All EN Call Transcript
August 22, 2023

Derek Shields: Welcome to today's quarterly All Employment Network Call. My name is Derek Shields, and I will be serving as the moderator for today's call. Before we begin with our agenda and presentations, I would like to cover a few logistics and housekeeping items. First, this meeting is being recorded and a transcription is also being captured. Now to the next slide, please.

So please remain on mute during the meeting unless you are called upon by the moderator to ask your question. Please feel free to ask questions in the MS Teams chat section. If you should wish to ask your question aloud, use the raise your hand feature and your mic will be unmuted. If you are joining us via phone and wish to ask your question, please use the raise your hand feature using star 5 on your phone and you will be unmuted. After that, you need to press star 6 to speak. It is a two-step process. Star 5 followed by star 6. We ask you to limit your questions to one person and additional questions or comments are always welcome and can be sent to enoperations@YourTicketToWork.ssa.gov. Those questions not answered during the live event will be forwarded to the appropriate panelists for response.

Closed captioning is also available for participants using through the MS Teams application or by using the separate closed caption link provided in the GovDelivery email announcement for today's call. We also have some links that have been placed in chat that you can use. To turn on closed captions in MS Teams, please go to the three ellipses at the top of the MS Teams window and click on “more actions”. You can go down that menu to turn on live captions. When using our provided caption link option, paste the link in your browser and it will open up a separate window to view those closed captions. And thanks again for posting that into the chat. Next slide, please.

On to our agenda today. We have a lot of topics and presenters for you. We're going to start off with welcoming remarks from Social Security by Mr. Robert Pfaff. Followed those remarks and some leadership updates, we will hear from Mike Anzick with an update on the upcoming Beneficiary Satisfaction Survey. After Mike, we have Charles Killen. He'll be covering best practices for reporting work activity; followed by Erinn Wiedman with EN updates and reminders. And then a Program Integrity update from Mary Kay Murphy, followed by training updates with Ana Morales; and our Communications and Outreach updates from Jayme Pendergraft. With 90 minutes, we anticipate somewhere around 50 to 60 minutes of presentation time, followed by the open Q&A for around 30 to 40 minutes. So that's our agenda for today.

It is now my pleasure to introduce our first speaker in providing welcoming remarks for the Social Security Administration. Pleased to introduce Mr. Robert Pfaff, the Director of Office of Employment Support in Social Security's Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support. Rob, over to you, please.

Rob Pfaff: Thank you, Derek. And good morning or good afternoon to all of you who have joined today. Thank you for joining us. We also thank you for the services and support you provide our beneficiaries. We're pleased to have this quarterly call. As you can see from the agenda, we have a packed session full of information to give you and a lot of great speakers. So I will keep my piece pretty brief, but I did want to give you some updates organizationally on leadership positions.

First and foremost, you may have heard this by now, but Social Security has received a nominee or there has been a nominee made, I should say, for the role of Commissioner of Social Security, and that is Martin O'Malley, who was previously the mayor of Baltimore and the governor of the state of Maryland and a presidential candidate several years ago. That nomination is pending Senate Finance approval. We don't have any date or anything to share with you in terms of when that hearing is going to occur, but we will keep you posted in terms of how that nomination is progressing.

Some other updates organizationally, this is much closer to all of us, and that is in the Office of Research Demonstration and Employment Support, of which the Office of Employment Support falls within. As you are aware, Susan Wilschke has been the acting Associate Commissioner in the organization for several years, and Jeff Hemmeter has been the acting Deputy Associate Commissioner for several years as well. Both Susan and Jeff have been made permanent in their positions, so they will be the full-time permanent leaders of this organization. So I wanted to convey that, and congratulations to Jeff and Susan.

Additionally, within the Office of Employment Support, we've had two management changes we wanted to share with you. First, for the VR team, Katie Striebinger had been serving as the manager of the VR team. She has transitioned into a senior advisor technical leadership role where she is going to manage multiple projects. Katie is an invaluable resource for us organizationally. She handles things such as ITOPSS, which all of you are familiar with, and all of the systems updates and changes associated. She also handles our budget, such as the beneficiary services budgets and the amounts we pay to Employment Networks and VR agencies, and a variety of issues associated with the TPM contract. She is certainly associated with payments. EN Payments has a very deep understanding and knowledge in technical expertise with Employment Network payments and VR payments and was critical to our transition over from our VR team making those payments to TPM now making those payments. I want to thank her and wish her the best in her new role.

What I should say is we had an open announcement for those positions, and we made a selection for the VR team, and that's Renee Clarke. Renee is now going to be the Payments and Systems Support Branch Manager of the VR team in our Office of Employment Support. A little bit about Renee is that she holds a Ph.D. in social psychology and was previously a Quality Assurance Analyst in our office since 2014. She also has a senior level Contracting Officer Representative qualification and was the lead COR for the Ticket Program Manager contract previously. So we welcome Renee into that role on the VR team.

In terms of the contracts and grants team, Cara Caplan had been serving as the manager of that team for some time. Cara has taken a position in our Office of Research and Demonstration as the Deputy Director where she will provide guidance and assistance to the office director and is working on Ticket To Work related research activities. In her place, we have selected Melanie Webb, who will now be the Contracts and Grants Branch Manager in the Office of Employment Support. Briefly about Melanie, she's a certified project management professional, and she holds an M.S. degree in behavior analysis with an emphasis in organizational behavior management. She recently served as the COR for the TPM contract Contracting Officer Representative, which is the lead for that contract. And before joining SSA in 2016, she was the project director for the Ticket Program's Beneficiary Access and Support Services contract, what we refer to as the BASS contract. And she has also served as project manager for several task orders on that contract for SSA previously. So a bunch of updates there, and we wish both Melanie and Renee and Katie the best of luck in their new roles. We're very fortunate to have such talented people in the Office of Employment Support.

So without further ado, I'm going to turn it over to Mike Anzick, and I think this is Mike's first time on our quarterly EN Call. Mike's a Senior Advisor, and he serves on the TPM contract Ticket Program Manager contract as a Contracting Officer Representative in the Office of Employment Support. And Mike's been with us for some time. He's not a new addition, but he's been with SSA for 25 years and has held several management policy positions over the years. Mike, I'll turn it over to you if you want to go ahead and take it away. Thank you, and thanks to all of you.

Mike Anzick: Okay. I'm glad to be here, and I think we're going to change the agenda up a little bit. Is that right, Derek, or did you want to jump back?

Derek Shields: Hey, thanks, Mike. Yeah, if you could just do the welcome to the new ENs and then go into the beneficiaries, that would be fantastic.

Mike Anzick: So yes, we are, on behalf of Rob and others in the office, we're really excited. We're always excited when new ENs join the program. So just to call them out, we have the Employment Support Services EN in Nevada. We have Newton Services Foundation from Michigan, the EMPath LLC from Virginia, Prospectus Associates Incorporated from Pennsylvania, Empower Us from Nevada, and APL Associates Holding LLC from New Jersey.

So again, welcome, all of you, to the Ticket Program. Again, I am Mike Anzick. I'm a Senior Advisor here with SSA and also one of the CORs for this contract. The topic I'm going to talk about today is our Beneficiary Satisfaction Survey. This is, again, a task from our Ticket contract, and we're going to use it to support ENs and our Ticket users. Again, it's the Beneficiary Satisfaction Survey. We're going to be using a subcontractor for the BSS. We'll collect information from beneficiaries who participate in the Ticket Program. We're calling them Ticket users. The beneficiaries will be surveyed, first, to measure their satisfaction with their EN, to ensure that we're providing them the effective EN services, and then to provide feedback to beneficiaries as they select ENs. So next slide.

So how will we collect the data? Again, through a contractor, we plan to begin data collection this October. Those selected, they're going to be randomly selected through all of our Ticket users, and those selected will receive a letter inviting them to participate in an online survey. And, again, it's only to those randomly selected sample, not to all Ticket users. And for those completing the survey, it should only take about 10 minutes or fewer, 10 minutes or less. So next slide.

And we're sharing this during this call because we want you to know more about it and also to ask for your help when these invitations go out. Your Ticket users may get these letters and then call you with questions. One of the first questions you may get is, is this a legitimate activity? Is this a scam? Should I be participating in this? There will be SSA letterhead and we'll have our Associate Commissioner's signature on it, but still people will have questions. So we'll ask you and then also our Field Offices will be aware of this survey and we'll be able to answer questions that way. But when you get these questions, please encourage them to participate, letting them know how important it is for us to gather this information, not only to help them, but to help our ENs. And remind them that it's going to take very little of their time, 10 minutes or fewer. To help you with this, we're going to be sending you FAQs to help you with it, with likely questions that will come up. Also, in their invitation, there's going to be a telephone number if they have any questions. So if you could direct them to this telephone number. And let anyone know who's worried about taking the online survey, if they have difficulty with this kind of technology, let them know that there will be a phone option for this survey.

Again, we're really excited about this survey. We've done it, I think, five years ago, so it's not something we do annually. We really want, and we've spent a long time with our subcontractor and with TPM developing a survey that we think is going to be very useful and yield very good results for us. So I'll be here through the rest of the call, and will participate in the questions and answers at the end if you have any questions. But I will turn it back to you, Derek.

Derek Shields: Mike, thanks so much for the update on the Beneficiary Satisfaction Survey, and we look forward to having you back for the Q&A. I'm now pleased to welcome Charles Killen from the Policy Innovation Team. That team is located in the Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support. Charles will provide some best practices for reporting work activity. Charles, over to you.

Charles Killen: Thank you. I'm happy to be here with you today. Before we start with some best practices and reminders on work, wage, and earnings reports for beneficiaries and recipients of both SSDI and SSI, I just had a few other reminders that I wanted to bring to your attention.

First staffing. It's been publicly stated, it's on different news media, so it's no secret that there are some staffing shortages at the agency. Our representatives are doing the best that they can, but the reality is that it does take longer to process some workloads. And even as we work to resolve those staffing issues, it's going to take some time to properly and fully train our new hires and reassign staff to manage the different workloads. So we really appreciate your continued patience with that. In the meantime, feel free to connect with an SSA project officer, an Area Work Incentives Coordinator, or even local office management with ongoing issues. We often get some questions about overpayments. Just a reminder that using our automated systems, some of which we'll be talking about here in a little bit, can help prevent overpayments. And as a best practice, beneficiaries and their recipients should maintain all their receipts and copies of evidence submitted in order to help resolve overpayments via the reconsideration or waiver process.

And finally, SSDI beneficiaries that know that their benefits should have been suspended or should be terminated, they can request that we voluntarily, they can request that we suspend their benefits during the review process to avoid the overpayments. We have a few reminders regarding the BPQY as well, the Benefits Planning Query. You may have seen a recent public service announcement announcing a new online tool, a version of the SSA 3288. Now, while there is a new online SSA 3288 available, it is not valid to request a BPQY. I'll repeat that. This new online version cannot be used to request a BPQY. So, you want to please continue to follow the guidelines in the BPQY handbook, and the 2023 edition of that is now available online. And also, a reminder that if the beneficiary or third-party requests a BPQY for non-programmatic purposes, for instance, student loan forgiveness, they will be charged the standard fee for a record extract. Sometimes, as you may know, there are some mistakes made, right? So, if there is an attempt to charge a fee for the BPQY and it was requested for a return-to-work initiative, you can contact local office management or the Area Work Incentives Coordinator to resolve that, because there should be no fee for that query for those programmatic purposes.

So now we'll move on to some of the ways that we have available to report wages and earnings and initial reports of work. So we'll start with beneficiaries of SSDI. Beneficiaries of SSDI and SSI, actually, that would include individuals who receive CDB or DWB benefits, childhood disability benefits, or disabled widow or widower benefits.

They should make their initial reports of work directly to Social Security via phone, mail, or even in person. Now, when I say initial reports of work, this is the first time that they're starting a job. So not necessarily are we talking here about monthly wage reporting, but if someone starts a job for the first time, those reports should be made directly to the Social Security Administration. And they need to tell Social Security right away if their work starts or stops, if their duties or hours or their pay changes. And they need to include the employer's name, employer's address. And when available, if they have it, the EIN is very helpful, and you'll see some instances why here in just a little bit. But the date the work started or stopped is important, of course, the wage or salary that they'll be receiving, and expected hours of work, like maybe 20 per week, 40 per week, et cetera.

So specifically for beneficiaries of SSDI, wage reporting now, it's not technically required, but monthly wage reporting is encouraged to maintain their record and make sure that we're having proper payments. Now, the preferred method of reporting wages is via My Wage Report, and the online wage reporting system is available to individuals with a My Social Security account. Now, the advantages of using My Wage Report is there's immediate access to an online receipt, and SSA will also have immediate access to that information keyed in, and SSA maintains a copy of the receipt of earnings. Now, representative payees can also make reports via My Wage Report, but they are going to need to have their own *my* Social Security account in order to do that.

Now, using the My Wage Report tool, individuals can make wage reports for multiple employers. Once the employers are already keyed into our system via the initial work report that we just talked about. And before calling us, the individual should have all of their pay stubs available for each employer for the reporting period. Now, in addition to My Wage Report, beneficiaries of SSDI can also report by mailing or bringing in pay stubs to the local Social Security office. If they do this, again, beneficiaries should request and maintain a receipt, which indicates what was reported and when. Now, when we get pay stubs by mail or that are brought into the local office, manual input of the pay stubs by SSA staff is necessary, and that will take more time to process than wages reported through the My SSA or My Wage Report portal.

Now, again, also with these beneficiaries who have like Impairment Related Work Expenses or other types of work incentives that they're using, they can report using the My Wage Report portal. However, they're going to need to submit receipts and other documentation for the Impairment Related Work Expense or other work incentive directly to the local Social Security office. And that should indicate the month of the expense for Impairment Related Work Expenses.

Now, for wage reporting for recipients of SSI, monthly wage reporting is required, and this is in addition to any other types of income that the individual who receives SSI receives. Now, recipients should report a change in work activity as soon as possible, but no later than 10 days after the end of the month in which the change occurred. Recipients should be reporting the gross amount of wages paid in the month, and this report should be made actually by the sixth day of the following month. Now, the preferred method for reporting wages for SSI and concurrent recipients is My Wage Report, but there are other options available. Again, the advantages for SSI recipients are the same that we went over for the SSDI beneficiaries.

You know, SSA gets immediate access to the information. The beneficiary has immediate access to their receipts, and SSA also keeps a copy of the receipt. But it is important to note that the other systems allow for only one active employer at a time. Remember, with My Wage Report, you can report for multiple employers using that system.

Now, deemors for SSI beneficiaries can use My Wage Report to report their wages, but like payees, they're going to have to have their own *my* Social Security account and use the My Wage Report portal through their own account.

We talk about alternate SSI wage reporting applications, SSI Telephone Wage Reporting System. Now, this is not something new, so I'm sure you're familiar with it. It's where recipients are going to call a toll-free number and report the prior month's wages. We also have the SSA Mobile Wage Reporting App. Now, this is a mobile application that's going to allow for monthly wage reporting using smartphone technology. It could either be downloaded on Apple devices or Android devices. And, again, this one is only going to allow reporting for one employer at a time. So with those two applications, the SSI Telephone Wage Reporting System and the SSI Mobile Wage Reporting App, as we said, one active employer, and EIN is not required for those methods.

When putting in information for My Wage Report, when you make the initial wage report directly to Social Security, if you're unable to provide the EIN, then Social Security is going to look for that EIN. In order to have access to it through the portal, we do have to have the EIN posted on our records. But once we have that with all the other information, it should be like a real-time access for you regarding that through our My Wage Report portal in the My SSA application. Now, representative payees and deemors can use the two alternate methods, the Telephone Wage Reporting System and the Mobile Wage Reporting App. The reported wage amount is posted automatically with these two systems to the SSI record, and the appropriate payment adjustments are made using those methods.

It's important to note that work incentives cannot be reported with those methods. So again, you'll have to report any type of Impairment Related Work Expense or other types of work incentives directly to the field office. But the reason we bring that up specifically for these is because those reported wage amounts are posted automatically to the record, if you post the wage, you have to report the gross earnings, and so you're going to report the gross earnings, and that's going to automatically post. So any work incentives, IRWEs or otherwise that you report them to the field office will be entered, but the adjustments will be made after the fact. So individuals who are using Impairment Related Work Expense or other work incentives might want to choose to submit their pay stubs directly to the field office along with the documentation for their work incentives.

Do we have just a few final reminders or things to emphasize for you? SSI recipients who need to report something other than wages or use work incentives, remember that that report should be made directly to the local field office. An estimate of earnings based on the most recent review will be used for SSDI beneficiaries until another work report is made or a work review is conducted. So remember we indicated that I told you that monthly wage reporting was not required for SSDI beneficiaries, but it is preferred or recommended. But if it isn't being done, then based on the most recent review, we're going to keep an ongoing estimate on the record based on the earnings from that most recent review. So with SSI, an estimate of earnings is going to be posted for SSI recipients, and that will adjust the payment monthly if the required reports are not made. So similar to SSDI, but with SSI, it's even more important because you know that SSI, just a small difference in the wages can affect your benefit amount. So if we're using an ongoing estimate and it's not correct, it can definitely cause improper payments. So keeping us up to date on a monthly basis, while it is required, we definitely want individuals to follow that requirement.

Now I want to thank you again for your continued patience as we work through some of the issues with staffing and we're trying to work through getting all of the workloads processed in as timely a manner as possible. But also, I'm going to look forward to addressing some of the questions. I see some have come through in the chat. And, of course, any questions that you have on what I've covered today or any other relevant issues in the time allotted. So again, thank you for your time today, and I look forward to speaking with you later.

Derek Shields: Charles, thank you so much for this important information. If you've been following along in the chat, we started out with a few questions regarding the Beneficiary Satisfaction Survey, about three, and Mike was able to respond to one. We've captured the others, and we'll bring them up. And then during Charles' comments, we had four or five different questions, and we've been capturing those, and we look forward to having Charles back with us during the Q&A to address those. So do continue to post your questions in chat.

Next, we're going to turn to our segment on EN updates and reminders. It's my pleasure to introduce Erinn Wiedman, Social Insurance Specialist in the Office of Employment Support. Erinn, over to you, please.

Erinn Wiedman: Thank you. Okay. So I would like to start out by saying that ENs are not required to use any cloud-based solution. So I'm going to go over some information about that, but, again, remember, you're not required to utilize them. So if an EN would like to utilize some cloud technology to store Ticketholder data, they must comply with all of the information security and privacy requirements outlined in Part 3, Section 12 of the TPA. So, to go over some of what that section says.

First, it says that all cloud-based solutions that an EN would like to utilize must be FedRAMP approved or FedRAMP authorized. So if you're wondering, how do I know if it's FedRAMP authorized? You can find that information directly on the FedRAMP website. The link is on this slide, and I believe will also be posted in the chat. The other thing is that ENs must send verification of the services that they have, and they intend to use, to SSA for approval. So that can be in the form of a screenshot, and it must include the subscribed licenses in the cloud configuration setting. ENs should not store anything in the cloud until and unless they receive approval from SSA in writing to utilize that specific cloud-based solution. So you're welcome to reach out to EN Service if you are unsure about what documentation, you need to submit to SSA. If you're unsure about whether or not the product that you're utilizing requires approval from SSA. If you're unsure as to whether or not the specific product that you're using is FedRAMP authorized, I would first say, look at the FedRAMP website. If you have further questions, I would also suggest reaching directly out to the company to ask them. But of course, you can also reach out to EN Service if you have those specific questions. Next slide.

Okay. APOR documentation. So in 2023, or for the 2023 APOR, as you all know, you were asked to submit benefits counseling certifications, work from home requests, and Partnership Plus agreements. Due to the sheer number of approval requests we received, email notifications of the approval or denial did not go out until recently. But all of those emails have gone out. So if you have any questions or you think you had submitted a request and didn't receive an email, please reach out to EN Service to follow up. I wanted to mention that ENs will not be asked to submit this documentation again for the 2024 APOR. So instead, again, as you may have noticed, starting in 2023, we began asking for work from home requests, benefits counseling certifications, cloud-based solution verification, Partnership Plus agreements, and proof of workforce status whenever they're applicable during the annual Services and Supports Review. Okay. Next slide.

I promise this is the final slide about approval requests. So as previously mentioned, work from home requests, benefits counseling certifications, cloud-based solution verification, Partnership Plus agreements, all of those things need to be submitted to SSA for approval. And I did also just want to mention that we asked for the Partnership Plus and benefits counseling specifically to receive the badge on the Find Help tool. So those sorts of forms need to be submitted to SSA for approval. And typically, you would be submitting these during your annual Services and Supports Review.

But there are circumstances where you may be submitting these requests directly to EN Service. So in situations where you have a new employee that would like to begin working from home or some other alternate workstation, an employee becomes newly certified Benefits Counselor or is recertified, an EN would like to begin utilizing a new cloud-based solution. Or if an EN signs a new Partnership Plus agreement or signed an updated Partnership Plus agreement, those are circumstances where you would email EN Service about those approval requests. And we ask to be able to help respond more quickly that in the subject line of your email, you include the words “approval request”. And again, that will help us be able to respond to those emails more quickly. And as well, please include approval requests in the subject line if you are emailing EN Service because you have questions about any of those things. So benefits counseling, cloud, work from home request, Partnership Plus, about submitting those forms. You can also include approval request in there. And as always, you should still include your provider identification number or PID in the subject line of all emails that are sent to the EN service help desk. And that's it.

Derek Shields: Thank you so much, Erinn. We look forward to having you back in a little bit for the Q&A session. We'll now turn to our Program Integrity updates with Mary Kay Murphy. Mary

Kay is a Program Integrity Senior Quality Manager with the Ticket Program Manager. Mary Kay, over to you, please.

Mary Kay Murphy: Thanks, Derek. If you could advance the slide, please. So we did have a lot of questions at the first EN Essentials training around the Discussion Summary. We did send out a GovDelivery message on, I believe it was August 9, and we thought it would be good to just go over that here. So when we talk about where or how to include the Discussion Summary, if you're using the IWP form, the SS-1370, a good place to enter the Discussion Summary is if you have no other terms and conditions that you've identified for this Ticketholder, you could add the Discussion Summary under Part 3, Number 13, which is your Other Terms and Conditions, on this 1370 form. You also can create the Discussion Summary as a separate document. What you'd want to do is include the EN name, your provider ID, your Ticketholder name, your Social Security number of the Ticketholder, and the Discussion Summary.

There was a question about signatures. This document, the signature is not required. However, what you want to do is make sure that this Discussion Summary document is maintained with all your other Ticketholder records and is available upon request by either SSA or the Ticket Program Manager. If you don't use that 1370 form, you can update your IWP template to include the Discussion Summary where it fits best on your form, or you can also use that separate document as mentioned above.

Next slide, please. I wanted to talk a couple minutes just about Ticket assignment and unassignment issues. Most ENs are able to assign and unassign Tickets via the portal. But every now and then, an EN is unable to assign a Ticket. They're getting an error message, and they need some help with that. We want to investigate or expedite that investigation. Anytime there is a Ticket assignment or an EN unassignment issue or request, we want to make sure to send something through GSO. If you send through GSO or you fax it to the 703-893-4020, this way you can send the Ticketholder's name, the Social Security number, and what the issue is. So as you can see, I have indicated below under Ticket assignment issues, we want to make sure that you include the EN name, the PID number, the Ticketholder name, the Ticketholder SSN, Social Security number, and the IWP, the signed and dated IWP. Most often, as we do research on the reason why you were not able to assign the Ticket, we then need the IWP to be able to assign it correctly if we can resolve that issue. And then you want to also include what the nature of the Ticket portal error was. Maybe what error did you receive? And then who should we contact? Who should we contact to help if we have any further questions or give you the resolution?

And then the second part is if the EN wants to unassign the Ticket. Again, same similar information. We need your name as the EN, the PID number, the Ticketholder name, Social Security number of the Ticketholder, the unassignment request date, and the unassignment reason, and then just your signature and date. And in both instances, remember, you're going to have Ticketholder information, so you want that to go through GSO or to have it faxed, and that's going to just help us expedite your issue with the assignment or unassignment. And, Derek, that's all I have. I'll turn it back to you.

Derek Shields: Thank you very much, Mary Kay, for the updates. Before we move to Ana and the training updates, I just want to call out that we have continued questions and some responses in chat. Mike and Erinn have been able to answer a couple. We got about four or five recent questions and we are capturing those, and we'll have those asked during the Q&A period. I also see that somebody has raised their hand, and we'll be getting to you once we're done with Ana and Jayme's presentations. With that, it's now my pleasure to turn this over to our EN Development and Training Manager, Ana Morales, to provide us with the training updates. Ana?

Ana Morales: Thank you, Derek. Good afternoon, everybody. Can we move to the next slide, please? Thank you. So as many as you are likely aware, Social Security and TPM were pleased to develop and release a new resource entitled the" EN Guide for Working with Ticketholders", and this guide is designed to assist ENs in developing the relationships with Ticketholders and supporting them through their journey to financial self-sufficiency. So the new guide provides specific tips and details about conducting a thorough Intake discussion with a Ticketholder, creating and updating a detailed Individual Work Plan, assigning and unassigning Tickets, and preparing for IWP and Services and Supports Reviews. So we would like to acknowledge the many ENs that helped TPM gather the ideas and the content that goes along in the guide, as well as the leads on the project from the EN Development and Training Department, as well as the Program Integrity Department for finalizing and putting this resource available to all of you. And to find this new resource, you can go to YourTicketToWork.ssa.gov website, go to the resource documents, and it's under the Tools for Success header. And the link to the guide is posted in the chat for you to follow along. Can we move to the next slide, please?

That next slide is about EN Essentials. So this is a new series of supplemental trainings for Employment Networks. Those are virtual events that feature information that is included in the new "EN Guide for Working with Ticketholders". It includes tips and details to support your EN performance and compliance from conducting these Intake discussions to creating a detailed Individual Work Plan. So EN Essentials events are presented via Teams, just like we are doing right now. To participate, ENs can join these events using the login information that you will receive via mail, via email, I'm sorry, prior to the event. And there is no need to pre-register. Also, all the archived materials for each of the EN Essentials will be posted online, which includes the audio, the transcript, and the webinar presentations. And you can find those on Your Ticket to Work website. We had one in July, and all that information is already posted, and we are also sharing that link in the chat for you to follow. Next slide, please.

So like I mentioned, we started all these events in July. We started with the Ticketholder Intake. That was a topic. And then we are going to follow with IWP. And those will be separated into two different parts. Part one is tomorrow, so make sure that you tune and join us from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Eastern time. This topic is going to be Developing And Maintaining Successful

Individual Work Plans. We will talk about how to complete the IWP using the Ticketholder intake information to create goals and identify the services and supports for the Ticketholder's needs, as well as amending the IWP when that beneficiary moves towards their employment goals. And then mark your calendars for September 20. That's going to be part two of the IWP. And during that session, we are going to concentrate on compliance metrics for IWP completion to include the Discussion Summary and required signatures. So that session will also stress the importance of ongoing communication and required documentation of the Services and Supports Reviews. Let's move to the next slide, please.

And that is about the Ticket Program Agreement Change Form. And the TPA Change Form serves different purposes to update your EN agreement information, like staff, Ticket Portal users, et cetera. But today we want to provide some reminders for the EN Service Team to efficiently process your request. So for the first one, when submitting the form, please complete only the sections that are relevant to the request, not the complete form. And always include your PID, the EN name, and the signature portions.

The reason why we're mentioning this is because if you complete the whole form, it makes the analysts believe that you are changing more parts in your agreement. So they will take more time reviewing all information in the system. Instead, if you can just change the specific section that you would like to change, that will definitely expedite and process more efficiently all the requests that we are receiving from different Employment Networks. One of the reasons why we are asking you just to do that part is because, as you know, in March, the TPA Change Form was updated and it has more sections for you to complete. And now that form is being required for every single change that you need to do in your agreement. So that's why we're asking you that every time you need to change something, only change the specific section that you need to address.

The next bullet talks about the purpose of the form is to add or remove portal users. And we have been having success with receiving the TPA Change Form every time an EN would like to add a user, but that hasn't been the case for removing a user. So we just want to make sure that everybody is on the same page when it comes to the form is required to add, but also to remove Ticket Portal users from your agreement. Include your PID and the EN name in the subject line of each email and submit all changes in the TPA Change Form instead of the body of an email. So like I mentioned, the form is now required. Everybody needs to submit the form and it's complete. Social Security and TPM, we worked together and added many new sections to the form to address every different area. However, if there is still an area that you don't see in the form, just a reminder that there is Section 7 in the form, where you can clarify any information that is relevant to the information that you are updating. And if you have any questions or comments related to the form, please contact EN Service directly.

And, of course, I see questions from the chat that we're going to address, and if not, we are going to have our Q&A session period. Thank you. Back to you, Derek.

Derek Shields: Ana, thank you so much for the training updates and the detailed review of the TPA Change Form. We have had some continued engagement in chat with a few questions around different topics, just to reinforce ─ the EN Essentials trainings, the recordings, and those materials are available as archived. And thanks to Brittany on our team for posting the link.

And there's been some exchange between Katie and Erinn and Natalie responding to a variety of different questions, so we appreciate those. And we'll be back with Ana in just a little bit. Now, as is customary, we'll transition for our next segment, as we commonly have, a Communications and Outreach update. It's my pleasure to introduce Jayme Pendergraft. She is the Director of Communications and Outreach for the Ticket Program Manager. Jayme, over to you, please.

Jayme Pendergraft: Thanks so much, Derek, and good afternoon, everyone. As Derek mentioned, I'll be talking about some of our outreach activities. Many of you have heard this before, and really the takeaway I want you to have from today's conversation is that we have content available for you to use and share on your social media. We can help you fill up your social media content schedule and calendar. I know many of you may not have the staff required to have an active social media presence, so grab our stuff. You can use it. You can share and repost from social, or you can grab something on our website and share the link. We appreciate it if you tag us, but you don't have to. But that's what I want you to take away today, is that there's content out there for you to use with not a whole ton of effort, just kind of going onto social media and sharing or utilizing GovDelivery and sharing some of the content we share there.

So the purpose of my team is to promote the Ticket Program to eligible beneficiaries and their families and friends and other people who may encounter them along the way so that we have info out there about what the Ticket Program is and what it can do for folks. Next slide, please.

One of the key ways we do this is through our WISE, or Work Incentive Seminar Event webinars. And these are monthly webinars typically held on the fourth Wednesday of every month. You may see a little bit of a change in that schedule sometimes, especially when it gets closer to the holidays or other events that are going on. We do typically have about 400 to 600 people attend every month. Our next topic is “Five Frequently Asked Questions About Working While You Receive Disability Benefits”. And it is tomorrow. We have a busy day tomorrow. The webinar is from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. Eastern. And we do encourage you to register at choosework.ssa.gov/WISE. We do send out sample social media posts via GovDelivery. I apologize for the little cutoff there. You should have gotten a GovDelivery message around 4:30 yesterday Eastern Time, encouraging you to get that word out there. You can take those posts and post on social, or you can just go to Choose Work social media accounts and share what we call the pinned post, the post at the top of the page about the WISE webinars. We encourage you to get the word out about WISE because it's a really great way to get a lot of questions answered all at once. We know you get lots of the same questions. And this is an opportunity to have potential clients get answers to the basic questions and then follow up with you for some more detailed questions or services. Next slide, please.

As I mentioned, we are super active on social media. We have daily social media posts on Facebook and Twitter. We also have a very active blog. We tend to post on our blog about once a week. And, again, that is content that you can just go grab the link and share it. We talk about things like career fairs that are coming up or specific topics about the program, like wage reporting or Ticket to Work for people with mental health conditions. As I mentioned, we also talk a lot about our WISE events. We tend to match our social media content to our theme of the WISE for the month. We publish about our success stories.

Other important Social Security updates, I know that we recently posted about Slam the Scam, which is an initiative that Social Security has been doing for several years trying to identify scammers out there. And then, of course, we share information from other federal agencies. Next slide, please.

We do have some fact sheets available in our library on the Choose Work site. They're also available in the EN Outreach Toolkit on the Your Ticket to Work website. These provide a focus, a short focus, on a specific topic related to the program. So we have fact sheets that range from serving specific populations, like veterans, to how a person can present their best selves to employers. So I do encourage you to go check those out. If you have someone who might need that information, print them out or give them the link and have them read the fact sheet and see if that generates any questions from them. Next slide, please.

Success stories. You all have heard my plea for success stories many times, I am sure, but I'll give a brief overview of what they are again. So these feature individuals who have achieved financial independence and no longer receive Social Security disability benefits, and they've done this through the Ticket to Work Program. Those are the majority of the success stories on our site. We also have what we call stepping stone stories. And these folks may still be receiving benefits, but they have achieved something along the path to financial independence that was a major milestone. So it could be something like completing an education or using services from VR or somewhere to get an accessible automobile that helps them get to their job. So that's the type of thing that we're looking at for stepping stone stories. And I believe we do only have one of those published, so if you have any thoughts on those, please reach out and let us know. Next slide, please.

Our most recent success story is kind of a new one, a new type of success story. We have identified a theme amongst our success stories and focused down on that theme. And the most recent success story features Amy and Jason, and it's all about Partnership Plus. So both Amy and Jason started with their VR agencies, who later transitioned them over to an Employment Network for additional services, and they did achieve financial independence. Jason, I believe, is one of our oldest success stories on the website. So he's been around for a while, and Amy's getting up there too, to be honest. But so when their case closed with VR, they knew that they wanted to continue to receive some support while they continued working and that they needed that additional help from an EN. So the VR agency did hand them over to an Employment Network for those continued services. Next slide, please.

We highlighted this for Ticketholders, obviously, because they may not know that this is a possibility in some states and that they might be concerned about their case closing with VR and then not having any follow-on services from any providers. So we wanted to let Ticketholders know that this is a possibility in some states, and it's also an opportunity for you all to take the success story and share it to help build partnerships in your state if you don't have a Partnership Plus agreement. So I would definitely encourage you to take a look at this program. It shows how Partnership Plus can work and how Amy and Jason have continued to succeed as a result of the Partnership Plus program. Next slide, please.

So again, these success stories, you can share them on social media. You're going to get sick of me saying that. We do announce our success stories via GovDelivery and share social media posts. We encourage you to log on to our social media and share them or onto the website and share them. They are under the Success Stories tab, and Brittany is dropping all of the links in the chat. You can also always contact us if you need some social media content or posts about a certain thing. You can send an email to socialmedia@choosework.ssa.gov if you're looking for some help with social media. And then if you do have a success story candidate, we encourage you to send an email to successstories@choosework.ssa.gov, and we will get back to you to follow up and talk through what the potential story may look like. Next slide, please.

This is our slide about how to stay in touch with Choose Work. As I mentioned, head over to Facebook and Twitter and share that content. Be sure you're following us so that when you tag us, we'll be linked and will be identified in your posts. We do also have several videos on our YouTube page. GovDelivery is key. Please watch out for all of those email messages. There are a couple different ways they come to you. One is just by being in Employment Network, you get many GovDelivery messages, and I also encourage you to subscribe to our public-facing links, which is where this link takes you. Sorry, public-facing messaging, which is where this link takes you to read what we're sharing with the beneficiaries and Ticketholders. You can also subscribe to our Choose Work blog updates, and that, again, takes you to our GovDelivery page that will set you up to get regular updates about our blog.

And lastly, stay in touch. You can email us at socialmedia@choosework.ssa.gov, and if you have any questions, feel free to reach out. And I believe that's my last slide, so I'll hand it back to Derek.

Derek Shields: Thank you, Jayme, for the updates from the Outreach team and recommendations you have with our attendees today. We have now concluded our presentation portion of our agenda and will transition into the general questions and answers period. As a reminder, as I mentioned before, to ask a question over the phone, please raise your hand on Teams by dialing star 5, and if you are called on, you're going to be unmuted by the facilitator, and then you'll have to press star 6 to unmute yourself. It is a two-step process. If we could go forward one slide, please. There we go. And if you're on MS Teams, again, enter your question into chat, as many of you have done and we've been collecting those, or you can raise your hand and your mic will be unmuted by the facilitator. When you do ask your question, we ask you to state your name, your EN name, and then, of course, ask your question.

So let's start out, though, by going to chat. I'm going to ask Ana Morales to come back. Ana, we've had a variety of questions, starting out with Charles and his presentation on reporting and other reminders. Would you be able to bring up some of those questions and begin with Charles, please?

Ana Morales: Sure. So I have several, so he will be busy for some time. But somebody was asking, after the initial report of job start is reported to Social Security, how long will it take to show up on their wage report?

Charles Killen: Thanks. Well, that's going to depend upon how the report is made. If the report is made over the phone or in person and the individual providing the information can provide the representative with the EIN or the Employment Identification Number, then it can be updated immediately, like in real time. But the issue can sometimes be that the representative needs to find the EIN, needs to do a search for the EIN when it's not provided because to do the work report, it's not required that you have the EIN. We want as much information as you have. And if that doesn't include the EIN, then we'll take what you have. But before it's available on My Wage Report, we have to find the EIN. So we'll do the search for that. But unfortunately that's going to take us a little bit longer to get that put in. But once the technician does make the input for My Wage Report and they have all available information, including the EIN, then it's going to be available for you. Now, if the report is made by mail, of course, and the EIN, even if they provide the EIN or if it's not provided, once the EIN is located then it will show up in the portal once it gets input by the office. But what we need to keep in mind is that when I separate in person or over the phone, because we know that the individual is talking to somebody right then, if we're going to rely on the mail, it's not going to be input until it's assigned to a technician to work and then the technician is able to get to that assignment. So that one will take a little bit longer.

Derek Shields: Thank you. And in reference to the EIN, we have a separate question but related to that. If they are having trouble getting the employer EIN on their account so the beneficiary can report online, is there a specific task that they need to do to get the employer listed so they can report?

Charles Killen: I wouldn't say there's a specific task other than reporting. If you have the EIN and you're reporting it to us, then the field office technician should be able to just input that information. But sometimes what happens is the service representative or teleservice representative doesn't have the capability, like the computer permissions to actually input the EIN right away, so they're going to refer that to a claim specialist for that to be done. So it also depends on who you reach and who you're talking to at the office if you're making that report in person. But as I kind of indicated in the last question, if the question just says, like, they're having trouble getting it so I'm not clear if they had the EIN and they're having trouble getting it on the account or they're having trouble finding the EIN so we can put it on the account. But whatever the situation is, Social Security has ways to find the EIN. So once we're aware of the work report and we input it into our current system with the EIN, it will be available in My Wage Report. If they have issues, like they've reported the EIN, they've made the work report, and they've tried to call or visit or write SSA about it not showing up in their My Wage Report, they can report that, like we said to a project officer or work incentives coordinator or local office management and, you know, make sure they have that beneficiary information so they can look into the issue for you.

Ana Morales: Thank you. Do you want me to continue, Derek, or do you want to take a question?

Derek Shields: Give Charles one more question.

Ana Morales: All right. Are there any plans for beneficiaries to be able to report IRWEs on the SSA account site?

Charles Killen: Not currently. There is nothing in the works to make that happen. The issue is that per current policy, the actual receipt is needed for IRWEs to be applied. So once we are able to put them on My Wage Report, we're going to have to incorporate a way for the individual to upload the receipt and for the technology to be able to look at the receipt and make sure that the amount that they're entering matches what's on the receipt. And as you might imagine, take a CVS receipt, for instance, that's about as long as your body if you're six foot tall, and you brought a bunch of other things at the same time, that technology is going to have to be pretty bright to figure that out. So we haven't quite gotten to that point yet, but we understand how much better that would be for online reporting and even for those other apps that we talked about. But the issue is the current policy. We have to see a receipt. Copies of receipts, as long as they're legible, are okay, but unfortunately just taking someone's word for it through one of the applications isn't something we can do per current policy right now.

Derek Shields: Thanks, Charles. Appreciate your answers. I'm going to check in for a moment with Katherine. Katherine, have you identified anyone that has a raised hand interested in asking a question aloud?

Katherine Jett: Hi, Derek. No, sir, not at this time. No raised hands.

Derek Shields: Great. Thanks. Appreciate that. That's what I was thinking. So we have had some other questions. I'll ask one here for Jayme. Jayme, there's a question if there's a plan in place to expand WISE to Spanish. Jayme, if you'd come on and give an update on that.

Jayme Pendergraft: Sure. This is Jayme. Thanks, Derek. Currently there are no plans to expand WISE to Spanish, but we can certainly take that into consideration. Thank you for the idea.

Derek Shields: Thank you, Jayme. Appreciate that. Ana, when we look back to some of the questions, I know Mike was responding to the Beneficiary Satisfaction Survey questions. Do you have any follow-up questions from the chat for Mike?

Ana Morales: He actually responded to all of them, but I guess in general ENs were asking if there's going to be an official notification that will help them let the beneficiaries know that the survey is coming, and Mike addressed that saying that they could put together a notification.

Derek Shields: Yeah, I think that's a good idea, and I'm thinking we would do that. I think an efficient way to do that would be through GovDelivery. We would send out a notice to all the ENs and let them know just before the letters are mailed so they wouldn't get your notice. They would be prepared when the notices come in. So yes, I think that's a good idea. We're going to be alerting everyone around the agency that this is coming, being ready, so, yes, that's a good idea to do that in advance.

Ana Morales: Yeah, and the other question, Mike, was if every EN will have at least one beneficiary to complete the survey.

Mike Anzick: So what we're trying to do, you know, there's a lot of Ticket users, and what we're trying to do is have a randomly selected sample that's representative across the board. So demographics, we're looking to make sure that our subsample looks like the population, so age, gender, geographic location, EN size, et cetera. So we're going to have a broad swath, and, again, it's randomly selected. It's not every EN, and we select somebody from each participant from each EN. So there's a possibility that not every EN will have at least one participant. But you can still send out the notices in case, because you won't know who it will be going to, and it can just be blanketed to everyone. So the answer is no, we may not have everyone included.

Ana Morales: And, finally, do you have a percentage of Ticket users that will be included in the survey? Do you know the percentage?

Mike Anzick: Yeah, I don't have an answer right now of what percentage of all Ticket users will be in the sample, but we can go back and look at that and have an answer.

Ana Morales: Thank you.

Mike Anzick: Yeah, thanks.

Ana Morales: That's it for Mike, Derek.

Derek Shields: Excellent. Thank you, Mike. Appreciate your extra time there. We have a question that came in more recently in chat, and I'm going to read it and ask if maybe somebody from Social Security would like to respond first. The question is, I asked this question to Program Integrity but have never received a response, leading to there's an increasing number of new rules that ENs are being held to. It is difficult to have a long conversation with my Ticketholders who are working full-time. I'm afraid I'll have to reassign them or lose them, and I just lost the chat because another post came in. Natalie, I see you're coming on.

Natalie Sendldorfer: Yes.

Derek Shields: Any reactions or comments there, please?

Natalie Sendldorfer: Yes, Derek, I did respond to that, and we just had a meeting yesterday and a recommendation from TPM to have a training session, similar to the IWP Essentials training, to go over the new requirements that have been added to the RFA recently. So that is in the works. We will keep you posted on when that will be. Most likely it will be after the second IWP training, which would be next month.

Derek Shields: Okay. Thank you for that.

Natalie Sendldorfer: Sure.

Derek Shields: When I heard this question a couple times before, how many of these are new rules versus how many of them have existed and now ENs are being held to account for? Can you comment on that?

Natalie Sendldorfer: Yes. The number of new requirements, it's only been a couple of new requirements. But, right, we are now just getting into, you know, the IWP and just expanding on the requirements and being more detailed about it. There's only been a few new requirements.

Derek Shields: Okay. So I appreciate that and look forward to an update for a future EN Essentials training that will focus on these to hopefully help EN streamline some of the work, because the question is alluding to it's becoming too much. So how can we make the requirements clearly known so it reduces the impact and lets the focus be on the beneficiaries themselves?

Natalie Sendldorfer: Yes. I appreciate that comment and question. Thank you.

Derek Shields: Excellent. Thanks. There's a question that's come in. There's been a couple of payments-related questions, and I think Katie has commented on a couple of them. Here's one. Is there any update on the payment request screen in the portal and entering pay dates?

It is very cumbersome having to use the screen versus typing the pay dates. Katie, is that one that you would like to comment on?

Katie Striebinger: Sure. I did just answer it in the chat. The latest changes we made to the portal that makes it so that you have to do the little pick screen is based on a security update, and right now with the platform the portal is on, it is not an option for us to let you do that, but we have opened an issue with our systems team and we are working on hoping to get that functionality for you in another update, but I don't have any date when I know that functionality is going to come back.

Derek Shields: Thank you, Katie. I appreciate you telling me that you had responded, too. I see that now. Appreciate that. Here's a question. If a Ticketholder came to an EN to be part of the Ticket Program, but EN found out the Ticket has been terminated and cannot be assigned it's showing up… there's a lot of activity right now that's pushing it. Natalie, you're coming on. Do you want to take this one?

Natalie Sendldorfer: Yes. So if a Ticket has been terminated and the beneficiary or the EN do not know why the Ticket was terminated, please send an email to EN service to my attention with a brief summary of what has transpired. Please do not include PII. In your email, please include a contact number, and I can call you over the phone and get the PII, the Ticketholder's information, and then I can have someone on our staff research that. Of course, there are incorrect terminations, and we can have that fixed. But if you could just follow that process, we'd be happy to help you on that.

Derek Shields: Thanks, Natalie.

Natalie Sendldorfer: Sure.

Derek Shields: There was a question earlier about Partnership Plus. How do we know which states are participating in Partnership Plus? Ana, if you wanted to come on and comment on Partnership Plus states.

Ana Morales: Sure. I responded on the chat as well, but if you are interested in a specific state, you can talk to your Training and Activation Analyst about the particular state that you are looking for, and they will be able to tell you if they are participating in Partnership Plus or not. Another way for you to check is in the learning module that we have on Your Ticket to Work website about Partnership Plus. Included in the module, there is a map, and that map is updated with the current Partnership Plus states and what type of relationship or agreement they have with the ENs. So you can double-check there. And if you don't know who your Training and Activation Analyst is, please, per usual, can email EN Operations, and we will be able to help you.

Derek Shields: Thank you, Ana. There's a question that's come in. Are there any updates on fixing the issue of pulling reports in the portal? For example, when pulling a payment report for specific dates, like a one-month period, it generates a report for a 12-month period. And somebody else just gave that a thumbs up. So there's a couple people interested in there. Somebody from our team want to provide an update on portal reports generation?

Katie Striebinger: Yes, this is Katie again. We're still working on making that correction. Like I said, the latest update to the portal, you know, there is a new look and feel as we had to go to a new security update, and we are working on fixing that issue. And we will send a blast out once it's corrected.

Derek Shields: Thank you, Katie. So for those of you that are acknowledging that question, they're working on it, and a GovDelivery update will be sent out once available. Katherine, it looks like we have a raised hand. Why don't we go over to you?

Katherine Jett: Hi. Yes, Derek, we have Tiffany. Tiffany, you're unmuted. If you want to unmute yourself and ask your question, please.

Tiffany: Hello. Can you all hear me?

Derek Shields: Yes.

Tiffany: Awesome. Okay. So I do have a question specifically because I'm actually going through a Supports and Service Review at this moment. So I have a question about the summary. Do we need to provide a summary page at the end of the IWP or attach it if we have documented case notes and all call logs on the COS?

Derek Shields: Mary Kay, would you like to take that one?

Mary Kay Murphy: Yes, I can. Natalie did answer that question also in the chat. And basically, as long as the case notes indicate that this is the Discussion Summary and includes all the requirements that must be included as the Discussion Summary, then having them in your case notes is fine.

Tiffany: Okay. I apologize. The chat is going so fast I couldn't see any replies.

Mary Kay Murphy: Yes, it is. All right.

Tiffany: Well, thank you, guys.

Mary Kay Murphy: Thank you, Tiffany.

Derek: Yeah, thank you, Tiffany. Appreciate that. Katherine, do you see any other raised hands?

Katherine Jett: No, sir. I do not.

Derek Shields: Thank you. Yeah, and while the questions may be answered in chat, it's also helpful to call out the engagement because others might not be able to view the chat, so it's good to cover it both ways. I'm looking back through questions. Keep submitting them. If we haven't gotten to your question and you wish we had, it would be helpful to resubmit it at this point. We do have another question. Will old IWPs be held to the standard of the new compliance rules when we have our service and supports review? Mary Kay?

Mary Kay Murphy: Yep. So the original, the GovDelivery message about the Discussion Summary did go out in, I believe it was April of 2022. Prior to that, we would not be looking for the Discussion Summary.

Derek Shields: Thank you. So it will be applied moving forward, but it was prior to April, it would not be applicable. There's another question here. If a Ticketholder came to the EN to be part of the Ticket Program but EN found out the Ticket has been terminated and cannot be assigned from the Ticket Portal, what should the EN do? I think we started reading that one off and Natalie came in on that. Natalie, just confirm on that.

Natalie Sendldorfer: Yes. If you could send an email to EN service with your issue and ask them to send it to my attention, Natalie, please do not include any PII in that email, any of the Ticketholder information, but please include your phone number, and I will give you a call and get the information over the phone, and then our staff will research the issue. Sometimes Tickets are terminated erroneously, and we can fix that issue, so we would be happy to help you on that one.

Derek Shields: Thank you very much. There is a comment referring back to the IWPs versus kind of the new procedure versus the old procedure, and it says that was not my case for my Services and Supports Reviews. I think if that's, you know, the case, then email and Program Integrity for a follow-up could be a route to address that concern.

Mary Kay Murphy: Yes. I was just going to jump in there. You're right, Derek. Thank you.

Derek Shields: You just wanted to share that email address? I think we had it in chat earlier, but programintegrity@YourTicketToWork.ssa.gov .

Mary Kay Murphy: Yes.

Derek Shields: Thanks, Mary Kay. You know, our questions have slowed down a little bit. At this time, I'll ask if Melanie Webb, who was introduced earlier, wanted to come on and take a moment to follow up the introduction that Rob provided and share any comments from her new role in the Branch Chief position. Melanie?

Melanie Webb: Thanks, Derek. And I think a lot of what I was going to say has already been covered, but I will just take a moment to say, as Rob mentioned, although I am new to this role as the Branch Chief, I'm not entirely new to the Ticket Program or working at Social Security. So many of you I worked with previously when I was a contractor prior to coming to Social Security in 2016, and I know that I've also worked with several of you through the marketing program or just in the program in general as a COR, and most recently I have had the opportunity to meet with several of you since assuming this role in late June. And so the one thing that I did want to mention that wasn't called out specifically was that we have heard from some of you, and this came up on the Payments Call a few times, that you have been experiencing some longer delays with getting responses from the EN service box, and just a couple of things that have contributed to that. First, just a very general one, given that it's summer and people have been on vacations or out of the office, there are times when we have to connect with different offices or with different colleagues to get the answers, and so it takes a little bit longer for us to get back to you.

But the larger contributor, as Erinn mentioned, from the results of the APOR this year and requiring a lot of additional documentation, that created a new workload for the team. And so the amount of time it has taken to review those documents, do some additional analysis, follow up where necessary, making sure that we're including things in the relevant systems, it has slowed down our response times a little bit. So if there's anything that's urgent, please feel free to follow up. We're not going to respond the same day or even the next day in some instances. But if you haven't heard anything and you want to follow up, we can at least let you know that we are looking into it.

Also, as Erinn mentioned, if it's a question that's specifically related to a form or a cloud or benefits counseling or Partnership Plus, by including the subject line that she mentioned for the approval request, that will help expedite things as well because we can forward those to the appropriate mailboxes and make sure that you get answers quickly. And then finally, as Ana talked about, we have heard some of your concerns in terms of, you know, the rules have been changing or there have been clarifications or GovDelivery messages that have gone out and the instructions aren't always clear or, you know, there's some miscommunication or misunderstanding. And that is the exact reason why we have been working very closely with TPM to develop as many training tools, documents, and resources as possible so that we can help you be successful in your roles with working with the Ticketholders.

So we can't encourage you enough. If you haven't had a chance to join the EN Essentials training yet, please do so. It's not just for new ENs, but for anyone who just needs a refresher, you want an opportunity to ask questions, you're looking for additional resources. We have more coming soon by way of instructional guides and job aids. And so we do take your feedback, you know, to heart, and we're doing what we can to provide better service, and we will continue to do that moving forward. So we look forward to the collaboration and your continued feedback, and I just wanted to say thank you.

Derek Shields: Thank you so much. Thank you, Mel. Appreciate your remarks and sharing those thoughts with everybody. And if Renee Clarke is also still with us, Renee, would you like to share a few remarks? Well, I'm not sure, we might not have Renee still with us. I know that we have a couple of comments in the chat, and we'll just call out to one. Thanks for the help from folks like Ana, Natalie, and Mary Kay, and others on the team.

Per Melanie's statement, you know, we're working to address your concerns, and per Rob's statement, there's great recognition of the services and supports that all ENs are providing to beneficiaries to help them on their journey to financial independence. So we appreciate that. And if we can move to the next slide, please

On behalf of the Ticket Program Manager team, I would like to thank our presenters and everyone attending today for this informative and interactive session. Looking ahead, we do have a few things on the calendar. Just make note for all your Payments Calls, we do have our next All EN Payments call on October 31 at 1:00 p.m. Eastern. As mentioned, a couple times, tomorrow we have our next EN Essentials session. That will be at 1:00 p.m. Eastern time. And our next EN Call, as listed on the screen, is scheduled for the quarterly session on Tuesday, November 7, for 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. Eastern time. As we like, if please send suggested topics to us for the All EN calls to enoperations@YourTicketToWork.ssa.gov. We appreciate those ideas.

Once again, thank you for attending and have a good rest of your day. This EN Call has now concluded.