



# Quarterly All Employment Network Call

November 16, 2017

## Introductions and Updates

### **Carol Cohen (SSA)**

Welcomed everyone and introduced Tom Hale, SSA economist and Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) for the SSA Supported Employment Demonstration (SED).

### **SSA's Supported Employment Demonstration (SED) project**

#### **Tom Hale (SSA)**

In FY2016, SSA awarded a contract to [Westat](#) to implement and evaluate the SED. The project will assess whether offering an evidence-based package of vocational, medical and behavioral health services to denied SSDI or SSI disability applicants fosters employment that leads to self-sufficiency, improved mental health and quality of life and reduced demand for benefits. The period of performance is August 2016 to August 2022. Recruitment began in November 2017.

The demonstration seeks to enroll 3,000 individuals living in 30 community mental health agency catchment areas. Enrollment is limited to individuals aged 18 to 50 years old who want to work; who applied for disability benefits (SSDI or SSI) alleging mental impairment in the past 30-60 days; and who received an initial denial decision from SSA. Participants will be randomly assigned to 1 of 3 groups: full-service treatment, basic service treatment or control group.

Communities involved in the study, along with information and updates, can be found on the SSA website at [https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/supported\\_employment.html](https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/supported_employment.html).

A Westat Project web page provides information about the SED for interested parties at <https://www.supportemploy.org>.

### **All about Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)**

#### **Margery McIver and Terri Uttermohlen (SSA)**

The purpose of the presentation was to:

- Give background on WIPA services and how WIPA fits in with other supports
- Outline referral criteria for the Ticket to Work Help Line and WIPA services
- Discuss EN wage reporting and the beneficiary's responsibility to report work
- Offer opportunities for EN staff to get more training

## Background

The WIPA program originated with the Ticket to Work legislation, Public Law 106-70, which authorized SSA to fund organizations to provide free, individualized work incentives counseling to Social Security beneficiaries (SSDI or SSI). In addition to helping the beneficiary understand their Social Security benefits and work incentives, WIPAs provide information about other Federal and state-based benefits and supports that the individual may be eligible for and how employment affects all of these benefits.

Currently, 83 WIPA projects operate in all US states and territories. They are funded for 5 years, and the next competition for awards is in 2020.

## WIPA Eligibility and Referrals

To be eligible for WIPA services, applicants must be over 14 and not yet full retirement age and receiving any of the following benefits based on their disabilities:

- SSDI, including Childhood Disability Benefits and Disabled Widow(er)s Benefits
- SSI based on blindness or disability
- Medicare under the Extended Period of Medicare Coverage; Medicaid continuation under Section 1619(b)
- A state supplementary SSI payment

The Ticket to Work Help Line accounts for nearly 76% of WIPA referrals. Help Line agents are trained to provide basic information about Social Security benefits and Work Incentives and refer to WIPA when appropriate.

To manage WIPA workloads, referrals must meet certain criteria. The first priority for WIPA services are beneficiaries who are working and/or at risk of incurring an overpayment:

- Beneficiaries who work full-time, including self-employment; or are about to work full-time
- Beneficiaries who are self-employed part-time, who currently work part-time or about to start working part-time.
- Beneficiaries who have had a job interview within the 30 days prior to their first contact with the WIPA or Help Line, or who have a job interview within the 2 weeks following contact with the Help Line or initial contact with the WIPA
- Transition-aged youth between the ages of 14 and 25 at any employment stage

## Quarterly All EN Call Recap | November 16, 2017

Secondary priority groups include:

- Veterans seeking assistance to return to work who do not meet the aforementioned requirements;
- Beneficiaries seriously considering employment, currently receiving services from a state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency, an Employment Network (EN) or other vocational program, or who indicate serious intent to work during their WIPA interview;
- Members of underserved populations seeking assistance to obtain training or education with a clear employment goal.

## Beneficiary and EN Wage Reporting

Though ENs report Ticketholder work and earnings to Social Security to establish evidence for EN payments, it does not replace the beneficiary's responsibility to report work and earnings to SSA. This allows SSA to determine how income will affect benefits, possible benefit payment amounts, application of Work Incentives and help avoid overpayments.

SSA resources, publications and online content about working and work incentives:

- [\*Working While Disabled: How We Can Help\*](#)
- [\*If You're Blind Or Have Low Vision: How We Can Help\*](#)
- [\*The Red Book—A Guide To Work Incentives\*](#)
- [\*SSI Spotlights\*](#)

## EN Training Opportunities

- [\*CWIC and Community Partner Work Incentives Counseling Initial Training\*](#)
- [\*Web Course: Introduction to Social Security Disability Benefits, Work Incentives, and Employment Support Programs\*](#)
- [\*Community Partner Work Incentives Counseling certification\*](#)
- [\*Self-paced Learning Modules: Collaboration between ENs and WIPA Projects\*](#)

## Announcement

Carol Cohen announced she is retiring from SSA, effective December 29. She thanked ENs for their commitment to the Ticket program and support to beneficiaries.

## Additional Details

- The full transcript and audio from the Quarterly All-EN Call will be available at <https://yourtickettowork.ssa.gov/web/ttw/events-archive>.
- The next Quarterly All EN Call will be February 15, 2018, at 3:00 p.m. ET.