

All State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Call

Welcome

Robert Pfaff welcomed everyone to the call. He shared updates regarding the agency-wide reorganization of components at SSA, which became effective October 1, 2018.

The Office of Beneficiary Outreach and Employment Support (OBOES) and the Office of Ticket Operations and Provider Support (OTOPS) merged into a new component now called the Office of Employment Support (OES). Rob serves as the Director of this newly consolidated organization. He will be more involved in the day-to-day operations. Patrice McLean serves as the OES Deputy Director and leads the Policy and Innovation Team.

The OES component includes the following staff and functions:

- Regina Bowden is a Senior Advisor for program activities and Nate Arnold will serve on the Policy and Innovation Team.
- Jennelle Bratcher will serve as the Branch Chief for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Payments Team and manage everything related to VR cost reimbursement.
- Cara Caplan will lead the Contracts and Grants team, which encompasses the WIPA, PABSS, and Ticket Program Manager contracts. She will also oversee Employment Network (EN) payments.
- Susan Wilschke is the Deputy Associate Commissioner for the Office of Employment Supports.

The reorganization is intended to be as seamless as possible. The team that has historically worked with the VR agencies will continue and contacts will remain as they are.

Reorganization at SSA will continue as required by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) mandates for government to streamline organizations.

Rob also provided an update on system issues. SSA is working to correct 2 major issues in the near future. The first is the incorrect termination of Tickets based on SSA field office actions. Notify SSA if you identify an incorrect Ticket termination and SSA will restore the Ticket. The second issue is that SSA's system allows Ticket assignments when the beneficiary is not in current pay. This affects the claims submitted for reimbursement and SSA is working to get this corrected as soon as possible.

VCU Training

Rob Pfaff introduced Susan O'Mara, a faculty member at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and the Director of the VCU National Training and Data Center (NTDC).

Susan presented a PowerPoint covering the VCU Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program (WIPA) background. Currently, 82 local WIPA projects are staffed by 400 Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICs) who provide individualized Work Incentives counseling services to about 35,000 beneficiaries per year.

Susan then provided an overview of the 2 levels of Work Incentives training offered by the NTDC.

- **Initial Training and Certification:** This level provides WIPA CWIC training and Community Partner Work Incentives Counselor (CPWIC) training for agencies interested in providing Work Incentives counseling services. The training for both CWICs (a WIPA-staff only designation) and CPWICs is intensive and requires a 5 day face-to-face training component, a 6-week series of competency-based, on-line assessments, and the submission of 3 satisfactory Benefits Summary and Analysis reports. CWICs and CPWICs are also required to engage in annual continuing education to maintain certification.

There are an increased number of CWIC and CPWIC Initial Training and Certification classes. There will be 12 classes this year with up to 30 participants in each class. WIPA staff receive first priority, followed by community partners with staff who provide direct benefits counseling. This includes those employed by VR and Medicaid agencies, Employment Networks, and American Job Centers.

Information on the Initial training and certification is available on the NTDC website at <https://vcu-ntdc.org/training/initial.cfm>. There is no fee but participants must provide their own travel, lodging and meal expenses.

- **Introductory online web course:** NTDC offers this course for those who need a basic understanding of work incentives and benefits, but does not provide work incentive counseling services.

The new web course, *Social Security Disability Benefits, Work Incentives, and Employment Support Programs*, provides a basic introduction to the Social Security disability benefit programs (SSI and SSDI) and their associated Work Incentives. This 2-week online course is designed for professionals who want a better understanding of Social Security disability benefits and a basic understanding of how work affects benefits. It was developed with State VR and EN staff in mind. VR agencies could include the course in VR counselor or new employee trainings.

A VCU instructor leads 6 self-directed modules that require about 8 hours to complete. CRC credit is available, as well as a certificate of completion. There is no charge for any coursework associated with the trainings. There is currently no class

limit on the basic web course. Social Security has approved the course NTDC will offer the course 8 times each year. The calendar is available on the NTDC website: <https://vcu-ntdc.org/training/initial/introcal.cfm>.

Ticket Not Assigned Claims

Candice Whaley reminded everyone that the beneficiary does not need a Ticket for the VR agency to receive cost reimbursement. However, if the beneficiary has a Ticket, it must be "In Use SVR" status to receive cost reimbursement. If you have specific questions on cases you would like to discuss, please contact the VR Help Desk. Page 50 of the VR provider handbook has information on In Use SVR and Ticket assignment.

2Q18 earnings, Claims 60+ days after submittal, Different name or SSN on claims

Shada Roper noted that once a negative or denied payment decision is made, SSA sends notices by regular mail in a few days. If a payment is made, information will likely be found first in the Portal. There is a 7 to 10-day Portal process for approval and payment. Regular mail is also used to notify VRs of payments. If you are not receiving payment notices, e-mail Shada directly.

Raquel Donaldson shared updates on the second quarter 2018 earnings. Wage reports from the Office of Child Support have been received by SSA. If you were holding on to claims because you were waiting on 2Q18 earnings, you should go ahead and upload those batches. A few states are not reporting their earnings and SSA will be following up. If payments are being denied due to second quarter earnings, e-mail the VR Helpdesk.

Regarding 60+ day claims, e-mail the VR Helpdesk after 60 days for her follow-up. SSA is now working on claims uploaded to the portal in September.

Some VRs are emailing the VR Help Desk regarding a different name or SSN appearing when uploading a claim. If the SSN is incorrect, SSA cannot provide a correct SSN. Please follow up with the VR counselor or the individual; however, if the SSN is correct and there is a name change issue, SSA can share names associated with SSNs.

Questions and Answers

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

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, January 8, 2019, at 3 p.m. ET.**