aged claim.

The EN can now request and receive the next Phase 1 Milestone payment if it is available, and the missed Phase 1 Milestone payment would be available at reconciliation. I know I just said a lot so let us go to an example.

So, here, you can see EN ABC submits a payment request for Phase 1 Milestone 1 for claim month March 2020 with Proof of Relationship but there is an earlier attainment month for Phase 1 Milestone 1 at 12/2019 in SSA's system. So, how we are going to address this, the payment request submitted by the EN, that Phase 1 Milestone 1 payment request fort March 20, 2020, will be denied.

You will see the denial reason that will say incorrect Phase 1 claim month requested by EN and you will get to see the comment that reads earlier attainment month payable at 12/2019 per earnings on SSA records or information provided by the EN.

So, in that denial comment, you will be able to see what that earlier attainment month is. So, because you did your due diligence, and you submitted your request within 24 months, but we cannot ignore that there is an earlier attainment month in SSA's database that would satisfy the payment, we are going to deny your request - but we are going to create a brand-new case with the correct attainment month for Phase 1 Milestone 1 at 12/2019.

Now, we are going to create that case, but we are going to deny it and you will see the denial reason, correct attain month more than 24 months ago. You are going to see the comment. Correct attainment payment month for Phase 1 Milestone 1 is 12/2019, this will be paid at reconciliation. So, again, it is especially important that you look at the comments because we are telling you what is going to happen with your Phase 1 Milestone 1 payment.

So, you are not missing that payment, you will pick it up in reconciliation. And because we have addressed the Phase 1 Milestone 1, the ENs can now request Phase 1 Milestone 2 payment. Again, if it is available. And like I stated, the missed Phase 1 Milestone payment will be available at reconciliation.

So, the important thing to remember here is SSA is not going to penalize the EN because SSA's database has an earlier attainment month that happens to be outside of the 24-month window. We are going to deny it so that we can make sure the system will pick it up in a reconciliation payment.

And rather than holding ENs up, because this was a recent change, the change was last year. Before this change, what we were dealing with was if you submitted a claim and it was within 24 months, but SSA had an earlier attainment month in the system, we would deny your case, provide you with the correct attainment months and ENs would then have to resubmit for that claim.

So, SSA has taken that extra step out for the EN. We are acknowledging the earlier attainment month in the SSA's database, and we are creating these denials so that the system will automatically pick up the Phase 1 Milestone 1 that the EN missed because of the earlier attainment month in SSA's database. We are going to pick that up and you will get it in reconciliation after you receive 12 Outcome Payments, that's when reconciliation will kick in for any missed Milestones.

So, I just want everyone to be clear about the key takeaway from here is to please make sure for all payment types, Phase 1, Phase 2, and Outcomes, please make sure that you are very mindful of when you are submitting for those payments.

You want to make sure that you submit your request within that 24-month period so that you can go ahead and get the payments that you are requesting.

So, again, I just want to make sure we went over that again because we do not want the ENs missing any of your Phase 1 Milestones. So, we all must do our part. Again, making sure that you are submitting your payment request within the 24-month window.

Okay. So, that is the aged claim rule. So, we have covered all the agenda topics at this point. But we do want to invite you to share topics that you would be interested in discussing through this form. Because, of course, our goal is to help educate you and provide clarification on process and procedures related to payment.

So, please, if you have any topics that you would like for us to discuss in this form, any payment-related topic, please make sure that you send your topics to the EN Payments Helpdesk. And here, you can see that that email address is enpaymentshelpdesk@yourtickettowork.ssa.gov.

Again, we do have our agenda topics and things that we need to discuss to provide clarification on certain payment related processes. But we just want to make sure that you are involved as well. So, if you do have any payments topics, please send that over to us so we can include it, we can review it and include it as one of our topics for the next all EN Payments call.

Okay. So, again, that concludes the presentation part of the agenda that we have for today's call. But on the next slide, I wanted to make sure you are aware of the resources that we have, and you do see this here. Please make sure you are reaching out to the helpdesk. They are available Monday through Friday, between the hours of 9 am and 5 pm Eastern Standard Time. And you have the different options there when calling.

Please also feel free to email the helpdesk. Please make sure you remember that we cannot email any personal identifiable information. If it cannot be encrypted, it cannot be attached. For questions and issues related to Ticket assignment or the service provider web site and the Ticket Portal, you also have a resource available to you which is ensystemshelp@yourtickettowork.ssa.gov.

So, please, just make sure, if you have any payment-related questions that you are contacting the helpdesk, again, if you are contacting the helpdesk via email, please do not include any personal identifiable information. What you can do when you are reaching out for payment-related issues via email is to include your work case number. That information is in the Portal. It is associated with the case, so you can always submit your work case number via email.

Okay. So, again, that concludes the presentation portion of today's call. What I would like to do now is open the line for any payment-related questions. I just want to remind you if you would like information on a specific case, we do encourage you to contact the EN Payments Helpdesk so that they conduct a detailed review of the case. Because again, on this forum, we do not have information for the particulars of your case.

So, if you are dealing with a denial or have questions about a denial, please reach out to the helpdesk because they would be able to look at that case and all the information that led to the decision of the denial. So, please make sure you are reaching out to the EN Payments Helpdesk for those specific questions.

But we will go ahead and open the lineup. We will take questions from the phone line first and then we will also take questions from the chat. So (Cody), if you do not mind, can we open the phone queues for any questions?

Operator: Absolutely. Thank you. If you would like to ask a question, please press star one on your telephone keypad. If you are using a speaker phone, please make sure that your mute function is turned off to allow your signal to reach our equipment. And again, it is star one if you would like to ask a question and we will pause for just a moment to allow everyone an opportunity to pose their questions.

And we will take our first question from (Gina Hatchenberg). Please go ahead.

Gina Hatchenberg: Hi. Thank you. This is Gina Hatchenberg with Paralyzed Veterans of America. I had a hypothetical, Kim, about the 24-month aged claim rule.

Kimberly Cutler: Yes.

Gina Hatchenberg: So, my understanding is that if there is an earlier attainable month, you all are going to deny it, let us know the date of the earlier attainable month, deny it as an aged claim. So, my understanding that we would just leave that alone, let it be paid through reconciliation and then we would submit a P1M2 based on that earlier attainable month?

Kimberly Cutler: Part of that is correct. In that scenario, yes, you would try to, like the Phase 1 Milestone 1 that was denied, well, let me – let me back up. If we are talking about a Phase 1 Milestone 1, because those are the ones that will be picked up in reconciliation. So, yes, you will let us take care of that, we will deny that request. You would see why we are denying the case. We would recreate the case for the correct attainment month. And then you would resubmit for your Phase 1 Milestone 2.

But just remember because we are denying the Phase 1 Milestone 1 at whatever that earlier attainment month that is in the system, that month, and (Katie), you might have to correct me if I am wrong, that month would not be contributed towards your next months on payments because it is already outside of the window. So, you would move on with your next available payment which will be Phase 1 Milestone 2.

Gina Hatchenberg: But are we basing our P1M2 on our original P1M1 request, or on the earlier attainable month that you all identified?

You understand what I am saying?

Kimberly Cutler: I did. So, I would – I think that it would be based on the month that you submitted because the one that we are going to pay per SSA's database is already outside of the 24-month window.

Gina Hatchenberg: Right.

Kimberly Cutler: But the one that you requested was within the 24-month window.

Gina Hatchenberg: I got you. So, we move forward with our timeline that we were originally thinking about with Proof of Relationships and pay stubs that would have been submitted along with it. So, it would need to correspond with our original request.

Kimberly Cutler: Right

Gina Hatchenberg: Okay. Got you.

Kimberly Cutler: So, you would just add two more additional months with your Phase 1, to satisfy your Phase 1 Milestone 2.

Gina Hatchenberg: Right. So, are you all just saying, hey, this is what you should have done, but keep going? Keep moving forward.

Kimberly Cutler: Not to say what you should have done. We are just saying, we cannot ignore the earnings that are in SSA's database. So, we are going to acknowledge that month. But you did your work. You submitted it. You submitted your claim within 24 months. So that is the key, making sure that you are submitting within 24 months and that is how you would be able to move forward.

Gina Hatchenberg: Okay. Got you.

Kimberly Cutler: Including that month and your Phase 1 Milestone 2.

Gina Hatchenberg: Of course. Thank you.

Kimberly Cutler: You're welcome.

Operator: And currently, there are no additional questions in the queue. And once again, That is star one if you would like to ask a question. And we will take our next question from (Holland Abergene). Please go ahead.

Holland Abergene: Yes. I have a question.

Kimberly Cutler: Sure.

Holland Abergene: Yes. Hi. So, let us see. So, it is about The Work case number out of the Portal. Now, I have tried to look for it and I have a tough time finding that, so I just wanted to clarify if the case number, is that the same as the reference number? Is that the same?

Kimberly Cutler: Yes, it is.

Holland Abergene: Okay. Well, that is a relief. That is what I thought. That was easy question. Because before I had been looking all over the place in the Portal and I was, like, okay. It is the reference number. So, all right. Thank you.

Operator: And there are no additional questions in the queue at this time. Again, that's star one.

Kimberly Cutler: Okay.

Operator: We'll take another question.

Kimberly Cutler: Well, (Cody), if we do not have any more questions. We can move to the chat.

Operator: Sorry about that. We will open it up to Freddie Floyd.

Kimberly Cutler: Okay.

Freddie Floyd: Hi. Good afternoon. I am Freddie Floyd with Return-to-Work Consultant, and my question is I submitted a payment request for Milestone 1 Phase 1, and it was denied stating that the person did not have enough earning.

Well, I spoke with a payment specialist, and they said when the lady first started working, she received two checks and both of those checks equal up to (535.66) which she said she should have qualified for the Phase 1 Milestone 1. So, I just want to make sure, for the first payment request must be for 930 some dollars?

Kimberly Cutler: So, there is the 50% rule. ENs are allowed to submit for Phase 1 Milestone 1 if the beneficiary earned at least 50% of Trial Work Level.

Freddie Floyd: Yes. Okay.

Kimberly Cutler: So, in that case, like you said, if the payment was denied because of not enough earnings, if the beneficiary did earn at least 50% of Trial Work Level that month the case could have possibly been paid. But the requirement is they must have at least full Trial Work Level earnings, one of the following two months.

So, if they earn 50% one month, they must have Trial Work Level one of the next two months. Let us say the claim month is December 2021, and so we do not have one of the next two months yet and you submit for payment at 50% of Trial Work Level, then that payment should undergo review and should be processed if all other payment criteria are met.

Freddie Floyd: Okay. Because.

Kimberly Cutler: So, I would encourage you to resubmit.

Freddie Floyd: Okay. She started in the middle of the month and her earnings total, I will Say the net – not the gross, was $530 some dollars. And it was my understanding that we could have gotten paid. I looked up the code, the denial reason we were not paid was because the beneficiary did not earn enough money within the two weeks' time.

Kimberly Cutler: I would encourage you to – go ahead.

Freddie Floyd: Go ahead, I am sorry.

Kimberly Cutler: No, I was going to say, in that case, again, I do not have the specifics of it, but I would just encourage you to resubmit that payment request or if you could just send the reference number to the EN Payments Helpdesk and let us look at it.

Freddie Floyd: Okay. You know what I meant. And going back to the 24 months, another lady called me, and she started working last year in July and she is having a lot of problems. She said she wanted to sign her Ticket. We have been working with her, helped her redo her resume. Then she submitted all her pay earnings to us so that we can submit them to Social Security. Can we, by putting together a resume and working with her and the employer, same employer, can we submit a payment for Phase 1 Milestone 1 for that or not? We can submit a payment but also a Proof of Relationship as well where we get paid is she started work in last year in July, now we're in '22.

Kimberly Cutler: You are still within the 24-month window. So, yes, if you are going to submit for Phase 1 Milestone 1 with your earnings, you want to submit Proof of Relationship and if you have pay stubs, those pay stubs would serve as your Proof of Relationship. So, yes, you are well within your window of time, if the Ticket is assigned to you, and if Phase 1 Milestone 1 is available, then you should be able to submit for payment. But again, it is based on if they are available. So, I would encourage you to go ahead and submit.

Freddie Floyd: Okay. How many pay stubs should I go? Should I do all of them, starting from last year, July, up until this date? Or is there a certain number of pay stubs including the Proof of Relationship. I just want to know the cut-off line for submitting pay stubs.

Kimberly Cutler: No. No, so again, we are looking at the 24-month window, so I always encourage ENs, if you have pay stubs, please submit them. So, the Proof of Relationship is required for Phase 1 Milestones 1-3, right? So, you want to make sure you always provide the pay stubs if you have them. So, if you have the pay stubs but we do not have the earnings in the system, then we are not going to be able to pay you unless we have earnings. So, I would encourage you to submit for payment and include your pay stubs.

Freddie Floyd: Okay. And one thing, too, I wanted to say which is last and someone can call in and give their opinion or you give me your opinion, too, employers now, as far as pay stub, employers now are just submitting to the beneficiary by phone or email, whatever, how much their earnings are when they make a deposit. And a lot of beneficiaries are just sending me not the exact photo of their pay stub, but something they receive from their employer for the total amount of hours, number of hours they worked, the gross pay and net, and that is it. So, is this acceptable? Because I contacted the chamber of commerce and they did agree with me, yes, employers now are changing the way they notify their employees about how much their earnings are. They do not give them a verbatim of the actual check stuff.

Kimberly Cutler: So, it sounds like that might be an Employer Prepared Earnings statement.

Freddie Floyd: Yes, I have. Go ahead, I am listening. I am listening.

Kimberly Cutler: So, yes. So, if it is an Employer Prepared Earning statement, that is acceptable for earnings. But again, you still would need to provide your Proof of Relationship.

Freddie Floyd: Okay. All right. That would be no problem. Okay.

Kimberly Cutler: So, the only thing is when you are providing Proof of Relationship, it is either pay stubs or a completed Proof of Relationship form. So, the only thing that stands alone as Proof of Relationship would be pay stubs. So, if you are submitting any other type of evidence of earnings, make sure you also include your completed Proof of Relationship form.

Freddie Floyd: Okay. All right. Because I have – the first time I see it, I just sent in the check stubs because it used to be where we just send in, at least for me, one pay stub and that was enough. But now, it sounds like we must not only send in a copy of the earnings statement or check stub, but we must also include the Proof of Relationship as well.

So, either both or either? I want to make sure.

Kimberly Cutler: Yes. Yes. You are good. Again, if you are sending pay stubs, they will be Proof of Relationship, and your proof of earning. So, pay stubs take care of all of that.

Freddie Floyd: Okay.

Kimberly Cutler: If you are not submitting pay stubs and you are submitting any other type of evidence of earnings, example the Employer Prepared Earnings statement, you must also provide proof of relationship. The Employer Prepared Earnings statement will satisfy your earnings requirement. Of course, if they are at Trial Work Level or SGA. That satisfies the earnings, but you still must submit Proof of Relationship with that and that is the completed POR form. Okay?

Freddie Floyd: Okay. I have it.

Kimberly Cutler: Yes.

Freddie Floyd: Got it. Thank you.

Kimberly Cutler: So, of course, pay stubs are always best. If you have pay stubs, send them in. Pay stubs are preferred for earnings. But we do understand, sometimes, you use other earning source.

Freddie Floyd: Okay. Thank you very much.

Kimberly Cutler: Yes. You're welcome. Okay, (Cody), let me just switch over and see if we have any questions from the chat?

Rebecca: Yes, hi, Kim. There is a question in the chat regarding the 2022 Payments at a Glance form and TPM is working on getting this form posted to the Ticket to Work web site, so hopefully, it will be posted soon.

Kimberly Cutler: Thank you, Rebecca. That is true. We will have that document posted no later than the first week of February because we do realize that the first month that the ENs can use those rates will be for this month which is January. So, we will have that posted within the first week of February. And will notify EN once we post that information. Any other questions, Rebecca?

Rebecca: And, yes, there was a question regarding the POR in which we have already discussed but if pay stubs are submitted, the Proof of Relationship form needs to be submitted with it and we have answered that as far as pay stubs. We do not need a POR for Phase 1 Milestones if the pay stubs are submitted. It is either or.

Kimberly Cutler: Right. That is correct. Thank you. And we can take one more from the chat if we have it. If not, we can go back to the phone lines. All right. Thank you so much. All right. Cody, do we have any questions in the queue?

Operator: Yes, we do have several questions in the queue now. We will take our next question from Al Ologue.

Al Ologue: Hello.

Kimberly Cutler: Hi, Al.

Al Ologue: Good morning. Hi, how are you?

I have a quick question pertaining to the monthly earnings estimator. A couple of days ago, I experienced a nightmare. Anyway, I submitted for a payment request for a particular month, and I used the estimator, and it was TWL, clearly TWL. The payment request was submitted and got denied. The statement that came back, says insufficient funds. So, I went back and forth, back, and forth, and finally found out the payment specialist has a different calculator because later it was explained to me by the helpdesk, very professional people, and helpful.

Kimberly Cutler: Thank you.

Al Ologue: I was told that the pay dates had a play into this. And therefore, based on the payment specialist, I did not have sufficient proof of income. So that is a difficult subject here because the payment specialist has a different calculate and so why cannot we have the same calculator. Because I submitted correctly, it was TWL, So, can you explain that?

Kimberly Cutler: Yes. Yes, Al, sure. I just wanted to explain, first, that the earnings estimator tool is just a resource for Employment Networks. So, it is just a tool that is provided for you to kind of plug in your information that you have and see, like you said, what is the Trial Work Level, what is the SGA. Understand that when you are submitting for payments, that the payments staff may have access to other information. So, it could be benefits status, earned in a month versus paid in a month depending on the entitlement code.
So, again, the earnings estimator tool is just a resource for you to use but when you are requesting payment, we use all available resources that we have that are in SSA's database. So, again, Al, with this type of case, we would need to look at the details of the case, just to see what happened that determined the denial. So, again, I know you have reached out to the helpdesk but, I would like to look at the case because I really do not know everything about the case. Sometimes, the payment specialist, do have access to additional information.

Al Ologue: I accept that explanation and I want to compliment Tamika who is the one that explained it. She went out of her way to explain this.

Kimberly Cutler: Okay.

Al Ologue: So, here is the deal, it has to do again with poor communication. Instead of saying earnings insufficient, they should have made a statement to the fact that due to the pay date, earnings are not qualified at TWL. But again, it is poor communication. How much more difficult is it for this person to just put in why case was denied instead of saying insufficient documentation. So, I am thinking when I am faxing, that it is. But everything could have been resolved if this person that makes the notes or these persons, would just provide more details instead of just stating that insufficient documentation received. So, anyway, that is one – I have another question, though, that is around the same subject.

It has to do with the secure Portal. Went to designated month, it says earnings established, okay. So, based on our information, we just send that sheet, we do not have to send pay stubs. Well, it got denied. Again, the same statement, insufficient funds.

And I said I am trying to figure it out. What is going on here? And well, again, the helpdesk came through and explained that you cannot depend on Portal because they may check and have other issues.

Kimberly Cutler: Right. Okay. We want to make sure that the denial comments are clear and, Al, this is something that we can revisit and see how we can change or modify the denial comments. We want to make sure that if your case is being denied that you are clear in the understanding of why.

Thank you for that. That is something that we will review and look at the different denial comments.

Al Ologue: Well, this.

Kimberly Cutler: And as in relationship to the Portal – I am sorry, sir.

Al Ologue: This has always been a constant that people get tired of putting down the Information. This has to do with communication.

Kimberly Cutler: I understand. And one of the ways that we communicate is through those denials. So, that is why whether we are speaking to you on the phone, whether we are emailing, information in the Portal, we want to make sure that the way we communicate things are clear and I am so glad to hear that the helpdesk was helpful and able to provide you with the information that you needed.

And as far as the Portal, when you see the message, earnings already proven or earnings are already established, that does not automatically guarantee payment because the Portal could be pulling from various sources. And again, once your payment requirement comes in, and we do an assessment of that payment, we are basing it on the available resources that we have.

So, even though you may have received the message, earnings are already proven, those earnings may not be what is needed to satisfy the payment, or it could be something else, another part of the criteria that is not met. Again, it goes back to making sure that the denial reason is correct and that the denial comments are clear. And again, that is something on which we will work.

Al Ologue: You made an excellent comment about earnings. Even though it is established, they should put earnings do not satisfied payment and that would be sufficient, so people know what is going on.

The other input I have is rhetorical, I guess. We talked about the 24-month rule. What is it for the self-employed? For the self-employed, we never really received good guidance or any guidance because it is going to take more than 24 months for the self-employed to report their earnings and they need to make different provisions for 24 months rule.

You must wait a year before the submitted taxes, and then another year, people are late. I think they should adjust that 24-month rule for the self-employed.

Kimberly Cutler: Yes. Well, that suggestion is noted, Al. As it stands, that 24-month aged claim rule does apply to a self-employed beneficiary. And you are right, they do have to file their taxes and that information must post into the system. Just continue to encourage your beneficiaries to file their taxes timely so then we can get that information posted in SSA's database.

And like you said, sometimes, it takes like a year, but again, you have another year to submit. But right now, as it stands, the 24-month aged claim rule does apply to all payments. But again, your suggestion is noted about an exception for self-employed beneficiary. But to answer your question before moving on right now, it applies to all payment.

But I do appreciate your questions, Al, as usual. Great questions. Thank you.

Operator: Thank you. The next question is from Tim Gibson.

Tim Gibson: Thank you. Thank you.

Kimberly Cutler: Hi, Tim.

Tim Gibson: Hello, Kimberly. How are you doing? Hey.

Kimberly Cutler: Hi, I am well.

Tim Gibson: I am good. I am good. I have not talked to you in a while. I appreciate this. The last call was insightful for me. My question is really in the same line. It is two-part question. The first one, more important question is the Proof of Relationship form. I totally understand the significance, making sure that we submit that evidence if we do not have the pay stubs, totally on board with that.

Communication is one of the key words here. We had a beneficiary submit a pay stub, it was back in October, and recently requested payment because that was the proof that we have relationship with that beneficiary.

After that, we have requested, and we are still waiting for the beneficiary to provide us with the last year earnings because there is a lot of earnings, we are asking them to provide. And at this point, we see those earnings are already in the system. So, we verified with the beneficiary that he is still working with the same company that gave him the raise. We requested for a payment again and it says no payment is available.

But in fact, after that first payment, back in October, we have submitted five times for the same number of payments, and they all were denied. The reason for my question is so we can get clarity for training purposes. Is there a way for us to find out who that person is that is denying the request?

Kimberly Cutler: No. Unfortunately, not because there are different people that are processing payments. No payment staff is assigned to just one EN. So, there could be multiple people processing your cases. And when it comes to the Proof of Relationship, Tim, like you said, just to be clear, it is something that is required for Phase 1 Milestones 1-3. Of course, you can always reach out to the helpdesk if your case is denied and you have questions about it, please feel free to reach out.

We do have a dedicated helpdesk staff that can look at the case. So, they could see everything that the person that processed the case saw. So, example if I was the one that processed the case and I denied it and you called the helpdesk and the representative there pull up that case, they can see exactly what I saw real time when I processed the case. They would be able to answer your questions just as I would.

Everyone that process payments follow the same rules. The rules do not change based on who processes the case. So unfortunately, no, we do not release the name of the individual that processed the payment. But again, whoever you speak with on the helpdesk can see exactly what they saw.

Tim Gibson: Fantastic. And so, Amanda whose a Godsend, I had been working with her. She will call back and speak with me. Who are the supervisors there now? That's Akila and you?

Kimberly Cutler: You can just send your email to the helpdesk. If you request to speak with a supervisor, someone will reach out.

Tim Gibson: Okay. No problem.

Kimberly Cutler: We're all here to help.

Tim Gibson: No, absolutely. No. Kim, listen, I used to work with you a lot. I guess the other part of this is sort of helicopter view. My EN submitted the Proof of Relationship form, and it was detailed. It is subjective because we are following the guidelines. So, do you have any future trainings about how to complete the Proof of Relationship forms so that we can all be able to do it? Can you investigate this particular case , Kim, please, to see how we can (explore)? Because we have been requesting payments since October? It is now January.

Kimberly Cutler: Yes. And that is a good topic, Tim. We can add that suggestion as an agenda topic for the next call. Just want to let you know, plain and simple, when you are submitting the Proof of Relationship form, you want to make sure that the Proof of Relationship form provides services provider and the date those services were provided.

Attempt of contact does not show proof of relationship. Just remember, whatever milestone you are asking for; you need to make sure that you have established proof of relationship during the milestone period.

You must show service(s) that you provided or positive contact with your beneficiary and just as an example of positive contact, spoke with the Ticketholder, reviewed job leads, etc. That is the best proof of relationship.

What is not proof of relationship is sending an email to the Ticketholder to update contact information. So, we can add this to a topic, Tim. Remember when you are completing your POR form you must show us how you have established proof of relationship. Proof of relationship must come from a positive contact or service provided during the milestone period. Attempt of contact does not work and you must be clear. If you send an email to your Ticketholder, you must be clear about what was included in the email. Example: emailed the Ticketholder job leads. Okay, you sent them job leads, that is a service.

But just saying, sent an email on October 12th, does not show proof of relationship. So, you want to be detailed when you are submitting the form and you want to make sure that not only are you showing us services provided and/or positive contact with the Ticketholder, but you want to make sure that the dates of service are within the milestone period that you are requesting.

Hopefully, that clears things up for you. And again, thank you. I can add this as a topic.

(Debbra Tennessee): Last time you called for questions in the chat, and believe me, we have a lot of questions, over a hundred in the chat that we have been trying to keep up with. But when you ask about it before, I hit the wrong button and hung up. I did have some and I know we are close to closing now, but I wanted to respond to this one question because I do not know how many others are having this issue, so I am going to read this one question for everybody.

And this came from Miley Hall. She was told that to get paid for a beneficiary, who I have not yet received payments for, I need to make an initial payment request in the Portal to start payments in ePay. In other words, ePay will not pay me for a new beneficiary unless I make a request in the Portal first. Is this correct? I do not recall this being indicated in the past.

Well, the answer to that is no. For one thing, I do not know what that first request could be, but it might be a Phase 1 Milestone 1-3 and we do not pay those through ePay. Any request that you have, you should submit those through the Portal with the requirement documentation, whether it is earnings, information, or forms, or whatever.

Now, once we have that information, we look at Phase 1 Milestone 4, Phase 2 Milestones and Outcomes on ePay, and the file is created based on earnings that SSA has in the system. So, if there is a payment that you have not received, let us say you received all Phase 1 Milestones 1-3 and you submitted those through the Portal. Well, there may be enough earnings in SSA's system for Phase 1 Milestone 4 and we can do that through ePay because you do not have to submit proof of relationship for Phase 1 Milestone 4.

More than likely, if you are under the Milestone Outcome payment method and you are going to submit Phase 1 Milestone, you would have to do that through the Ticket Portal. Okay?

Kimberly Cutler: All right. Thank you so much, Ms. Tennessee. And you are right, we are at the close of our call today, and it is unfortunate that we are not able to answer all your calls. Sometimes we have a lot of questions. But I want to encourage you to reach out to the Payments Helpdesk for your questions as you can hear, some ENs have noted that they are doing a fantastic job on the helpdesk.

Kudos to Tamika and Amanda who are helpdesk agents. So, please, please, if your question was not answered on this call, please use the resources that I mentioned right before I concluded with the presentation part. You can see that information. Please, call the Payments Helpdesk. Send them an email without personal identifiable information.

Just to make sure that you are getting your questions answered, if you have any topics that you would like for us to cover, payments related, of course, during this forum, please send that information over to the enpaymentshelpdesk@yourtickettowork.ssa.gov.

So, again, thank you. Again, thank you, Ms. Tennessee for the questions in the chat. And at this time, I just want to thank everyone for their participation. Good questions today. Thank you all for joining today's call. And we do hope that you will join us again for our next scheduled call on April 26.

So, again, if you have any topics, make sure to get them in, get them in to us. Thank you, thank you, thank you for your time today. Talk with you on April 26 and please enjoy the rest of your day.

Operator: Thank you. That does conclude today's conference. We thank you all for your participation. You may now disconnect.