

Welcome and SSA Updates

Rob Pfaff (SSA)

Rob Pfaff welcomed everyone to the call, including new Employment Networks (EN), and shared the following updates:

New Deputy Commissioner

Social Security (SSA) has a New Deputy Commissioner, David Black, who will serve until January 19, 2025. Deputy Commissioner Black is also Secretary to Social Security's Board of Trustees. He previously served for nearly a decade as General Counsel for Social Security and Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. Deputy Commissioner Black is a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve.

EN payments policy

Jennelle Bratcher will now manage State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency and EN payments policy. She will identify issues related to policy and facilitate EN payments discussions. This change will be seamless and transparent to ENs.

Employment Summit

The summary report and comprehensive notes are going through due diligence executive reviews. SSA may release the documents early next year. If so, we may discuss the report during the February All EN call.

Productivity data

Rob shared the following EN productivity trends for the period between 9/30/2015 - 9/30/2019:

- The number of ENs is trending down, with 537 ENs as of 9/30/2019. There are about 17% fewer ENs than were active as of 9/30/2015. In previous years, a heavy focus on recruiting resulted in more than 1,000 ENs. The focus now is on EN quality over quantity, as evidenced by the site reviews.
- There has been a 35% increase in overall Tickets assigned to ENs, despite fewer ENs. The average Ticket assignments per EN on 9/30/15 was 80, compared to 131 on 9/30/19, for a 65% increase.
- EN payments are also increasing and ePay has been a positive factor. EN payments rose from \$46M in FY 2015 to nearly \$84M in FY18. The average EN as of 9/30/15 generated about \$72,000 in annual payments and as of 9/30/19, the annual payments average was \$160,000, a 122% increase. SSA is getting reports that ENs are growing, hiring staff and moving into larger buildings.

Tickets in Use with VR have decreased over the last 18 months. One possible factor is the Department of Labor regulations under the Workforce Investment and Opportunities Act (WIOA). WIOA requires state VR agencies to allocate a percentage of services to youth under age 18 who are too young for Ticket to Work. This limits the VR agency's ability to serve adult beneficiaries and offers an opportunity for ENs to serve wait-listed beneficiaries.

EN service shift of responsibilities

EN services will soon shift from internal SSA staff to Ticket Program Manager (TPM) staff due to staff attrition at SSA and no ability to hire over the past 2 years. SSA is working on a plan with TPM to transition some of the EN contact services from SSA to TPM to assure that there are sufficient staff to take your calls and respond to e-mails. SSA will announce this via email to all ENs when implemented.

Community Partner Work Incentives Counselors (CPWIC)

Susan O'Mara, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)

VCU provides 2 types of training available to community partners:

The CWIC training is solely for community partner staff who provide intensive benefits counseling services to their customers on a regular basis. Class size is limited to 30 participants and ENs receive enrollment priority, so it is important to register as an EN community partner for the CWIC training. VCU has scheduled eight CWIC training classes for 2020 and registration is now open for the January and February trainings. Find detailed information at <https://vcu-ntdc.org/training/initial/calendar.cfm>.

Before registering for the CWIC training, community partner staff must first complete an introductory web course, "Introduction to Social Security Disability Benefits, Work incentives, and Employment Support Programs". The 2-week, online course is comprised of six 1-hour self-paced lessons with an instructor, a video component and supplemental reading. The introductory web course is also very beneficial to those who do not intend to take the CWIC training.

There are four introductory webinar classes scheduled for the first quarter of 2020. Registration is open, with no limit to the number of participants. EN staff should register now for an introductory on-line webinar course if they intend to register for a CWIC training class in 2020. Find the schedule and information at <https://vcu-ntdc.org/training/initial/introcal.cfm>.



EN updates

Cara Caplan (SSA)

The Annual Performance Outcome Report (APOR)

APOR and 222 Security Awareness forms are coming out at the end of January 2020. Please ensure that your EN contact information is up to date. Please be timely in completing these APOR and 222 forms per the terms and conditions of the Ticket Program Agreement (TPA). Every year SSA terminates ENs because they do not comply.

Site visits

SSA conducted 61 EN site visits during 28 trips across 18 states this year. We are primarily seeing great EN work. Common issues are non-compliant documentation, maintaining contact with Ticketholders, and suitability for all relevant staff. Be sure to alert SSA regarding any new EN staff and put them through training and the suitability clearance process.

Cloud storage

SSA is aware that ENs are using cloud services to store beneficiary data and is now gathering information to understand the extent. SSA sent a message to ENs last week requesting a response from those who are using cloud services. Please review this message and respond by the end of this week regarding any use of cloud storage for beneficiary data.

Timely Progress Reviews (TPR)

TPR started on November 18. ENs should inform and support Ticketholders to understand TPR, so they do not lose their continuing disability review (CDR) protection.

Find Help changes

John Millnik (TPM)

Find Help now includes the following new features:

- The search form includes 3 new EN service filters including resume writing, wage reporting assistance and transportation.
- There is an option to “pin” up to 3 providers. The new provider card has a pin in the right-hand corner, and when clicked, the provider is pinned to the top of the page and saved as users move through pages of information.
- A “compare service” button activates when at least 2 providers are pinned and a new window will open for provider comparison. The user can also collapse and expand pinned provider information.



TPM gathers service information for the Find Help tool from the EN TPA and APOR form. If you have changes to your EN marketing descriptions, send them to ENDescRev@ssa.gov. EN descriptions are limited to 250 characters and must have factual statements and descriptions of services limited to the Ticket program.

Service Provider Foundations Modules

Ana Morales (TPM)

TPM implemented a new Learning Management System (LMS) in August to deliver the Service Provider Foundations training to new ENs and new staff of existing ENs. The training includes 14 self-paced modules with built-in self-assessments and support provided by TPM staff. New EN staff must complete the training within 60 days. Attendees receive a certificate of completion and activation to serve Ticketholders after completion of the course. The same learning modules are available for general viewing on the Your Ticket to Work website at <https://yourtickettowork.ssa.gov/training-and-events/foundations-modules.html>. Viewing the modules on the website does not count toward EN training requirements.

The Ticket Portal training module is not available on the website. TPM offers this training to ENs through either a one-to-one session or once-a-month group session. To register, contact: ENoperations@yourtickettowork.ssa.gov

Outreach update

Pat Van Nelson (TPM)

Social media

We have exceeded Facebook social media goals in both reach and interaction. The number of Facebook followers doubled to 54,000 between August and October.

There is an opportunity to share service providers' social media and website content on Choose Work Facebook and Twitter channels. To share information, send your social media handles to us so we can like and follow your pages. We may also share specific but we will need to review the content. Send a request a few weeks in advance of events you want shared. Ensure that any success story does not include PII. Send social media handles and information sharing requests to socialmedia@choosework.ssa.gov.

We have published short articles and radio spots through a syndicated news service. To date, 7 submissions have generated 28,436 print articles with a readership of 27,131,488 and combined total of 443,475,417 unique views per month. Also, 5 radio spots have been broadcast a total of 1,975 times with an audience reach of 191,469,598.



The published articles are available at www.napsnet.com. Select Government News under article categories.

Feature stories

Our beneficiary feature stories are very popular and we rely on ENs to refer story candidates. We recently initiated “Stepping Stone” articles, which focus on individuals who have demonstrated progress on their path to financial independence, such as completing a training program or successfully using a Work Incentive. Send candidates for Stepping Stone and Success Stories to Stories@choosework.ssa.gov.

WISE

The December WISE webinar, “College to Careers”, will be on Wednesday, December 18, 3-4:30 p.m. ET. It will feature information about youth peer mentoring and career-paths for college students with disabilities. Featured speakers will be Steven Allen, Policy Works and Ray Cebula, Cornell University. Register for the webinar at choosework.ssa.gov/wise.

Anniversary

We are refreshing the Ticket Program branding and we will release a new logo on December 17 to mark the program’s 20th anniversary.

The full transcript and audio from the Quarterly All EN Call will be available at <https://yourtickettowork.ssa.gov/web/ttw/events-archive>.

Next All EN Call: February 2020, from 3:00 - 4:30 pm ET

