**Opening comments**

Michelle Laisure, Operations Support Manager (OSM), welcomed attendees and turned the call over to Desiree Fitzgerald, Office of Research Demonstration and Employment Support (ORDES).

**Payments Data**

Desiree Fitzgerald stated she was looking forward to 2014 and provided payments data:

* For FY ’13 there were 7,942 Ticket payments made to VRs
* These payments equated to $5,306,964 and represents a 36% increase from FY ‘12
* She also thanked OSM for their supporting role

**Questions and Answers from Call**

***Q:*** *What is the appeals process for EXR cases?*

**A:** Please send an email to SSA

***Q:*** *Can we still submit payment forms or is it ePay only?*

**A:** Yes, you can still submit those forms.

***Q:*** *We (Oregon VR) currently have a shared payment agreement in place with our mental health agencies.  That means that with dual service clients (both VR & Mental Health) working with both of us that are on SSI/SSDI, we assign their Tickets under the Ticket to Work program.  We act as an EN for this this particular population only.*

*When the new VR EN agreement requirements came out in Sept. 2013, we submitted our model to have the Mental Health agencies take on the quarterly tracking requirement under the agreement.   After meeting with these agencies about the new requirement, it was decided that we would review all the current Ticket assignments to see if each agency is will and able to track the clients that were assigned for them.  After this review was completed, we started un-assigning the Tickets that were no longer able to be tracked by the mental health agency.  Most of the Tickets that were un-assigned were due to the fact that the client no longer qualified for the Mental Health Supported Employment program.  In the case of three of these individuals, they were still in plan and working with us (State VR agency).  In those cases, we requested that the Ticket be un-assigned under the TTW program and be put back into “in-use with VR” status.  The main reason that we need this to happen is because the clients are receiving letters from TTW telling them that they are no longer working with us and now they are subject to medical reviews.  This is causing the these particular clients to panic and it is also very confusing to them since they are still working with us.*

*Changing from Ticket assignment to In-use status is not addressed in the 90-day change rule.  Changing from Ticket assignment to In-use status is not going to benefit the State VR agency in any way since the Cost Reimbursement payment requirements are more difficult to achieve then TTW payment levels.  This particular disability population is even less likely to reach the levels needed for Cost Reimbursement.   So far I have three individuals in this particular situation.  We need to do this change for the benefit of the beneficiary and MAXIMUS needs SSA’s approval to make the change.  Thank you.*

***Q:*** *Would you please address what will happen if we do not get ourselves up to date with payment requests by the time ePay takes over?*

*We will certainly start to make payment requests, but since we have not done this since September when I felt that eProcess had started, this will be a long process. I am hoping that you will tell me that you will pick up payments if we miss them or don't get to them.*

**A:** We will pay all outstanding claims when we implement ePay.

***Q:*** *I assume that "first quarter of 2014" means calendar year 2014 and not federal fiscal year 2014, correct?
I just want to verify that even if we don't get our paper payment request in that you will be able to go back and pick up or start payment on an assigned ticket no matter what level of reimbursement they are on, Phase 1, Phase 2, or outcome.*

**A:** We apologize for the confusion over the submission of VREN Payment Requests and will attempt to clarify any issues you've identified. Since we did not implement the ePay portion of the VREN agreement in September (date agreements were due), most VRENs continued to submit their quarterly payment requests. We now understand that Illinois and possibly other VRENs ceased this process in anticipation of VREN ePay.

To respond to your first question of which 1st quarter we addressed in our prior email; calendar or fiscal year, the answer is calendar year (Jan - Mar)

Once we implement the ePay process (April 2014) all outstanding claims will be paid. Our EN Payments Staff checks all Social Security records and identifies all claims that can be paid whether or not an EN submits a payment request. This staff looks at a variety of earnings sources that display earnings by month, quarter and year (reported by IRS).  Since it has been several months since submitted payment requests, you will receive payments for all claims that meet the critieria for a Ticket to Work payment.

Most VRs submit their PRs quarterly and would begin submitting claims for the 1st calendar quarter of 2014 (Jan - Mar) in April (same time we implement our ePay process) or later. We've asked VRENs to stop submitting payment requests so that our EN Payments Staff will be able to address claims from the VREN ePay process and not have to address multiple PRs covering the same claims (duplicates). Our Payments Staff follow a FIFO (first in first out) inventory method and all PRs are addressed (including duplicates).Processing duplicate PRs will take time away from processing the VREN ePay claims.