

All State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Call

Welcome

Robert Pfaff welcomed everyone to the call and expressed appreciation for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services provided to Ticketholders. He shared the following updates:

- Social Security (SSA) was successful in replacing Jennelle Bratcher, who left in January, with Katie Striebinger as the manager of the VR Team. Katie has a lot of experience with the VR side and was able to step in seamlessly and fill the role. SSA is already seeing the benefits of the leadership transition.
- Relative to SSA program operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, the central SSA office is all working remotely. If you would like updates regarding SSA's field office operations during the current COVID-19 situation, you can find information at [SSA.gov](https://ssa.gov). There is a dedicated section on the home page regarding available field services. Information is also posted on the yourtickettowork.ssa.gov website.
- The Ticket Program Manager (TPM) staff are working remotely as well. SSA assumes this has been a seamless transition. Please reach out to them if there are any issues with program services.
- In terms of workload and the Ticket to Work program participation and activity, SSA has not seen a significant drop off, given the huge rise in unemployment. On the Ticket assignment side, we continue to see hundreds of assignments per week, and we are only slightly below our average weekly assignment number. We are also still getting a lot of payment requests for both VR cost reimbursement and EN Ticket payments. I give credit to our SSA teams and our TPM colleagues for their resilience during this situation.
- SSA is trying to provide regular updates to all service providers and appreciate your patience.

Katie Striebinger noted that this VR call is an audio-only call, which is unusual for the SSA team because they are usually in a room together to coordinate who will answer which question. She told participants that there may be a pause after asking a question, and to ask only one or two questions at a time while in the queue. She requested that

participants hang up and call back into the queue if they had more questions, so that everyone will have a chance to ask questions. SSA would stay on the call until all phone questions are answered. She also recommended sending an email after the call to the VR Help Desk and that SSA would respond.

Katie Striebinger provided the following updates:

Backlog

The backlog is currently just under 8,000 claims, which is still high. SSA is processing claims from December 2019. Katie asked that VRs with claims that are not 120 days past due from the upload date before contacting SSA.

FY20 Cost Formula

SSA sent everyone the updated FY20 cost formula information and no further revisions will be forthcoming. VRs should be emailing the VR Helpdesk with any questions regarding the cost formula. The reason for the change is every VR client must have an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to be considered for cost reimbursement and many of the costs and programs included on the old cost formula did not necessarily an IPE. National VRCER Rollout

SSA is ready to distribute the Vocational Rehabilitation Client Earnings Report (VRCER) to all VR agencies. The VRCER replaces the revised QBER report. By the end of today, VRs will receive a GovDelivery message with the details. For those who participated in the VRCER pilot, there is no action you need to take. For those who did not participate in the pilot, the GovDelivery message will have a VRCER authorization form to be signed by the agency's signatory authority identifying the contact(s) authorized to receive the VRCER file and to be returned to SSA by April 22. VRs should inform SSA if they do not receive the GovDelivery email by tomorrow morning.

SSA receives quarterly earnings data files in January, April, July and October and will get the newest earnings file on April 15. SSA will send out the VRCER during the first week of May. We are requesting for VR's to hold claims for the beginning of May until they receive the VRCER file and see which claims they can submit.

Notice of Determination (NOD)

SSA does not currently have the ability to send an electronic copy of a NOD; however, VRs can go into the Portal and download the list of "Payments Already Made to Me", which also contains the NOD information, including the code, the dollar amount and invoice number. For questions about how to do this, contact the VR Help desk. SSA appreciates your patience, as the current situation has affected all of us. Please reach out to SSA if you have files or business processes that are affected.

Extended Diary

SSA realizes that many VR agencies cannot get to their email and is extending the period for the expired diary notifications. No claim will be denied 650 until further notice. Katie noted how happy she is to be on the VR team and working with the VR agencies.

Raquel Donaldson provided the following updates:

Tracking Costs

Regarding the updates to and issuance of the FY20 cost formula, Raquel thanked VRs for their patience, stating that it has been a trial and error process for all of us and we appreciate your feedback and questions. She acknowledged special appreciation to Eric Schmidt from Maryland VR and his staff for providing valuable feedback for the FY20 cost formula.

Regarding the submission of tracking costs, SSA met several times with RSA, who informed SSA that the tracking costs were already included in the administrative costs within the Schedule 1 worksheet, which include expenditures for MIS, the case management system and administrative salaries. SSA is also aware that under the WIOA, VRs are required to track individuals for 6 quarters after the attainment of the employment outcome. Beginning with FY20 and going forward, SSA will not be reimbursing for tracking costs; however, tracking costs for FY19 or earlier will still be paid.

Earnings – 590 Denials

Raquel reminded those on the call that the 2019 October All VR call discussed 590 denials based on insufficient earnings evidence and that SSA sent an email blast on this subject. Starting November 1, 2019, if SSA did not see 9 months of earnings documentation, SSA would deny the claim. The cost reimbursement backlog is primarily due to inadequate earnings documentation.

Employment Verification

VRs that access the Portal will receive a notification regarding employment verification every 6 months. As of April 9, Linda Custis has verified everyone's employment. Raquel stated that if VRs continue to get the employment verification message, there is nothing they need to do. SSA takes care of this. VRs will see the notification again in October.

Questions and Answers

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

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

The next All VR State Agency Call will be held on **Tuesday, July 14, 2020, at 1 p.m. ET.**