All EN Payments Call Transcript
February 6, 2024

Katherine Jett: Good afternoon and welcome to the quarterly All-EN Payments Call. My name is Katherine Jett. I'll be your moderator for today's call. The call is slated for 60 minutes, and will be recorded and transcribed.

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Okay, we'll go over a few logistics and housekeeping items. If everyone would just feel free to ask a question in MS Teams chat section. The way you locate chat is, there's a bubble up top on your screen, identified as an icon and as chat. During the Q&A session later on in the call, if you're joining via the phone and you wish to ask a question, just raise your hand utilizing star 5. You'll be unmuted by the facilitator, and then you'll press star 6 to unmute yourself. Now, if you have a question and you want to ask via the MS Teams application, all you need to do is raise your hand, click the raise hand icon. We will identify you, unmute, and you'll need to unmute yourself to ask your question. Please limit questions to one per person. Any additional questions that are not answered in the call today, you can send an email to ENPaymentsHelpDesk@yourtickettowork.ssa.gov. We have closed captioning available. If you want to activate closed captions in the MS Teams application, just click the three dots above the "More" in Teams. From there, you'll go down to "Language and Speech" and "Turn on Live Captions". We also have a closed caption link that you can utilize. It will be in the chat. It will open up closed captions in the browser window. Thank you today for your participation.

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We'll go over the agenda. We have a welcome. We have the announcements, the end-of-year stats, the 2024 Trial Work Level, SGA blind, SGA amounts, 2024 Ticket payment rates, ePay file stats, ePay reminders, EN payment reminders, resources, and the question-and-answer forum.

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At this time, I would like to welcome TPM's EN Payments Manager, Nicole. Nicole Black. Take it away, Nicole.

Nicole Black: Thank you, Katherine. Welcome, everyone. Happy New Year. This is the last time I promise I'll say it because it is February. Thank you for joining the call. And I want to start off with a few announcements. The 2024 payment resources are now available. I know everyone's happy about that. So, please note that the 2024 Payments at a Glance, the 18-month Look Back tool, and the Earnings Estimator are now available for download in the Resource section on the Your Ticket to Work website. If you have any questions about your payment method, please contact EN Service at ENService@ssa.gov.

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For 2023, we paid out a total of $140,586,777, which equates to 206,338 payments, with 71,778 denials. And in case you were wondering, the most common denial reason for 2023 was the beneficiary still receiving federal cash benefits.

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The 2024 Trial Work Level and SGA amounts are as follows, Trial Work Level for 2024 is $1,110, SGA is $1,550, and the Blind SGA amount is $2,590.

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Payment Rates. I know that's something you guys have all been looking forward to. So, for ENs that are on the Milestones Outcome method of payment or receiving payments, for your SSI beneficiaries, your Phase One Milestones will be paid out at $1,788 and your Phase Two Milestones as well as your Outcomes are paid out at $300. For your SSDI beneficiaries, your Phase One Milestones are again paid out at $1,788 with your Phase 2 Milestones and your Outcomes both being paid out at $536. Then for those on the Outcome-only Method for receiving payments, for your SSI beneficiaries, that's paid out at $560. And then for your SSDI beneficiaries, it's $998.

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ePay File Stats. So, the last ePay file was completed in December of 2023. And in that file, we processed a total of 13,275 claims and paid 4,107 SSNs, for a total amount paid out at $7,257,314. And with that, we move right into the next ePay file. The January ePay file was started on January 30, so it just started last week.

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ePay Reminders. Phase 1 Milestone 4 is paid via ePay but remember that all ENs must submit payment requests for Phase 1 Milestones 1 through 3 through the Ticket Portal with proof of relationship. Any Tickets that are unassigned are not included in ePay. And the EN must have passed their annual Services and Support Review. Another thing to remember is that the ePay file is processed in SSN order, not provider ID order. Phase 1 Milestone 4, Phase 2 Milestones, and Outcomes are all paid via ePay, so ENs are encouraged not to submit for these payment types via the Portal when the EN portion of the ePay file is being processed. Submitting for these payments can slow down processing and can cause duplicate claim months. And if you submit a request for Phase 1 Milestone 4, or Phase 2 Milestones or Outcomes during ePay, that SSN will not be processed until it comes up on the ePay file. Please allow TPM to pay all available claims via ePay before requesting via the Ticket Portal.

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Remember, if you have a PII violation, you will be removed from the EN ePay for three months, or one ePay file. During this time period, you must submit your payment request via the Ticket Portal. So, for example, if you violate the PII rule while a file is currently being processed, say, for example, now in February, you would then be removed from the next ePay file, which would be in April.

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EN Payment Reminders. So, the first one deals with the Systems Access Management, or SAM, registration. All Employment Networks are required to keep their registration current and all information up to date on SAM. To avoid a disruption in receiving payments, please be sure to address the renewal prior to expiration. SAM will send out some email reminders prior to your registration expiring. However, if you miss the email or just forget and you see a diary reason code of SAM CCR registration expired, update required, then the EN must sign in to SAM.gov to renew and validate their information. Once this takes place, it does take a couple of days, and then we will go in on our end to update the system so that you will be able to resume receiving payments.

Your Payments Contacts. Please be sure to update your contact information if that changes as it relates to the person that we contact for payments outreach. We do this so that we can make sure that you are receiving the outreach emails from the Payments Help Desk. Outreach emails are sent to the ENs to obtain payment-related documentation when EN Payments staff report missing or incomplete information from the payment request that you submit. And you'll have nine business days after an outreach email is sent to respond.

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As a reminder, the Ticket Portal does track the status of your payments in real time, and you can also utilize the Excel function within the Ticket Portal to download reports and view diary and denial information.

Payment Processing. Another reminder is that the EN Payments Help Desk is not able to provide claim months to request payments. Your payments are also processed within 30 days of receipt. What that means is that they're either paid, denied, or placed in diary within 30 days of your submissions.

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As always, I know you all have lots of questions and lots of good ideas, so if you have a payment topic that you would be interested in discussing through this forum, our goal is to help educate you and provide clarification on processes and procedures related to payments. So, please send those topics to the EN Payments Help Desk at ENPaymentshelpdesk@yourtickettowork.ssa.gov.

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And then, if you have questions and you want to reach out to us for assistance, you can reach us by phone Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern. Option one is the Beneficiary Help Desk. Option two is the Payments Help Desk, and option three is the Systems Help Desk. If you would like to ask questions or need support via email, you can send your payment-related issues to ENPaymentshelpdesk@yourtickettowork.ssa.gov. For questions and issues that are related to Ticket assignment, the Service Provider website, and the Portal, you can send those to ENSystemsHelp@yourtickettowork.ssa.gov. And with that, I'm going to turn it back over to Katherine.

Katherine Jett: Thank you, Nicole, for those very informative updates. We will now open it up to the open Q&A. As a reminder, if you'd like to ask a question over the phone, if you'll press star 5 to raise your hand, you'll be unmuted by the facilitator, and then you'll need to press star 6 to unmute yourself. And if you're on the MS Teams application, click the raise hand icon. You'll be called on after you're unmuted by the facilitator, and then you'll need to click your microphone to unmute yourself. All right, Rebecca, can you help us identify any raised hands at this time?

Rebecca Yohannes: Yes, our first question comes from Tiffany. Your audio and video are active. Please click your microphone to unmute and activate your video.

Tiffany: Hello, I have a quick question. I have a Ticketholder that I signed at the end of December and she had previously had a Ticket assigned with vocational rehab. So, her Phase 1 Milestones were billed with vocational rehab. It's my understanding that I need to bill in January for Phase 2. Is that something that I would bill through the Portal, or do I need to wait on that for ePay, since it is Phase 2?

Nicole Black: Thank you, Tiffany, for that. Thank you for your question. I want to make sure I heard you right. You have a Ticketholder who you just recently assigned. They did work the VR with a successful case closure, so your Phase 1s are not available to you. And so, with this being your first request as a Phase 2, are you to submit this to the Portal or wait for ePay to complete?

Tiffany: That's correct. Thank you.

Nicole Black: Okay, perfect. I got it. So, with this, I would recommend waiting until ePay has been completed, and then you can do your reconciliation to see if it was paid, and if not, then you would submit for your Phase 2s.

Tiffany: Okay. Got you. All right. Thank you so much.

Katherine Jett: Thank you, Tiffany. Rebecca, I see we have another hand raised.

Rebecca Yohannes: Yes. Our next question comes from Lisa. Your audio and video are active. Please click your microphone to unmute and activate your video if you'd like to ask your question.

Lisa: Hi, can you hear me?

Nicole Black: Yes.

Lisa: Okay. So, did you state on the previous ─ I think maybe slide 13 ─ that we shouldn't be calling the help desk for assistance with trying to figure out the claim month?

Nicole Black: Hi, Lisa. Yes, ma'am. The Payment Help Desk cannot provide you with the actual claim month. And the reason is that things change in real time as income is updated. So, they can provide you guidance or provide you information as to why it was denied, give you any additional assistance, but they cannot tell you exactly which claim month to process for.

Lisa: Okay, so it's just better for you guys for us to just guesstimate, and then if it is correct, obviously you'll pay it, and if it's not correct, then you'll just deny it, then.

Nicole Black: Yes, ma'am.

Lisa: Okay. Thank you.

Nicole Black: You're welcome.

Kimberly Cutler: Hi, Nicole. I would just like to add to that question. This is Kimberly. We don't necessarily want you to guesstimate about the claim month. Make sure you're using the Payments at a Glance. Make sure you're using the Payments Already Made to You in the Portal. That way, you can kind of track where you are. We don't want you just throwing stuff against the wall and seeing what sticks. So even though, like Nicole said, you cannot call the help desk and they're going to tell you that for your Phase 1 Milestone 2, you would need to use this claim month, but make sure you're using the available resources that are in the Portal. You can look to see what your last payment was, or your payments were, what those months were, and then you can use that as a guide to know that along with the Payments at a Glance, you'll be able to use that to know what your next payment is, right? And then look at the Portal to see what your claim months were and use that information. We don't want you just wasting your time sending stuff just to get denied and things like that. So, I would just suggest you use your resources.

Lisa: Okay, thank you, Kimberly. I was just thinking, there's one in particular [situation] that we've been dealing with because the consumer goes in and out of SGA quite a bit. And so, it's hard to tell month to month to where to start with him. But we'll try some other things and then go from there.

Kimberly Cutler: Okay

Lisa: Thank you.

Kimberly Cutler: You're welcome.

Katherine Jett: Thank you, Lisa. We'll go back to Rebecca.

Rebecca Yohannes: Yes. Our next question comes from Anthony. Your audio and video are active. Please click your microphone to unmute and activate your video if you'd like and ask your question.

Katherine Jett: Anthony?

Anthony: Good afternoon, all. You know, going through the Ticket to Work Portal, I noticed that one of my Ticketholders was not there anymore. And I was able to find her based on previous payments, and the Ticket had been unassigned. The unassignment date showed that it was July 2023. She had three Milestone Outcome payments available prior to that unassignment, but when I noticed ─ this is the second time this happened ─ a Ticket will be terminated, and when I'm going to look for it, but my Ticketholder is not there. Why does that occur without any warning that you've had a Ticket terminated?

Nicole Black: Hi, Anthony. Thank you for your question. And I'm going to ask for Kim to sign back on or come off mute and answer this question for you.

Kimberley Cutler: All right. I'm going to do like Nicole does, just to make sure I understand. So, the Ticket was unassigned. Well, you went looking for your Ticketholder. You couldn't find the Ticketholder, but you found your Ticketholder in the unassignment list. Ticket was unassigned July 2023. Your concern is ─ or your question is, When a Ticket is unassigned or terminated, why are the providers not notified?

Anthony: I thought I'd mistakenly terminated her because I've been doing some outreach for the Ticketholders where there are no payments, they're not responding back, and I know we were going to do this this pop-up proof of relationship thing, right? And that's when I noticed she was not one of the ones I unassigned. It was terminated.

Kimberley Cutler: Okay. So, the Ticket was terminated. So, I'll try to answer this, but I may defer to Katie. So, my understanding, and this may have changed, is that if ─ I'm not sure if when a Ticket is terminated, that SSA sends out a notification of termination to ENs. I'm sorry, I can't speak to that. Katie, can anyone at SSA confirm, you know, once a Ticket is terminated, is there any type of information that goes out to the EN alerting them of the termination?

Katie Striebinger: Hi, this is Katie. No, we don't send a notice to ENs when a Ticketholder is terminated. Like you're seeing here in the Portal, it'll show up in your "Previously Assigned to Me" list, and there is a little checkbox on that screen that if you check ─ include terminated Tickets, you will see them show up there. You know, Tickets terminate ─ Tickets unassign for various reasons and sometimes the unassignment is a termination. So, without knowing the specific case, you know, I can't speak to what happened in that particular case; if the Ticketholder unassigned it or if something happened in the system and they no longer have a Ticket. Honestly, we do encourage you to use the Ticket Portal as a tool that that you can in real time check your client list. You can at a glance see how many Tickets you currently have assigned and see how many were previously assigned to keep an eye on your clients and their status. But we do not send any notices specifically to ENs.

Kimberly Cutler: Okay. Thank you, Katie.

Katherine Jett: Thank you, Katie. Thank you, Anthony. And Rebecca, I see we have more individuals with questions. Can you identify the next one?

Rebecca Yohannes: Yes, we do. Our next question comes from Sonya. Your audio and video are active. Please click your video ─ your microphone to unmute and activate video, if you'd like.

Sonya: Hello, ladies. How are you doing?

Nicole Black: Well, how are you?

Sonya: I'm frustrated. I love the EN Payments Quarterly sessions because this is the most frustrating part for me as the EN is that I'm submitting ─ my participants are working, my customers are working. I get their paystubs; I enter them in the Portal. And nine times out of 10, for some reason, it has to be something I'm doing that they're denied. And I know you have to look at the various codes to understand why it's being denied. but if no one's ever explained these codes, you don't know. No one's ever explained the payment process to me. They just say, submit the pay stubs. How is that supposed to work for one?

Nicole Black: Thanks, Sonya. Thank you for your comment. So, I have a couple of things that I can share to hopefully help. The first thing is there are some resources on the Your Ticket to Work site that break out and explain what the denial codes are. If anyone is able to put that link in the chat so that Sonya can grab that and be able to identify where to see the denial codes and where they are on the Your Ticket to Work site, that would be really appreciated. Secondly, there is a training coming up. Is that next week? Is next week the 14th already?

Sonya: Yes. Yes, it's February the 14th. I'm ready for it. I'm already on it.

Nicole Black: Okay. The year is already flying by. So that would be a great place to start. We're going to go back to basics and deliver the nuts and bolts on processing payments, because it is something that is a step-by-step process, and you need to actually be doing it on a regular basis to kind of get the gist of it. So, I would definitely say participate in that, and there's going to be a part two to that, so just make sure that you're available for those. And then anytime you have a question, reach out to the Payments Help Desk, and we will all do our very best to try to help you out.

Sonya: Thank you, and I have another question. Is there someone in our local cities that we can actually go to for Social Security in person to sit to go through the process, or is it just strictly the resource ─ the resource at a glance?

Nicole Black: Unfortunately there isn't anyone locally that you can reach out to. I would just recommend any roadblocks that you hit, reach out to the Payments Help Desk so that they can try to point you in the right direction on how to, you know, investigate what the roadblock is and try to help you to better understand the processes to request your payment so that you do not have the denials and things getting kicked back to you.

Sonya: Okay. I have another question. Is this, okay? I'm sorry. I'm trying to get it all in.

Katie Striebinger: This is Katie, I have a really quick [comment] with a question before we go over that one. So, were you given any kind of initial payments training in, like, a learning module, or have you taken any online courses we have?

Sonya: No, because the EN, TTW is not my only responsibility for the company that I work with for. It's one of my other duties. I have so many other things; it's just another layer of my job because the person who was doing the Ticket to Work left. That person might have gone through the training and was prepared. She had to have been, because the company was getting reimbursed on a regular basis for the participants that were going to work. My main duty at the time was placing them. I was suitable. I went through suitability, but my job was getting the holder the job. She was ─ her responsibility was entering all these other factors into your database system. No one ever trained me on that.

Katie Striebinger: Yeah, I think we can try to point you to the best training resources we have because I definitely think it's not something someone can explain to you over the phone quickly. We have an actual training module you can kind of walk through that explains it. Kim or Nicole could you talk about it more. But I think that's one of the big things we lean on is that, as you come in, we have all this initial training, and it's just maybe you missed all of that training. I think that's why you're probably struggling as you are right now. Kim or Nicole, is there any ─ do you have a link to the modules or anything we could put in the chat?

Nicole Black: Did someone send the link?

Katherine Jett: Yes, the link for the EN Essentials Employment Network Payments Refresher for February the 14th.

Nicole Black: Okay. The link has been placed in the chat.

Sonya: I have it.

Nicole Black: So, yes. And then Sonya, I'll also make sure that you get the information to access the modules on the Your Ticket to Work website. That can give you a high-level overview, and if you would have the opportunity to review those before the training next week, I think things will kind of come together better for you and make a little bit more sense.

Sonya: I have one last question because I know other people have a question. Should someone in your agency be responsible for this financial aspect of this? Like, we have a finance person who is suitable. Should that person be doing that? Should I be doing the EN, the quarterly meetings, placing the person, the TPA? I'm doing, like, everything by myself. But should this be delegated to multiple people?

Kimberly Cutler: This is Kimberly. Unfortunately, of course, we can't tell you how to do the dynamics of your company. There's a lot that's involved with payments. And of course, we want you guys to be compensated for the services that you provide to your Ticketholders. So, again, we can't necessarily give you a layout and only suggest that you do have a point of contact that you should use to be able to get that training. Like you said, the person before received the training, but you did not. So, I think you would have to have someone that can just really make sure that they have the time in addition to whatever else they're doing to get that training to use the resources that they need. Because again, you don't want to keep submitting payments incorrectly because that's already causing work, right? So, if you guys could take it back to the table and have someone that can really focus on this particular task, making sure that they know the training resources available, sit in on the calls, the quarterly calls, the essential training that's coming up, those different resources, so they can be better prepared and ready when they submit for the payment request. A you said, you have a lot of questions, but please reach out to the help desk if you have any further questions and we will definitely make sure that we're following up with you.

Sonya: Thanks so much, ladies. I have more questions, but I'm going to hold off.

Kimberly Cutler: Yep, just reach out to the help desk. Thank you so much.

Katherine Jett: Thank you, Nicole and Kim and Katie and Rebecca for answering individual questions.

Rebecca Yohannes: Yes, our next question comes from Casey. Your audio and video are active. Please click your microphone to unmute and activate your video if you like and ask your question.

Casey: Hi, ladies. How is everyone?

Nicole Black: Hi, Casey. Doing well, thank you.

Casey: Good. My question, okay, so the last I would say three or four of our EN Payments calls, the number one reason for denials was Code 2, receiving federal cash benefits. That's kind of a tough one for us because, as you know, the Portal is not gospel. Is there any type of plan in place to kind of maybe get that a little more updated in a timely manner so we're not retroactively unassigning a Ticket because they weren't eligible, or submitting all these payment requests and they're being denied when the Portal shows that they're actually eligible for those payments? So, is there any type of process to maybe try to get that Portal information as accurate as possible? Because that is, unfortunately, where we have to get our payment information from. So, the more accurate it could be would definitely help our organization.

Nicole Black: Thank you for your question, Casey. I'm going to turn that one over to Katie.

Katie Striebinger: So, I do want to clarify. The Portal does not show you anyone's status with Social Security, whether they are receiving federal cash benefits or not. That information is not available in the Portal. The only thing the Portal will indicate is if you go to request a payment, it'll tell you if there is an indication of enough earnings to submit the request. But having the earnings there does not mean that person is the same that will make them do an Outcome payment. That information is not in the Portal.

Casey: And I'm just kind of curious. That's obviously probably more than likely creating an overpayment for our beneficiaries if we have paystubs over SGA and they are receiving federal cash benefits at the same time. So, that's kind of just something I wanted to bring up to see if there was anything in the plan to maybe get that a little updated better.

Katie Striebinger: I think I'm missing what you are trying to ask.

Casey: So, when we request our Phase 2 or Outcome payments and they're denied because of code 27 or 2, we have SGA paystubs to send with that request. But we're getting denied because they're receiving federal cash benefits. So, if they're receiving federal cash benefits and they're working at the same time. That's typically going to cause an overpayment for the beneficiary.

Katie Striebinger: So, the reason you're listing 27, right, that's suspended or terminated but not due to work. So that's not the same.

Casey: Code 2, right.

Katie Striebinger: That's not the same as 02.

Casey: Right. I meant to say Code 2. I apologize.

Katie Striebinger: So, right, so, you know, like I said, I'm just, like –

Casey: It's okay if you can't answer.

Katie Striebinger: I don't know how you requesting a payment based on their being SGA would update an individual's record. If anybody else wants to weigh in, but the process of, you know, the disability determination process, and that entire aspect of an individual's record with Social Security is definitely not something we add to Ticket to Work Program, right? We aren't updating those records, and we aren't updating that information.

Casey: Okay, well, thank you. I appreciate it.

Katherine Jett: Thank you, Katie. Thank you, Casey. And Rebecca, our next question?

Rebecca Yohannes: Yes, our next question comes from Mary Lynn. Your audio and video are active. Please click your microphone to unmute and activate your video if you'd like and ask your question.

Mary Lynn: Well, good afternoon, everyone. Actually, this is good timing because I'm following the question that was just brought up. So, I believe the difficulty that some of us experience with those codes when ─ if the EN has someone who's certified with the Work Incentives benefits planning, we kind of have an understanding that we have the person over SGA we're following when they should be going in or out of cash pay. It just seems like it's all timing. Perhaps the local SSA office may not have the individual in or out of cash pay at a time that maybe we think it should be and therefore the Ticket Portal doesn't have an updated date that coincides with when we think it should be allowed to be paid. So, I just wanted to comment that I think that's the trouble or the difficulty that causes that inability for the EN to get paid.

But that isn't ─ the real reason why I wanted to put my hand up is I had a question somewhat related to all of this and that is, you have an individual on SSDI. This is for an example because that's easier than SSI, and they have been in informed that maybe five, six, eight months ago they really should have been out of cash pay status. But the Ticket Portal, when you go into the screen with "show assignments" and then below it says in cash pay, out of cash pay. What I've noticed, even today, there was a date changed that said ─ that went from in cash pay to out of cash pay, but the date was January of 2024. Should we assume that even though it might have been earlier than January of 2024, do we as the EN assume that that's really the date, it's not any date earlier than that according to the Ticket Portal? Because we only think it should be, like, July of 2023, but it says January of 2024. Or does that January 2024 mean that's just when it got updated?

Nicole Black: Hi, Mary Lynn. Thank you for your question. I will ask Katie to jump in and answer this question as well.

Katie Striebinger: This is Katie. Can you speak to the resource you were looking at again for that information?

Mary Lynn: Yeah, it's the screen when you go into the beneficiary's record that's called assignments. It's where you can show history of assignments and then down below it, it has if they're in or out of cash pay. They'll have a month and then they'll have a yes or no on the right-hand column.

Katie Striebinger: Okay, and so you're asking for an interpretation of the chart?

Mary Lynn: So, I'm kind of asking if the chart says January of 2024, they're not in cash pay anymore. Does that literally mean that got changed in January of 2024? Or does it just mean it got updated in January of 2024, but the effective date might have been earlier.

Katie Striebinger: So, the table is the effective date. You are correct. It is a history. It is a history table.

Mary Lynn: So, if we have ─ if there's conflicting dates, should we bring that to someone's attention? Like, if the local SSA office informed the beneficiary it was October and we've got a lot of proof that that's been a different date compared to the date that's in the Ticket Portal, who should we bring that attention to?

Katie Striebinger: So, the value in the Ticket Portal is just there for reference. When you actually submit for payment, and then that payment goes to an individual to review the case, whatever it actually says on our records at that time is what we're going to use. You could only use that table as a reference. That does not guarantee that, you are going to get paid for that month for whatever pay period ─ So, it's just anything in the Portal is just a reference, right? Even if the Portal tells you "earnings already proven, go ahead, you don't need to submit proof", there is a chance that you still might. The Portal is just there. We have this helpful information there to lead you towards what is potential, but you really can't use any information in the Portal as a guaranteed payment. My favorite with the situation of, you know, you are trying to get Outcomes and you don't know if they're in current pay or not. I would say that is what I do find as the beauty behind ePay is that if there is a payable status, we will make those Outcome payments on ePay, right? We will check. And if they are not in current pay and have made SGA, you will get that Outcome payment via ePay. But you can also try via the Ticket Portal, and like I said, it'll get adjudicated, and the status at the time is the payment you get. But I will just say there's no hard and fast rule that if you submit it based on what you see in a chart that it's a guaranteed payment.

Mary Lynn: Okay, yeah. That's helpful.

Katie Striebinger: Yeah. It's what our system shows you. The Portal is in real time, but also your payment is being adjudicated in real time by a real person with what they see in front of them. So, information can change, and we have to pay based on what we see when we actually get to your payment. I think to loop back around to the first question about why the help desk can't tell me what month. We want to try our best to guide you, get you paid and have you see what's available. But at the end of the day, I can just try. But if you have specific questions about specific Ticketholders, please do reach out to the help desk and we can try to help you.

Mary Lynn: Oh, definitely. I do.

Katherine Jett: Thank you, Mary Lynn.

Mary Lynn: Okay. Bye-bye.

Katherine Jett: Thanks, Mary Lynn. Again, we'd like to remind everyone that if any questions aren't answered today, you just reach out to the ENPaymentshelpdesk@yourtickettowork.ssa.gov. And Rebecca, I believe we have another individual with a question.

Rebecca Yohannes: Yes. Our next question comes from Kathy. Your audio and video are active. Please click the microphone to unmute and activate your video if you like and ask your question.

Kathy: Hi. Can you hear me, okay?

Nicole Black: Yes, ma'am. Hi, Kathy.

Kathy: This is not a billing question, but I'm hoping you can answer it. I think it's pretty easy. Got a couple of Ticketholders who need to be discharged because in one case, they've decided to not work toward going off benefits and another is not making timely progress. I've looked for the process for unassigning a Ticket, but I'm not finding it. Can you direct me on where I would go for just the process for unassigning a Ticket for those reasons?

Nicole Black: Thank you for your question.

Kathy: Is it something other than just simply unassigning the Ticket?

Nicole Black: Thank you for your question, Kathy. I would recommend you can reach out to EN Service and ask them the question, and they can give you the appropriate steps to take care of the Ticket unassignment.

Kathy: Okay. Thank you.

Katherine Jett: Thank you, Kathy. And Rebecca?

Rebecca Yohannes: Yes, our next question comes from Jennifer. Your audio and video are active. Click the microphone to unmute and activate your video if you like and ask your question.

Jennifer: Great. Can you hear me?

Nicole Black: I can.

Jennifer: Okay, great. I have a little bit of a complicated question, I guess. I just want to make sure I'm understanding the process correctly. So, I'm working with an individual who we thought when we assigned him would be eligible for Phase 1 Milestones 2 through 4. He is working at Trial Work Level. However, he gets SSI, and we didn't realize that he has ISM applied to his payment. And so what happened is his SSI payment stopped, even though he's not working over SGA. And because of that, he was then moved into the Outcome payments phase, and we haven't been able to bill for any Phase 1 payments. So, I guess my question is whether we'll be able to get anything back for this Ticketholder. I think his eventual goal, he said, is to eventually work full time, but we don't know how long that process will be. It's his first job, so he wanted to start out part time to get used to it. So, my understanding right now is that we're in a situation where unless he decides that he does want to work SGA and gets up to Outcome 12, then we would not be able to get any payments for Phase 1. Is that accurate?

Nicole Black: Let me make sure I heard you correctly. So, you have someone, you were not able to get your Phase I payments because within a short period of time, you were eligible for Outcome payments just based on their income. Is that correct?

Jennifer: Correct, because he has ISM applied. So, even though he's only working at Trial Work Level, his SSI payments stopped because of the additional deduction for ISM.

Nicole Black: Yeah, I'm not familiar with ISM. Kim, is this anything that has any relevance to the payment?

Jennifer: It's like the deduction for food and shelter. So, his SSI base rate is lower, right? He's only getting $628 per month, and so his earnings, even though they're over Trial Work, stopped his SSI payment.

Nicole Black: Okay. So, Kim, step in if I answer this incorrectly. So basically, yes, what your initial thought was once you reach Outcome Payment number 12. Then if and when you reach it, at that point, any Phase 1 or Phase 2 payments that were not paid to you would be picked up at reconciliation.

Jennifer: Right. And if he decides ultimately that he doesn't want to work full time and doesn't want to do SGA, then we just won't be eligible for any payments on his record. Is that correct?

Nicole Black: Correct, because we won't be able to go back and address the Phase 1s and
the Phase 2s until you hit Outcome number 12.

Jennifer: Okay, so there's no way to reconcile that even though he is working at a Trial Work Level, and we should ─ I guess I feel like we should really be eligible for those Milestone payments. It just seems like there's a technical loophole where we can't now access them because his SSI payment has stopped.

Nicole Black: Handing it over to Kim. She came off. She came on camera and came off mute.

Kimberly Cutler: I think I hit that button by mistake. I was just playing it. So, you're right. Your understanding is correct. So, once the payment ─ once the Ticketholder enters the Outcome period, they are no longer eligible to receive Phase 1s or Phase 2s. And you're right. So, if they decide not to work, then, yeah, you would not be able to get any payments. And the question you were having about the ISN or ISM, like Nicole said, we're not familiar with that because what we do is we process based on real time what's in the Portal. Now, if you're thinking that something should be corrected or if there was a mistake, then I would encourage you to have the Ticketholder contact their local field office Unfortunately, we're only operating by what we see in the Portal at the time. So, if it shows that the Ticketholder went into suspense due to work or earnings, and there were those phase, I think you said Phase 1 Milestones 2 through 4 that you were eligible for but because they entered the Outcome period, you could not get right now, and your concern is that they may not even want to work to an SGA level and you're not even going to get to Outcome 12. If you feel that there's something on the back end, like there was something wrong with the way that his earnings were entered or accounted for, the only thing I can encourage you to is have the Ticketholder contact the local field office. Our hands are tied because we can only process based on what we see.

Jennifer: Understood. I think it would be a helpful thing to look at in terms of , we don't control what living arrangements people have. So, I think if you were just looking at his earnings, he should be eligible for Phase 1. But the fact that he has that deduction for food and shelter means that he gets put into these Outcome payments even though his actual wages are way lower than most people in Outcome payments. I just think it's an area that maybe we need to look at because it means that a lot of vendors may be missing out on payments for those individuals. And we don't want to be encouraging people to change their living arrangements if that's the way that they have things set up and the way they want things to set up. I'm just saying, in the system, it discourages basically assigning those people.

Kimberly Cutler: Right, and I think that would be a conversation that, again, the Ticketholder can, with your guidance, because you articulated it fine ─ maybe the Ticketholder can speak to the local field office and go from there. Because again, until that's worked out on the back end, at this point we can't do anything. We can't control that. We don't update benefit status; we don't change it. That's out of our hands. So, yeah, definitely, that's a conversation that should be held with the field office if there can be any changes.

Jennifer: I appreciate that. Yeah, I don't think it's an issue that nothing was processed correctly. I think it's an issue with how it's set up. But I appreciate you reviewing it.

Katherine Jett: Thank you, Jennifer. Rebecca, I see we have more hands raised.

Rebecca Yohannes: We do. Our next question comes from Paul. Your audio and video are active. Click the microphone to unmute. Activate your video if you like and ask your question.

Paul: Hi, good afternoon. Paul with America Works. I just have two questions. So, one is regarding the Portal. So established earnings, if we go to request a claim, obviously it says established earnings if it is established. A problem I've had just a little bit is sometimes I request, and it will be denied for basically, like, proof of earnings. So, whenever I reach out to the Payment Help Desk, they said that even though it has established earnings, they can't see them for some reason. It's not all the case, it's just a small case, I would say, a handful of them. But could you explain a little bit further?

Nicole Black: All right, thank you, Paul. Katie, can you speak to what it is that he's seeing in the Portal?

Katie Striebinger: Can you repeat that one more time please?

Paul: Sure. So, I go to enter a claim and I see established earnings in the Portal. So, nine times out of 10, I can submit it, following procedures and it gets approved or whatever, it gets processed. But on the rare instance, you know, a handful of times, it will get denied, and it will be because earnings aren't established, or earnings aren't on file. So that's why they denied it. I've reached out one or two times to ask about that because obviously established earnings means that they are on file. And they said that for whatever reason, like, they weren't able to see those established earnings. So, I just didn't know if that was, you know, a special case that I should be aware of.

Katie Striebinger: So, like I said, previously, the Portal does its best to give an indication of earnings, you know, though it looks through some logic to see if there are available earnings. But it is not the same as, like I said, when you get an individual who gets the actual case that you submitted, and they sit there with all the earnings sources and make a determination. The Portal is doing its best to say, hey, you don't need to send us some evidence because we already have some on hand, to save you sending paperwork to us that we potentially already have. You know, if you find that your rate of denial is, you know, the Portal tells you that there's something there and you rely on it and it comes back and it's denied, then, you know, it may behoove you to just start sending the evidence with your claims to just back it up so that it's there and you don't have to resubmit it again. You know, it is just a tool. We were hoping ─ we built that in there with the hope that it would cut down on, like I said, you sending earnings that we already have. But it is definitely different than the Portal telling you that there are earnings there that might be applicable and when the individual gets your case and looks at everything that we have in our system.

Paul: Okay, sounds good. Yeah, we've been basically waiting on the denial and then entering with the earnings on file if we have to. So, just wanted to check on that. The last question I have is just on a denial reason on sort of a way to combat it. So, you talked about it actually earlier on this call, suspended but not due to work or earnings. So, I guess a little bit about our EN is that my team does the billing for Ticket to Work, but we don't sit in front of the client. We have representatives that do that, so we reach out to the representatives, they reach out to the client. Is there something that we have to have the Ticketholder do regarding that denial reason, or what's the, you know, how to correct that?

Nicole Black: Thank you, Paul. I want to make sure I understood that correctly. So, you have the benefits are in suspense, but it's not due to worker earning?

Paul: Yes.

Nicole Black: Okay. So, in those situations, that is when the Ticketholder would need to reach out to the field office and rectify whatever that situation is to have their benefit situation updated, or it may be something that's beyond their control, and they can communicate that reason to you so that you'll know what's going on.

Paul: Okay. That's the guidance I've been giving. I just wanted to make sure that was still good. All right, that's all I need. Thanks.

Nicole Black: All right, thank you.

Katherine Jett: Thank you, Paul. And we have time for one more question. So, Rebecca?

Rebecca Yohannes: Yes, our last question comes from Michael. Your audio and video are active. Click the microphones on mute, activate your video if you like, and ask your question.

Michael: Thank you. Good morning, slash afternoon, everyone. So, just really quick for Casey, and Mary Lynn, with regard to your question earlier. If you know one of your Ticketholders is earning SGA and they're still receiving benefits after the Trial Work Period, you can complete an SSA work activity report or have a local WIPA complete that form. And that will require the Social Security to do a formal determination on the wages. And that may unclog and have the record updated for everyone so you can start getting reimbursements on the other end. So that's what we've done. We've been very successful. So, I thought I would share that.

Katherine Jett: Thank you, Mike. I'm wanting to stop you. Do you have a question, sir?

Michael: I do, I do. Okay. So, we are up for a program review. We were up two months ago. And so, who can I reach out to to get this review initiated?

Nicole Black: Thank you for your question, sir. With that, I would recommend sending an email to EN service team, and they will be able to point you in the right direction and give you the guidance that you request.

Michael: Awesome, thank you.

Katherine Jett: Thank you very much, Michael. You have a great day. All right. Thank you, Nicole.

Nicole Black: Thanks, Katherine.

Katherine Jett: You're very welcome. Thank you, all of our participants, today. So, on behalf of the SSA and the Ticket Program Manager, thank you. A special thank you to Nicole, our presenter, for the very informative updates. I'd also like to thank everyone for attending today's call. Just as a reminder, the recap, the PowerPoint, the transcript, and the audio will be available in two weeks on the Your Ticket to Work website, and we'll put that address and URL in the chat. But you can go to the Training and Events Archives, National Calls, and just look for the Quarterly All EN Call for February 6th. Again, thank you everyone, and the call is now completed.