

"Please stand by for realtime captions."

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You are currently on hold for the quarterly EN call. We are assembling the audience and plan to begin shortly. We appreciate your patience. Please remain on the line.

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Please stand by. We are about to begin. Good day and welcome to the quarterly EN call, Today's conference is being recorded. At this time I will turn it over to Cara Caplan.

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Good afternoon everybody. Welcome to the quarterly all EN call. I would especially like to welcome all of our new EN's and welcome to the program. We would also like to congratulate the state of Washington on their new partnership agreement, the Washington state division of vocational rehabilitation finalized and distributed their brand-new partnership agreement in April that they are excited to begin working with EN to provide ongoing support under their new initiative. Washington joins 26 other states, the partnership plus collaboration. This is awesome! More than half the states are participating now. I would like to also announce that we are having, the Office of Employment Support is having an upcoming employment summit. Social Security will be hosting this on June 12 and 13 at Social Security's headquarters in Baltimore. The purpose is to engage employment experts in a discussion on the strategies that support the supports full employment program, successful employment program for adult Social Security beneficiaries for disabilities. Due to the format of the event we must limit the number of participants. We have invited a diverse cross-section of ENs and state VR agencies services, to providers who represent an array of service models and structures. Social Security leadership in various programs stakeholders will also participate, including our Ticket Program Manager, the Council on State Administrators on Vocational Rehabilitation, Virginia Commonwealth University, who is over our training and technical assistance contract; the Department of Labor and Rehabilitation Services Administration. Information collected during the summit will be widely shared with all Tickets to Work service providers. We will forward to you additional details once we have the mechanism in place.

We are more than halfway through our site visits for fiscal year 2019. To date, we have visited 29 sites. We have about 20 more remaining for the rest of this fiscal year. For your security awareness form, I know they just came out and if you have new employees, you need to send those in. We want to make sure, some people are sending them to where we used in the APOR. Those need to go to EN service at SSA.gov. Also for TPA changes to your agreement, please make sure you use the TPA change form for updating any information in contact, address, phone number, anything changing to the agreement, and also send that to EN [service@SSA.gov](mailto:service@SSA.gov). Also we have noted many Ticket assignments in the recent contract. We think there is miscommunication. SSA is working on clarification of that policy. We believe this will help ENs when they should and should not unassign Tickets. Please look for that in the near future. And I would like to introduce Matthew Silverstein of America Works. He is the director of public affairs. Matthew is going to briefly discuss the hiring party initiative that America works is implementing, which is a very creative and unique activity to place beneficiaries into employment. Matthew, go ahead.

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Thank you Cara. I want to thank Cara for asking us to talk today. About a month ago, the beginning of April, we saw that there was an article on CNN business, and also in the website.

They were talking about these new hiring parties, in particular Taco Bell was throwing. Taco Bell has been facing some difficulty in finding good talent for their stores around the country. A tight job market makes it very competitive with 3% unemployment. It is hard to find quality people and to retain them in jobs, especially minimum wage jobs. So they decided to throw a hiring party in their stores around the country and it happened the last in the last month. And we saw this and thought it was an interesting idea. So we adapted it for Ticket to Work. We are throwing a hiring party. Most of them are occurring tomorrow in our offices. We are throwing seven parties nationwide. In New York City, Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington, DC, Baltimore, Memphis and Burlington, New Jersey. Actually the Burlington office actually held one today. They had 60 people who showed up. We had 20 different employers there. That is one of the things we added to this. We invited employers that we work with around the country to the event. We decided to throw it tomorrow, why tomorrow, tomorrow is national pizza party day in the country. So we are holding a pizza party tomorrow as our first hiring party initiative. In total, we have actually 400 of our Ticket to Work clients that RSVP'd. And probably another hundred or more who didn't RSVP that will show up. A relatively cheap way to have a creative event. And we are really excited about it. All the employers that we invited are actually employers that are hiring right now. If this is successful, we are going to be doing this on a regular basis. Also something we did was we took for example the one in New York City tomorrow, 20 different employers coming. We came up with a career menu that every beneficiary will receive. They will have a listing, a menu of companies. We encourage them all to meet with everybody. And we will brief Cara and Rob as to how they go. And we think it's just another innovative way to get people to show up. We believe when you include food, ideas, more people, they show up. That's pretty much what we are up to.

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Thank you so much, Matthew. We really appreciate you sharing that with us. I am sure maybe some people will reach out and try to get with that. What I will do at this time is handed over to Jayme Pendergraft.

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Thank you so much, hello everyone, this is Jayme Pendergraft and I am the program outreach manager for the TPM program. Today we will talk a little bit about success stories. Every once in a while you might hear from one of our team members at MAXIMUS asking whether you have a Ticket program success story you would like to share. This is a great opportunity to promote the work you do and the impact your work has on the lives of your client. Human interest and testimonials are also very powerful marketing tools. It puts a face on the Ticket to Work program and we, the Ticket program stories have been published on the website. They're shared on social media and they're promoted to other organizations. And this afternoon I will interview Rachel Hoffman from Virginia. Rachel has been the Ticket to Work manager for the Choice Group the last year that she has been with the Choice Group for seven years, providing direct service to clients training for staff. Rachel has a master's degree in counseling and a resident licensed professional counselor. This afternoon she is going to share the experience with developing a success story that showcases employment success of Angel. I hope you all have heard about it by now. We published this story near really, nearly 2 months ago. He is an Air Force veteran who sustained back injuries during the service and later received disability benefits from the Veterans Administration and Social Security. Welcome, Rachel, and thank you for joining us.

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Could you talk about Angel's background and at what point in his journey that he found the Choice Group.

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Thank you for inviting me. As you were telling everybody, Angel was in the Air Force before he was injured and he went out on disability. So at the point he reached out to the Choice Group. He was already in physical recovery, ready to go back to work but unable to return to his role in the Air Force. He was already looking for jobs on his own. Then Angel had questions about benefits and was fairly uncertain what would happen with the benefit once he went back to work. Angel, one of those clients I'm sure everybody who has had is a self-starter, and did a lot of research on his own. It was confusing for him, how he would benefit and having to benefits from Social Security and the VA. And what would happen with those if he was working. He reached out to one of the benefit designers and was talking to them, and the timing was pretty perfect because while they were talking he got a job offer.

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That is great, thank you so much Rachel. How did he find the Choice Group exactly?

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So he was doing independent research, and went to the Choose Work website and he called Social Security and they pointed him to the Choose Work website. We actually have a lot of clients that find it that way. And they say, hey, I found you online, and he went to the website. He was connected with the main office. In the way we do things, that puts him into a phone screening process and he was able to speak to somebody within a week, and he was an appropriate match for the Ticket program and within the next, the week following that, two weeks, he was able to connect with the local Choice Group advisor that met with him in person and talked about his goals. And he was trying to decide should I take this job offer or not. They were able to talk through that together.

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Thank you. Could you tell us a little more about the type of services the choice group provided to Angel?

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So Angel obviously was able to get a job on his own. He was primarily looking for benefits counseling. He received individualized information about how work would impact the disability benefit. We had to dig a little bit deeper because of the VA component. He wanted to know how to look at health insurance, and as I mentioned, Angel started talking to the Choice Group about his benefits, which was what gave him the confidence to accept the job. Because he needed more information to make a decision about working. Later on, in services, Angel got a notice from Social Security that the cash benefit would be stopping. He called us and we told him call us any time you get a letter. And it should not have been stopping at this point. So our benefits advisor did some research into Social Security's operations manual to see how the VA benefits and Social Security benefits interact and determined that because Angel was classified as a wounded warrior, the pay he received while on active duty -- because he was in physical rehabilitation and a wounded warrior -- it did not apply to his trial work. So he was still eligible to have his cash benefit continue. We gave him this information and the documentation and wrote everything out so he could take it to the local Social Security office and they were able to resolve it and turn his checks back on. And then a year later the benefits advisor was able to tell Angel, "hey, your cash benefit will stop now." And he was reporting his earnings and the check didn't stop right away. Because of his specific situation he wanted assistance. He needed someone to go with him in

person to the local field office so our benefits advisor went with him to the Social Security office and they were able to get a check to stop and resolve an overpayment and prevent future overpayment. Primarily Angel needed benefits counseling but we were also able to help him with some of the physical and emotional stress that he was experiencing with returning to work, which was very challenging for him still having a significant disability and our counselors started talking with him monthly, walking through the transitions and cash benefit so he knew what to expect every step of the way. He has already gotten one promotion. We have been there to help him make sure his earnings continue to increase, finding those opportunities.

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That is really great. I am sure Angel was very appreciative of the unique supports you are able to offer him but could you tell me about what he is doing now?

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Like I said, Angelo has gotten a promotion. He is still working for the same company. He works for a Department of Defense Federal. He is a federal contracted employee for the Department, for a 503 contractor that works for the Department of Defense. I made that about as confusing as I could make it. He is a contract employee. His employer is also a federal contractor. He is an IT network professional. He works with a liaison between the contractor and the federal government to procure IT hardware and equipment they need. So that is what he is doing. A super smart guy.

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Great. You mentioned section 503 and that he was hired by a federal contractor through section 503. Can you explain more about what that is?

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Yes, so there are organizations out there who have a federal utilization benchmark to hire employees who have disabilities and have them integrated in every level of their organization. It can be a great avenue for employment and partnership for our clients. The Choice Group counselor seek out these agencies because most of them are, all of them are actively trying to improve employees with disabilities and provide jobs that are at every level of operations. We have had a lot of folks who are employed through section 503 federal contractors so Angelo did choose to disclose to his employer that he has a disability and he is a veteran. And because he disclose that, that moved into prioritize hiring pool and that helped him get the job faster and hopefully that is the way that it works for other folks. We find, I still have a lot of direct service, but I find it is real helpful to talk to every single beneficiary about the section 503 hiring. Because a lot of them see the form that says check yes or no, yes I have a disability, and are intimidated by it. They are not sure why they are asked the information and they really don't know if it's appropriate to disclose. Is it beneficial for me to disclose I have a disability did we always mention that to our clients and show them the form and say this is up to you if you disclose. And a lot of our folks end up getting jobs through those agencies which is exciting.

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Great, thank you Rachel. I wanted to add a note, while they are located in the DC area they are federal contracting opportunities nationwide. We have a couple of resources on the choose work website available to explain what section 503 is. We also have a webinar in the wise OnDemand page that talks about section 503. If it's something you are interested, in check out the WISE OnDemand page and take a look at the past available in the library. It is <https://choosework.ssa.gov/library/FAQ-section-503-of-the-Rehabilitation-Act>. That's in the library on the first page of the library. Be sure to check that out if you have questions about section 503 of the rehabilitation act.

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Sorry for my sidebar. Rachel, could you tell me about the impact the work has had on Angelo's life did

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I will go back to 503 for a second. This is for a speaking, seeking out employers who are partners. It is such an easy avenue for partnership. A lot of these guys have somebody who is a diversity or disability recruiter. They are easy to pick up the phone and talk to somebody, especially when organizations already have that on the radar -- that I should be hiring and seeking out agencies and hiring folks with disabilities. I took your sidebar and made another sidebar, sorry. So Angel's life, I was talking to him yesterday, such a fun guy. Angel has a very strong sense of family responsibility. And the drive -- he wants to provide for his family and improve their financial situation. You can always make more working than just getting your checks, we tell beneficiaries. He has been able to do that and has maximized what he can provide for his family. With his employment he's been able to access additional health insurance for his family. I think more than that, Angel has got a strong work ethic and work was always going to be part of his life and his identity. He is one of those people that was never going to be happy not working. As a part of his identity, emotional well-being. It has also been a help for him to find a place of belonging and social connectedness with his peers. He is out there in the workforce and meeting people and interacting with people regularly rather than just being home. I talked to him yesterday and he was saying Rachel, this is not easy. I still have my disability. It is a fight for me to be working, but it is so important for me to be a part of the workforce and do this. So I'm entirely inspired by him.

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That is wonderful, glad to hear he is finding fulfillment in his job. The last question is could you tell us a little bit more about why you chose him as a success story.

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Yes, Angel is very proud, somebody who loves to tell his story. He is very open and doesn't shy away from talking about his disability. He feels telling a story can inspire somebody else then he has got a passion to put the word out there, especially to other veterans; that they have a skill set that can be used in the civilian workforce. He sees telling his story as his way to give back to the veteran community. I actually cannot take any credit for identifying him for a success story or starting that process. Many of you know Greg Bell who works for MAXIMUS now, at the time was working for the Choice Group and Angel with his client. He sought Angel and said I think you should do this. He initiated the process because he had that background with MAXIMUS and knew how important it was the work you are doing to promote success stories. Once he got the ball rolling, the process was so much easier than I realized. Angel with MAXIMUS did all the work and put together what was really a beautiful, polished, finished product. And you know what? I've been able to take that and run with it and use it for our website, marketing materials, and what is really cool, I don't know if I'm allowed to tell this but I will anyway. Is that because you guys publish that story, then NPR picked it up and they interviewed him and now they are running another story on Angel next week, which will give us such great visibility and give Angel a huge platform to tell his story and inspire other veterans. So it has been entirely worth it. I hope when folks call and say hey you work with veterans, I can hand them this story and point them to the website and say yes. Not that I know everything about VA benefits on the top of my head, but I always know somebody who knows somebody that can figure it out and we will

begin find the answer. That one little step of saying yes let's do a success story has led to some great visibility for Angel story. Really advantageous for us.

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Thank you so much Rachel, so wonderful to hear, we are excited to listen in on Angel's interview this month on NPR. That is huge. Congratulations to Angel. And before we close out I wanted to make sure I share the link to Angel story for those who may not have seen it yet. You can read the full story online at [choosework.ssa.gov/library/Angel-success story](http://choosework.ssa.gov/library/Angel-success%20story). Can we go to the next slide, please?

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Before I get into my request for success stories I want to say a big thank you to Rachel and the folks at the Choice Group who are able to help make this interview happen. And of course who were able to give us Angel's story. As you heard, we are always looking for new success stories. If you have a Ticketholder who achieves financial independence through work, send it over to us. They might be a good fit for a success story. As a bit of a reminder [indiscernible] by Social Security. Is selected as Rachel mentioned, TPM will work with you and a Ticketholder to create the story for publication. You heard how easy it was to work with us and basically end up with a polished product. We want to make sure you all have the same experience. So if you have a story to share to get started send an email to stories. Another huge thank you to Rachel and Adelle. At this point I hand it to you for questions.

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Thank you, Jamie. Thank you, Rachel. That is really inspiring and it helps us to the things that we do on a day-to-day to basis help someone. Thank you for sharing that. Orlando, at this time we would like to open up the lines for questions for Rachel.

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Absolutely. If you would like to ask a question please signal by pressing\*and one on your telephone keypad. If you are using a speakerphone make sure your mute function is turned on to allow your signal to reach us. Once again please press star and one to answer a question on the phone. We will pause for a moment to assemble the queue.

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While we wait on that Orlando, John do we have any questions from the queue just yet?

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No we don't have any questions in the queue.

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All right, appreciate it.

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As a reminder to the phone audience press star and one if you would like to ask a question.

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It appears we have no questions at this time.

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All right, appreciate that. At this time

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Thank you guys I appreciate it.

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Thank you so much Rachel.

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I will go back on mute now.

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Okay, Jamie, back to you.

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Great, thank you and thank you Rachel, that was really helpful and informative. Always nice to dive deeper into the success stories. Could we go to the next slide, please.

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We actually have a brand-new success story that was published today about a woman named Shirley. Shirley was diagnosed with narcolepsy after she had several episodes of falling asleep. Sought a neurologist who diagnosed her with narcolepsy. She also ended up being diagnosed with depression a little bit later on in her journey. Shirley also had a very strong work ethic similar to Angel. And she always knew she wanted to go back to work. In her EN America works helps her understand Social Security work incentives including the Ticket to Work program, finding the self-confidence she lost while she was out of work and advocate for reasonable accommodation. You can read more about Shirley's story at [choose work that SSA.gov/library/ Shirley - success story](http://SSA.gov/library/Shirley-success-story).

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We will also be sending out a message in the coming days with information on how you can help us spread the word about Shirley's story and we always appreciate when EN's actually do share on social media or if you are interested in getting a blurb for a newsletter or language for your website, feel free to reach out to us and we will be able to provide that as well.

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Next slide please. Since the last all EN call we did publish a new resource, Presenting your Best Self to Employers. It talks about resume writing, preparing answers and questions for a job interview, and a little bit about how, if you wanted to disclose disability to a potential employer. And this link is a bit long so I will ask John to chat it out. It is also in our library available under the FAQs and resource section. And resources to have on hand, you're welcome to share them on social media or your website. I know some of you even put them out and provide them in your lobby for your clients. This is the newest one. We hope you will find it interesting. Next slide please.

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We do have an announcement today regarding service provider social media. We made the decision to shut down Facebook, the Facebook account for service providers, which was the Ticket to Work for service providers and the twitter account that was at Ticket to Work. The reason we are doing this is because we hope you find the majority of the information you need on the choose work social media account. And we will be setting those, shutting them down this month. As I mentioned there's plenty of information and updates out there for you to see on the choose work social accounts. I will tell you how to find those.

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This slide includes information on where to follow Choice Work. We hope you are already following us but in case you are not you can link up on Facebook at Choice Work, or follow us on Twitter at Choice Work SSA. Our panel has not changed but if you are not familiar with that, the [YouTube.com forward/ choose work](http://YouTube.com/forward/choose-work). And it has not changed in the Ticket to Work page.

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Next slide please. There are a couple of additional ways you can get news about the program. I know many of you have subscribed to the connection. This is a quarterly newsletter that offers Social Security updates, information about upcoming task and requirements for you all, and also

includes upcoming events and tips and training for your business to succeed did there is a lot of different information in there. If you have not yet subscribed to that quarterly newsletter, send an email to take a connection at your Ticket to work that SSA.gov. Another good way to stay up-to-date on information about what we are talking about every month, is to join the wise webinars. The webinars are not only for Ticketholders, there is also some information for the primary audience or Ticketholders. We encourage you to share those webinars via your social media accounts or any newsletters, on your website. You can do so by subscribing on the choose work website if you go to the contact page you can find how to subscribe to the webinar. And also always available, right on the home page of choosework.ssa.gov.

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Next slide.

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Lastly, one of the ways -- one of the things we have been promoting frequently on the service provider social media are the trainings that are available in the Virginia Commonwealth University. These trainings include certifications for benefits counseling, or refresher programs on roles related to disability employment. If you are interested in learning more for VCU about the trainings they provide through their work incentive training and data center, be sure to bookmark the training page or subscribe to receive their a newsletter. John has chatted those out to the audience. Next page please bid

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And last I did want to close with some volunteer opportunities that we always have available. We invite you to submit ideas proposed for the Choose Work blog. The blog focuses mainly on disability employment related topics. And we do publish the blog approximately once a week. In addition we are always looking for presenters for the wise webinars did we work closely with you to train you on presenting, and we also again develop the majority of the content to make it easy for you. So if you are interested in volunteering for either of those two things, or submitting a success story, send an email to social media at choosework.ssa.gov. That is everything I have so thank you for your time today. A big thank you to Rachel for sharing Angel's story. Adelle, back to you.

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Thank you a lot Jamie for all that good information. Before we open up for questions today, I want to bring to your attention that we have posted the reporting FAQs. If you visit the yourtickettowork.ssa.gov website, at the top of the home page you will see the word "About". click on it and it will bring you to a page where if you look towards the bottom on the left-hand side you will see FAQs. Once you click on FAQ you will see frequently asked questions and the last bullet will be wage reporting with about 11 questions. When you have a chance go ahead and check that out.

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Orlando we can open up the lines for questions now.

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Thank you and once again ladies and gentlemen to ask a question on the phone please press star and one on the telephone keypad. If using a speakerphone make sure your immune function is off. Once again everyone, press star and one to ask a question over the phone. We will pause for one moment.

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Again that is star and one to ask a question and we will take the first question from Barbara with Orange Grove Center.

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Yes, how will a site be notified of your visit?

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We try to notify you at least a month to two weeks in advance. Where are you located?

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We are in Chattanooga Tennessee.

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I don't believe we are going there this year.

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You are going to Tennessee.

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What is the name of your EN.

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Orange Grove Center.

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I don't believe, I can't be 100% but I don't believe we have you on the schedule for this year. In general it is a two-week tune one month in advance.

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Thank you.

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You are welcome.

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Once again as a reminder please press star and one to ask a question on the phone. We will take the next question from Andrea Barlow with apps foundation.

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Good afternoon. I was interested to know is New Haven Connecticut on the list?

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No you are not on the list.

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Okay thank you.

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I don't have the list in front of me, so everyone knows I will not know everybody off the top of my head. If you are, for everybody's knowledge, if you are one of the sites we are going to, you will be notified. So there is plenty of advance notification. We try to work with those schedules.

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Once again that is star and one to ask a question over the phone.

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It appears we have no further questions at this time.

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John, do we have any questions in the chat quick

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Absolutely did one question from Jennifer who asked when did you see the clarification for when your certificate is going to be released?

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It will be most likely within the next month.

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It is the same current policy there is. The policy is not changing. We are just making it, just clarifying it more for some persons who are confused, that is all. There is not a change in policy.

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Okay. Thank you John. Only one in the chat. Orlando, any others in the queue?

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We have not had any other questions in the queue.

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Then I think we will end the call. This was a nice short one. We would like to thank everybody for joining. And our next quarterly all EN call will be August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 3 p.m. Eastern Time.

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Everybody have a great rest of your day.

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And ladies and gentlemen this concludes today's call, thank you for your participation. You may now disconnect.

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[Event concluded]