

Welcome and SSA Updates

Robert Pfaff (SSA)

Robert Pfaff welcomed everyone and thanked them for their time and participation. He also provided the following updates.

Employment Summary Report

The Employment Summary Report was supposed to be available around this time; however, it is in the final stages of review and editing and is projected to be completed and made available within the next few weeks. Notification will be sent via GovDelivery when the final document has been released to the public.

Payment for Pre-employment Services

The legalities of Social Security Administration (SSA) making payments for pre-employment services is being discussed within the agency. SSA has been asked about this by other VR agencies and has been going back and forth with General Counsel on the subject. SSA is still working on logistics regarding the issue and will make its decision available when something is finalized. SSA may engage with VR agencies and request that examples of dollar amounts be sent if the information is available. The information could include dollar amounts that SSA would have paid on cases submitted for cost reimbursement that would have included pre-employment services payments or an estimate of what would have been received over a specified timeframe. For example, VRs could submit one, two or three fiscal years of information. All of this is in the preliminary stages. It is complicated, but SSA is currently working on these things.

Announcements and Outreach Updates

Jayne Pendergraft (TPM)

Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

Jayne provided an explanation of the ACP. It is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) benefit program that helps ensure households can afford the broadband they need for work, school, healthcare and more. This benefit provides a discount of up to \$30.00 per month for eligible households. The eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, a desktop computer or tablet from participating providers if they contribute more than \$10.00 and less than \$50.00 towards the purchase price. The ACP is limited to one monthly service discount and one device discount per household.

Households with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines are eligible for the ACP. If a member of the household meets at least one of several criteria, including receiving

Supplemental Security Income (SSI), they may also be eligible for ACP. For a full list of the criteria, please visit www.fcc.gov/acp. Jayme encouraged participants to become familiar with these programs as well as inform eligible Ticketholders about the ACP. Additionally, the FCC has an [outreach toolkit](#) that can be shared with the community. The toolkit includes a newsletter, social media graphics and guidance on how to use these materials.

WISE Webinar

Every month TPM hosts a [Work Incentive Seminar Event](#) (WISE) webinar. These are online events designed to explain the Ticket Program and other Work Incentives. They are fully accessible learning opportunities, typically held on the fourth Wednesday of every month.

Social Media

Another regular outreach channel that the Ticket Program uses is social media. Jayme encouraged attendees to follow us on social media and go to [Choose Work's Contact](#) page for a list of our social media accounts. She told attendees that TPM also publishes a variety of Success stories, Fact sheets and blog posts on the [Choose Work](#) website. These tools can provide information to Ticketholders on a large broader scale so providers can then answer some more specific questions or provide case by case information as you meet with individuals. These resources also serve as an introduction to the Ticket Program and help providers get general information out as easily as possible. For questions about how to use any of these resources or how to promote a webinar, she encouraged attendees to contact us at socialmedia@choosework.ssa.gov.

Reminders and Updates

Katie Striebinger (SSA)

Backlog status, FY2022 Cost Formula

Katie Striebinger provided the backlog update. SSA is currently processing claims that were uploaded in January 2022. They are still working internally on the FY 2022 cost formula. There aren't going to be any untimely filing claim denials based on the fact that SSA doesn't have it ready. Any claim submitted that is affected will be placed in diary until an approved FY22 cost formula has been input into the system. SSA does not have any updates at this point and is continuing to work on it. Do not hold on to any claims. VRs should still be uploading all claims to the Portal.

TPM -Ticket Unassignment

SSA has been getting questions about TPM reaching out about Ticket unassignments. When beneficiaries call the Ticket Help Line to request a Ticket unassignment, both TPM and SSA do everything they can to assist the Ticketholder. The current process is that TPM encourages the Ticketholder to reach out to the state first to resolve the Ticket unassignment. If the Ticketholder is unsuccessful, TPM does reach out to check on the status and we'll then reach out to the VR agency before unassigning the Ticket. Recently, SSA has seen an increase in the number of



beneficiaries requesting Ticket unassignments. SSA plans to fine tune this process and we will be reaching out to VR agencies later this month requesting some feedback to work on a better business process. It used to be a here and there request, and would, on an ad hoc (as needed) basis, deal with each Ticketholder. However, SSA is getting the impression based on things that have been occurring recently, they need to come up with a clear business process for everyone involved to know the steps that they're going to follow to help with Ticketholders. Look out for an email from SSA later this month.

Unique Entity Identifier

A reminder went out on both March 8 and March 29 announcing the transition of federal agencies from the DUNS number to the Unique Entity Identifier, which is the UEI for VR payments. Effective April 4, SSA started using the new UEI number to pay VR agencies. SSA will continue to use that DUNS number for reference and identification purposes. VRs will see this number in the Ticket Portal and will not see their UEI listed anywhere other than the UEI directory information in the Portal. This is something SSA is just storing internally to be able to pay VRs correctly. However, since the number is not as easy to remember as that 9-digit number, SSA will continue to use the DUNS number for reference purposes. For questions, review those notices that first identify the process for finding your UEI and any questions you might have.

Claims Placed in Diary

On March 10, SSA announced the end of the extension period for expired diaries. Starting this Monday, May 16, SSA will deny cases that have been in diary for more than 30 days and have not received the requested additional information from VR agencies. These claims will be denied using code 650. VRs will not receive an email reminder of cases that are more than 30 days old. In the next couple of days, look in the Portal to see what is awaiting requested documentation and please get it to SSA. If there is something that the VR cannot get by Monday, please reach out to SSA to work with on those handfuls of cases. But overall, SSA is not looking to give any more extensions and is done giving extensions for expired diaries.

SSA Updates

Raquel Donaldson

Raquel stated if anyone has any questions about the claims placed in diary, to reach out to her. Sometimes the notes left by the technicians may be a little off or confusing. Please feel free to email her at the VR Help desk. For any questions about the diary, email the Help desk and we will try to work with you. The policy went out and SSA has cases that have been placed in diary since 2019 and 2020 and is looking to get all of that cleaned up.

Triennial Reviews

Raquel received a great question in reference to the new SSA triennial assessment process, which came about as a result of a recent annual security reminder SSA Data Exchange (DEC)



Coordinators sent to the state agency data exchange partners noting the new assessment process. For any questions about this, or to follow up, please feel free to email Raquel if you do not know your DEC. This is the person to speak with regarding the State Verification Employment (SVE), or anything like that. Email the Help desk and Raquel will provide the contact person. VRs can ask any questions about the triennial review.

590 Denials

SSA created the policy to hold the VRs accountable for submitting legitimate claims where the beneficiary has the required nine out of 12 months or three out of four quarters of earnings that meet SGA or blind SGA. For some VRs, there is always a question of whether the person is truly blind. For questions about this, please email Raquel at the VR Help desk. Sometimes VRs may be looking for blind SGA but don't know it and submit the claim with regular SGA and it gets the 590 denial. If SSA can stop that early, they do so.

On the remarks tab, if there are no remarks on the remarks tab or comments about whether you're using VRCER, or you have the wages showing, then you will be denied the 590 as well. We are looking for one or the other. Even if you are putting the remark "VRCER," we are going to look just to make sure that VRCER is truly showing three out of the four quarters of earnings as well.