**All State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Call**

**3 – 4 p.m. EDT**

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Operator: Ladies and gentlemen thank you for standing by. Welcome to the National VR Conference call. During the presentation all participants will be in a listen only mode. Afterwards we'll conduct a question and answer session. At that time if you have a question please press the star followed by the number one on your telephone keypad.

If you need to reach an operator at any time, please press star zero. As a reminder, this conference call is being recorded Tuesday March 8th, 2016. I would now like to turn the conference over to Regina Bowden, director for the office of ticket operation and provider support. Please go ahead.

Regina Bowden: Thank you. Hello everyone and welcome again to our monthly VR calls for imbursement national teleconference call. We really appreciate you're participating today on this call and we have a full agenda with a lot of good information to share from updating you on our upcoming virtual job fair, share information about our reimbursement updates and also information about our ticket portal as well as the other topics that are listed on the agenda.

And as usual, after we cover the agenda topics we'll then open up the lines for your questions. But as always please remember if you have questions after today's call that you can always contact our VR helpdesk at vr.helpdesk@ssa.gov.

Before we jump into the agenda items, we have our deputy associate commissioner Rob Pfaff who has joined us today, so Rob may have a few words and I'll turn it over to Rob.

Rob Pfaff: Thanks Regina and good afternoon everyone. It's great to have you participate and we appreciate that you take the time out of your busy day to call in and participate in this call. We have a lot of good information to share with you as Regina indicates today. I wanted to greet you and say hello. And without further ado again thanks for all your work that you provide to – and service and support that you provide to our disabled beneficiaries, and without further ado I'll go ahead and turn it over to Danielle Armstrong.

Danielle Armstrong: Hello everybody, I'm Danielle Armstrong, the vocational rehabilitation team leader. Just really brief announcement, I wanted to thank you all first of all for all of the great topics that you sent in. Of course we aren't going to address them all today but we will address them on the next upcoming calls.

Some of the questions that came in we're preparing presentations for. You asked about 301, that's going to be upcoming and we just want you to know we appreciate you sending in the topics. We are keeping track of all of them, they will be addressed on the calls going forward and we just appreciate your participation.

I'm going to turn it over now to (Laura York) to talk about the upcoming virtual job fair.

(Laura York): Hi everyone, this is (Laura York). I just wanted to – you may have all seen the web deliveries, I hope that you have but I just wanted to let you all know that we're having our second ticket to work virtual job fair on March 16th and at this point we have 30 employers scheduled to attend. All of these employers are federal contractors who are interested particularly in hiring individuals with disabilities and I will now go through the list of employers. It is rather long so hopefully you will be interested.

Before I go through the list let me just quickly say that this is a targeted – it's a regional job fair and we are not looking nationwide this time. We are looking at D.C., Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Puerto Rico. And again, we are looking for beneficiaries who are interested in working in those areas, also for beneficiaries who are willing to move should they be offered a job. Anyone in the country can attend as long as they're willing to move to one of those locations.

Again we have 30 employers scheduled to attend and those I'll now go through a list of employers. (Amerimax), Citi Bank, (Infirm), (VA Systems), Turner Construction, DB Schenker, (Maxmouth), Convent, Hyatt Hotels & Resorts, (Resion), (Ita Merill Associates and Personnel), (Services and Benefits), (Serious XM Radio), (Covenant Energy Systems), Princeton University, Pepco Holdings, Community College of Philadelphia, (West Coat International), (GC Services), (Central Corporation), (Pfizer), (Equova Water), Wells Fargo, Comcast, (McMester Car), Dr Pepper Snapple Group, (Transworld Systems Incorporated), (American University), Marriott, First Community Bank and (ICI Services Corporation).

Again this is a targeted event. We are also just wanted to let you know that if you have beneficiaries who are work ready and are able to accept a job should it be offered and they have their ticket assigned to you, again very important that they have their ticket assigned at the time of the event. It's also very important that they be registered for the event and have the consent forms signed.

The process is that they will register and sign the consent form and send that consent form to you as their provider to have that on file in your office. If they are not registered by the time that registration closes they will not be able to participate in the event. We really are interested in having you help your beneficiary participate in the event not only to register but also to help them interact with recruiters and to get the most out of the event. So we really are looking forward to you and your work ready beneficiaries participating again not only to help them – your participation is really – you're sought not only to help them register but to help them walk through the event and make the most of it and their interactions with beneficiaries.

If you have any questions, please check out the yourtickettowork.com Web site. There are several delivery messages that have gone out about the job fair so please we encourage you and your beneficiaries to participate. And again that's on March 16th from one to five pm eastern time. Thanks everyone.

And now I will pass it over – sorry – to (Raquel).

(Raquel Donaldson): Good afternoon everyone, this is (Raquel Donaldson). Just a few quick reminders and updates from course reimbursement. The current month of earnings is still January, we haven't received any updated information since then for earnings. (PVRs), we're asking that you do not fax documentation in regards to your (PVR). That's a lot of paperwork that we receive through the fax and we want to make sure we receive all the receipts for the (PVR). So if you could mail the (PVR) back to us we'd greatly appreciate it.

Cost formulas you're more than welcome to fax over to me and I have been receiving them. I would just appreciate if you give me a heads up. Fax me, call me – I'm sorry not fax me. E-mail me or call me just to let me know that it's coming so I can look for. We share the fax machine so I just want to make sure that I receive your information so I can get it reviewed and approved and sent back over to you.

That's it for me. Now I want to turn it over to Ms. (Linda Castus).

(Linda Castus): Hi. I just want to let you know I'm very excited because we continue to host and hold the VR course reimbursement and ticket training. And we have been able to do so at your request and I'm really excited about that. For the past two days the (SC) seminar program director from – for rehab in Mississippi (Anne Noreen Roca) who is the employment initiative director from Utah has been here with us for the training.

So if any of you want to attend the training just give me a call. My number is 410-966-6866. Or you can e-mail me (linda.castus@ssa.gov). Thanks. I'd like to introduce (Shader Rofa). She will discuss VR codes.

(Shader Rofa): Good afternoon everyone, thank you for all the claims that you're sending in and working with us and all the helpdesks requests that you send and you're trying to work with us as we are trying to work with you so thank you for that. We have been reminding technicians to double check their claims but we've noticed quite a few incorrect rehab codes on that 199. So we're asking that you please either e-mail the helpdesk if you do not know your provider code or if you want to omit that information that's perfectly fine but those too we'll get that information and input it in the system correctly. But we are looking at the claims as Danielle said last time, reviewing them as we go as much as possible to make sure that we're paying the right VRs and getting all the right information to you.

Of course with automation hopefully all of that will be eliminated and it's coming very soon. Yay, for technology. So you shouldn't have any more problems with things like (VR) codes and such. With that being said, I'd like to pass it to (Desiree Fitzgerald) our deputy director.

(Desiree Fitzgerald): Hello everyone. I thought it was time to give you an update on Cuba. Last year this time when we pulled it down we told you that we would hopefully bring it back. And we will be bringing it back but we still have a ways to go before we could do so. So we'll continue to let you know how things progress but we had to get a new agreement with the office of child support enforcement.

When we get – when we start doing Cuba again we will be getting monthly data from them which hopefully will put us on you know evil I'm sorry, equal footing – for some reason the word didn't want to come out of my mouth – but you know with you all. Right now we continue to have you know the situation where you have data and your system that we don't have in ours but we're looking for a solution to that.

I should also mention that if there's anyone still out there using the (PPR) you should probably discontinue. We do not consider that a good data run. You would have to, you know, put some effort into making it work for you. But for the most case – agencies were submitting cases and we weren't able to pay on those cases based on the information in our system. So we would say it's best to discontinue the use of the (PPR).

The only other thing I wanted to mention is that when we get to the automation this summer all of your cost reimbursement case work will be in the portal and you'll be able to use the feature there that allows you to know whether or not we have (runnings) in our records. But I'm not going to say too much about that. (Katie) may be – might want to touch on that. If not today in the future we'll be giving you more information along those lines.

But I'll turn it over to (Katie Streibinger) to talk about the portal. (Katie).

(Katie Streibinger): Hi, thank you. Hi, good afternoon everyone. I did want to start with a question that came in when we were requesting information from the call. I know that right now when you check on the ticket assignability for a beneficiary in the portal you can get back one of two messages; either not in ticket program or not – no information available.

And I know it's a little confusing and you've been trying to figure out what the difference is. There is no difference. There was a creative programmer who decided there should be two different messages for the same thing, they mean the same exact thing. The beneficiary is not in the ticket program. We are working on updating the messaging and the portal so it'll be less confusing going forward but there is no difference. Those tickets – your message means the ticket is not assignable.

Another thing that comes up very often is when you check the ticket assignability of a beneficiary and you're checking a ticket that is already assigned or assigned to you but then you see the in use status that says it is not in use. If the ticket is showing that it's assigned in that assign box in the middle of the screen, that ticket is assigned. The in use wording means that the beneficiary is not in use most likely about 99 percent of the time because the beneficiary has failed (TPR).

We are working on getting the portal updated so that it's clear that the beneficiary's not in use because they failed (TPR). That is in the works. But I do want to reiterate that if you see assignment in that box in the middle and you see that it's assigned to you or assigned to someone else, that ticket is assigned. Do not look for that in use message to tell you whether or not a ticket is assigned.

The in use is actually referencing whether the ticket is in use and has protection from (CDRs). If the ticket is not in use the beneficiary does not have protection. And this again is another messaging we're trying to you know tweak things in the portal to make them clearer and I will continue to reiterate this on calls because it does come up very often and it's one of the most common questions I get, I see not in use but it's assigned.

And then I want to talk about the portal. As you may have heard, cost reimbursements will be added to the ticket portal this summer. This has been a long time coming and we are excited the new technology is almost here.

I am not going to speak on the specific functionality on this call but I will have more to report next month so please make sure you call in. We hope to have more information to give you and a sneak peak of some screens. I don't have that ready for this call. It's a little too soon to give you that but we – the new functionality is coming and we want to get you excited about it.

We had a technical meeting on Wednesday February 17th to discuss the requirement for submitting electronic cost reimbursement claims in the portal. In the future you'll be able to submit an XML file with all of your cost reimbursement claims that will then create cases for our payment staff to process in our in house system (i-top). If your technical staff was unable to attend this call or did not receive the instructions, please e-mail their helpdesk and we'll send you the information.

If you have any questions after the call we held on the number one7th that you did not get answered, please do e-mail the VR helpdesk and we will get back in touch with you. We are here to help you and get everything working. Once again the VR helpdesk is the place to reach out to for any portal questions and anything to do with the functionality coming on the new electronic cost reimbursement that we gave a little overview of last month. So I'm going to send it back to (Raquel) for questions.

(Raquel Donaldson): Thank you (Katie). Now we're going to go ahead operator, if you could open up the lines for any questions please.

Operator: OK. Ladies and gentlemen if you would like to register a question, please press the star followed by the number one on your telephone keypad. If your question has been answered and you would like to withdraw your registration, please press the pound key. One moment please for the first question.

And your first question comes from an unknown caller. Caller, your line is open.

(Raquel Donaldson): Unknown?

Operator: Caller, your line is open. Hello.

(Raquel Donaldson): OK, next question if we have anyone else.

Operator: OK. And the next question comes from another unknown caller. Caller, your line is open.

(Gina): Hello.

(Raquel Donaldson): Hello.

(Gina): Can you hear me?

(Raquel Donaldson): Loud and clear.

(Gina): OK, I didn't know if it was me or not. This is (Gina) calling from Wisconsin.

(Raquel Donaldson): Hi (Gina).

(Gina): I'm sure you have my name but it doesn't. I just have a quick question regarding you said with the portal you guys are talking about the files again. Oh (you) answered it. And so you are able to upload the cases individually and that would actually be the preferred method when doing the paperwork for claims when the electronic portal comes up?

(Raquel Donaldson): Yes. Once that's available that will be the preferred method that you do and use the upload for your claims. It's going to be the fastest and most efficient way to get them to us once that becomes available.

(Gina): You mean the upload or the individual file?

(Raquel Donaldson): You will have a choice. The upload is where you can do a file, where you can do multiple or you can do the individual. This is once that becomes available for your cases.

(Gina): OK. And are you going to teach people for that like a pilot?

(Raquel Donaldson): Yes we will. As we get closer to that we will contact different individuals to ask for participation in the pilot.

(Gina): OK, thank you.

(Raquel Donaldson): You're welcome.

Operator: And your next question comes from the line of (Tom Sharick).

(Tom Sharick): Yes. (Raquel) this is a question for you and just asking you to clarify when you said the current month of earnings that you have available is January 16. Now does – I assume what you mean by that is that the quarter ended December 31st, 2015 that quarter wages is what you now have uploaded. Is that correct?

(Desiree Fitzgerald): Yes, the current – when she says the current month of earnings that means the most recent month that we're showing earnings available on the record. We haven't gotten another file yet.

(Tom Sharick): OK. The reason I wanted to just clarify that is if you know the most recent quarter of earnings that you've received closed December 31st and you received it in January, I know as far as Maryland's wage history database being uploaded it is not complete – the earnings have not been completely uploaded by the time it appears that file was sent to Social Security. So it's really incomplete as far as we're concerned for that fourth quarter 2015.

(Katie): Hi this is (Katie), I just want to jump in. So the way we get data from (Oxi) is we get data from (Oxi) in a batch form on a quarterly basis. So when we get the data – the last file we got from (Oxi) was on January 15th. So we have a snapshot of what the data looks like in (Oxi's) database on January 15th. Does that help?

(Tom Sharick): Well it helps but what that says to me is that the quarter wages …

(Katie): So if the earnings were posted on the number one6th we don't have them and we're not going to get them until we get another file in April.

(Tom Sharick): Yes. And the point I'm making is that most of the wages for the fourth quarter of 2015 I know from Maryland they're not uploaded until sometime later in January and by the end of February. So what you're receiving for the fourth quarter of 2015 I know at least for Maryland is very incomplete data. For those two weeks of you know that first month after the close of the quarter we see hardly any wages for that previous quarter already available in our Maryland unemployment database.

(Katie): Would it be easier if we communicate on the calls the last time we received the data so you can from there backtrack of when you know that you would see it? Are we just not – you know …

(Tom Sharick): Now, here's my …

(Katie): We don't really know how – I assume the data you know we know that there's a delay with the data being populated on the file like you said.

(Tom Sharick): Now here's my suggestion, I know as far as Maryland is concerned our you know unemployment insurance wage history database is completely uploaded into their system by the end of the second month following the close of a quarter which means February 29th. It would make more sense that then they would send you a complete file for that previous quarter's wages rather than sending it to you on January 15th and it being incomplete.

(Desiree Fitzgerald): Well actually we are going to have them send our information every month in the future. That's part of what we're arranging to have happen. But right now we get the data knowing that it has a data lag and also knowing that the states continue to report information each month and that eventually you know all the reporting that's going to happen will have happened. But you know we're not in a position to change the timing of when we get it because we have an agreement that's you know that's already in the works. But we're going to be getting something every month that should help us out in this situation.

(Tom Sharick): Yes, that should be much more usable data because right now you know what you have obviously matching what we have and I understand that you may be not be able to make that change in the short run but I thank you.

(Raquel Donaldson): And I just want to give – I mean no matter what we do though, we are not going to get a daily update. We are never going to be able to in real time see what's in the database. You know if you were sitting in there looking at the earnings that you can see, we're never going to be able to see the same exact date because we're only going to get some kind of batch file either monthly in the future or right now quarterly. We're still getting a snapshot.

(Tom Sharick): Yes I understand that. That's why I'm making …

(Raquel Donaldson): So there'll be a little bit of a lag just you know.

(Tom Sharick): I understand that and you know that's why I made the suggestion of doing at the end of the second month following the close of a quarter. But I understand (Raquel) also what you're saying that you know that that's not possible to do it at least in the short run. We're looking forward to the monthly updating though. That should help greatly.

(Desiree Fitzgerald): All right. Thanks (Tom) for the call. Operator, do we have any more?

Operator: Yes. And your next question comes from the line of (Mike Hermanson).

(Mike Hermanson): Hi, yes this is (Mike Hermanson) in Montana and I just had what I think is a quick question. I've got a few beneficiaries here in Montana that for various reasons you know what they've asked me to do is to permanently remove their tickets from the system which of course as the VR agency I can't do that. But is there someone that they can contact or a contact that they make in Social Security so that their ticket is permanently gone? They just don't want to be part of the ticket system.

(Desiree Fitzgerald): You're saying you have a beneficiary their ticket is currently assigned or their ticket is unassigned, they just don't want to participate in the program. I'm just trying to understand.

(Mike Hermanson): OK. Right now I've got more than one and they aren't in use or they aren't assigned but they just don't want to have their – I mean they don't ever want to have a risk that could somehow be put in use or assigned and they want it taken out of the system. They just don't want to be part of the ticket to work system.

(Desiree Fitzgerald): They could call the beneficiary call center if they don't want to participate in the ticket program and don't their ticket to ever be in use or something. Is that right (Laura)?

(Laura York): They can – I just want to make sure. So their ticket is currently in use which is VR. Is that what you're saying (Mike)?

(Mike Hermanson): No, no. It's not in use. I've taken it out of in use. You know they're people that don't trust the system a lot and you know I tell them it's out of in use and we don't plan on putting it in use but they don't – they don't want to have it in the system at all. I mean.

(Desiree Fitzgerald): OK. I'm sorry we were having a sidebar here but it sounds like a situation where the (beni) doesn't want marketing if no – and contacts and the ticket won't be put in use. So we do have a mechanism to deal with that if they contact the call center and ask that they not receive marketing if they don't want to be contacted about participating. That's the only thing. But ticket does exist, it's an entitlement but no one will contact them about it if they contact the call center and say that they would like to have that be the case.

(Mike Hermanson): So that might help. What would be the number for that?

(Laura York): That number is 1-868-968-7842. I'm sorry it's 866-968-7842.

(Mike Hermanson): OK, thank you.

(Desiree Fitzgerald): You're welcome.

Operator: OK, and there are no further audio questions at this time. I will now turn the call back over to you.

Regina Bowden: Thank you all. I'm going to turn the call over to (Robin). He's going to tell you about when our next scheduled VR call is.

(Robin): Thanks everybody. The next all VR call will be April 12th. We ask that if you can please call in and participate. We will send you notification regarding the time and the number and so forth and the agenda.

Just a point of clarification before we drop off in regards – and I'm asking (Laura) the states involved. I don't know if we mentioned New York when you …

(Laura York): Yes let me …

(Robin): Could you, could you?

(Laura York): Go over the, this is where – let me go over those states again.

(Robin): And this is for the virtual job fair.

(Laura York): Yes, for the virtual job fair on March 16th. There – we're targeting jobs in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and Puerto Rico. So again an individual does not have to be currently living in those states to participate. They can be living anywhere as long as they are willing to move to accept a job in one of those states or territories.

(Robin): Thank you (Laura). So if you have beneficiaries who may be interested, we encourage you to register them for this event. Without any – and I'm looking around the room, I want to thank our staff and the managers who were able to participate and the support we got today from (Maxmouth). And unless there's any other questions or comments, we'll go ahead and conclude this call. Thank you all very much.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, that does conclude today's conference call for today. We thank you for your participation and ask that you please disconnect your line.

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