

All State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Call

Welcome

Regina Bowden welcomed everyone to the call. She thanked the people who attended the 2-day Cost Reimbursement (CR) training sessions conducted at Social Security Administration (SSA) since last spring, referencing the positive feedback received after these sessions. This training, which covers the Ticket to Work (Ticket) program and CR, is open to anyone and is conducted on an as-needed basis. Anyone interested in participating should contact the VR help desk (VR.helpdesk@ssa.gov).

Cost Reimbursement Updates

Danielle Armstrong went through some frequently asked questions submitted through the VR help desk. She noted that all paper claims submitted prior to the conversion have been entered into the new payment processing system. If a State VR Agency mailed any claims that are not currently reflected in the Portal, those claims should be uploaded into the Portal for processing. If a case has been denied, you can verify that with the VR helpdesk. Viewing denials is expected to be corrected with the next systems release. Claims submitted are processed on a first in/first out basis. She noted that although the new system is much faster, there might be some lag due to the large number of claims being uploaded on a daily basis. She explained that a duplicate case must be denied before it can be removed from the system, which could be why there are multiple denials for the same SSN/VR period.

Armstrong reviewed a number of the issues State VR Agencies have identified in submitting CR claims through the Ticket Portal. She thanked everyone for their patience during the transition to the new system and for their responsiveness with providing additional information. She mentioned the importance of sending screen shots when reporting Portal issues because what SSA staff see on their end and what State VR Agencies see as users is different. Armstrong explained that all issues reported are tracked by a systems team. She said that if a State VR Agency has not received a response about an issue they identified, it could mean there is no news yet or that the team is waiting for a response from someone at SSA. Armstrong noted that although budget constraints have delayed some of the necessary fixes, SSA staff continue working on issues that have been identified; however, the actual fixes will not occur until the next Portal release (date TBD).

Current earnings, additional requested information, onsite training, payment release date

With regard to current earnings, Raquel Donaldson explained that SSA is now getting wage data on the 15th of every month. That means the data received on August 15 will include wage information reported by employers between July 15 and August 14. She also reminded State VR Agencies that earnings may be lagging based on when employers actually report the wage information.

Donaldson explained that in responding to any request for additional information received from SSA, a State VR Agency must input the information directly into the Portal. Mailed, emailed and faxed information will no longer be accepted. The Ticket Portal Guide explains how to create a cover sheet that will automatically connect the documents to the correct CR work case.

Donaldson noted that not all State VR Agencies have established a payment release date, which is the date chosen to have all payments processed for the last month released. Donaldson reminded everyone that the date selected is the date that SSA forwards the information on approved CR payments to the finance department for payment. It takes another 7 to 10 days before the actual wire transfer to the State VR Agency occurs. Since the notices on approved claims go out as each claim is processed, there is a delay between the approval notice and the actual payment to the State VR Agency.

Donaldson recently finished compiling an updated State VR Agency Directory with changes submitted over the last 6 months. This list will be sent to the SSA Coordinators for each State VR Agency and the Regional CR Coordinators. Going forward, she asked that State VR Agencies submit changes to the Directory as they occur, instead of waiting for the next update.

Donaldson reminded everyone that she will be emailing each State VR Agency Director and SSA Coordinator instructions to begin preparing information for cost formulas for fiscal year 2018. Even though the deadline is March 2018, the sooner this information can be submitted, the better.

Donaldson explained that occasionally a State VR Agency submits a CR claim that they did not intend to submit. The only way to delete this claim is to submit a request to the VR help desk, noting the Work Case number and explaining that the claim was submitted in error.

Portal updates

Katie Striebinger addressed some of the systems issues identified by State VR Agency Portal users. She explained that no fix has been implemented since the quarterly VR call in April. Most, if not all, of the identified issues are expected to be corrected in an upcoming release. A few issues are highlighted below.

1. Payment notices are mailed when the VR team approves the claim, which is before the payment is processed by the Treasury Department.

2. Denial notices do not currently include the CP of Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) on the form.
3. Some notices are not being mailed. SSA is planning to correct this problem.
4. Some Portal users are getting an “Unexpected Error” message when trying to submit a single claim through the screen. Since there is currently no workaround for this issue, the user will have to wait until the error is fixed. SSA will not penalize State VR Agencies on these claims. If you can upload an XML file, you may want to do that rather than waiting to submit a single claim through the screen.
5. When submitting an XML file, some State VR Agencies get a message saying, “Claim validated – no errors found – errors encountered in saving the claim.” This means the work case was not created. If this happens, you should check your list of pending cases and if the cases are not listed, you will need to resubmit those claims again.
6. The Portal does not accept reconsideration or supplemental claims for cases processed prior to March 2017. The workaround is to submit these cases as original claims; however, you must put in the remarks that the case is a reconsideration or a supplemental claim.
7. The “VR Pending Payments” screen has a limit of 1,000 records. If you have more than 1,000 pending cases you cannot take any action on this screen.
8. The “VR Payments Already Made to Me” screen does not currently include denials. This screen is limited to 1,000 records. If your State VR Agency has more than 1,000 cases in the system, you can search for this information using the dates range option or by downloading the information into an excel spreadsheet.
9. The payment status date changes as a CR claim moves through the system. For example, the approval date will change as the case moves through the claims process with the final date being the date the request for payment is forwarded to the Treasury Department. This is not working correctly right now so it is not clear that this reflects the case moving through different statuses.
10. The Quarterly Beneficiary Earnings Report (QBER) files will be reinstated for use by State VR Agencies, most likely in the spring of 2018.

Striebinger reminded everyone of the importance of downloading and using the Ticket Portal User Guide. She strongly encouraged everyone to go to the guide first before sending a question to the VR help desk. In some cases, responses from the help desk simply refer the person back a particular page in the guide. Contact the help desk if you do not know how to access the guide.

The Portal requires that State VR Agencies have a person’s Social Security Number (SSN) and the first and last name as it appears in SSA’s systems in order to place a Ticket In-Use SVR. SSA cannot provide the State VR Agency with the person’s name in response to the submission of a SSN.

State VR Agencies should not attempt to open and close old cases in the Portal. All State VR Agencies are expected to submit information on opened and closed cases on a monthly basis. If issues within your records do not match the information in SSA's records, contact the VR help desk before attempting to open or close old cases.

Questions and Answers

A question and answer period, which is part of the call recording and transcript, concluded the call.

Regina Bowden thanked everyone for their great questions and noted that additional questions not dealt with during the call should be submitted to the VR help desk.

The full transcript and audio from the All State VR Agency Call are available at <https://yourtickettowork.ssa.gov/web/ttw/events-archive>

The next All State VR Agency Call will be held on **Tuesday, October 10, 2017 at 3 p.m. ET.**