

## All State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Call

### Welcome

#### Robert Pfaff (SSA)

Robert Pfaff welcomed everyone to the call and provided the following updates:

- There is a slight overall decrease in program participation during the pandemic through June.
- There is slight increase, from 35,000 to 38,000 beneficiaries, assigned by VR to the Ticket to Work Program. In general, it is business as usual despite remote work.
- SSA is interested in services for Veterans. Please share information regarding VR supports, projects, websites, social media, and materials VRs use to serve Veterans. SSA will report to Congress and our Executive Management about VR outreach to Veteran populations. E-mail information to [ENoperations@yourtickettowork.ssa.gov](mailto:ENoperations@yourtickettowork.ssa.gov).
- SSA is effectively reducing the cost reimbursement claims backlog. SSA is paying more than \$20 million per month in reimbursement funds to VR agencies based on claims data captured back to 2015.

### VR Updates

#### Katie Striebinger (SSA)

SSA has a little more than 7,000 pending cases and less than 700 of them are more than 60 days old. SSA is making its way through everyone's cases and while there is a large pending caseload, the backlog caseload is small.

#### Fiscal Year-To-Date VR Reimbursement Activity by State Report

SSA distributed the Fiscal year-to-date report in June and July and will continue sending the report monthly to VR coordinators. The report includes clearances and receipts, as well as the number of pending cases and the average processing time for cases. This report is a restart of a report previously provided to VRs prior to SSA transitioning to the portal.

The report is in alphabetical order by state and includes only the states that have claims activity (claims received or completed) from October 1, 2019, to the present. The report

data comes from the Ticket portal and iTOPSS. The information should match if you try to recreate the report using data available in the portal. If it does not, contact Katie.

There are differences in the total approved versus total paid claims columns. It takes a few days after SSA authorizes a payment to process the funds through Treasury. Pending payments that have been approved by SSA but have not cleared Treasury will display in the total approved column.

Reconsideration claims are included in the claims allowed column. The denial rate is built on many old claims processed since October 1, 2019. The high denial rates at the beginning of the fiscal year drove SSA's recent policies and the decision to implement VRCER

### **VRCER (Vocational Rehabilitation Client Earnings Report)**

SSA sends the VR agency this report to show the wages in SSA's system. It is a positive tool for VRs to use in making decisions about claims submission.

VRCER is quarterly. In May, SSA sent the report to 59 agencies. Thirty-nine of the 59 agencies submitted 2,025 claims based on VRCER wage data. SSA will send the next quarterly VRCER report the first week of August.

Social Security, in collaboration with the Council for State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind, is presenting a training webinar, "Submitting Successful Claims to improve VR Cost Reimbursement (CR) Allowance Rates" on July 23, from 1-3 p.m. VRs should mark their calendars for this webinar.

## **VR Updates**

### **Raquel Donaldson (SSA)**

#### **Email Blasts**

SSA sends e-mail blasts through GovDelivery, including information regarding policy and procedure changes as soon as possible. VRs not receiving these blasts on a regular basis should e-mail Raquel, who will place them on the distribution list. The blast information is important. VRs should read and save it for future reference.

### **Earnings – 590 Denials**

When SSA sends a 590 denial, SSA is looking at the earnings information VRs submit. When using VRCER data as the earnings data source, put the word “VRCER” on the remarks tab. SSA needs evidence of 3 out of 4 quarters of earnings at substantial gainful activity (SGA) level. If the evidence is not there, SSA will send the VR a 590 denial.

### **PII**

SSA cannot provide VRs with Social Security numbers. If there is a claim upload issue with a name or SSN, e-mail Raquel the SSN and the name. She will tell VR if the SSN is wrong, but will never send the correct SSN. If available, Raquel will send the person’s correct name information.

### **Beneficiary Complaints**

SSA forwards Ticket to Work Help Line VR complaint e-mails to the VR Director and to the SSA Coordinator. SSA then considers the complaint closed and allows the VR Director to manage these complaints.

### **Reconsiderations**

SSA uses the initial claim’s submission date when VRs submit a claim for reconsideration. If SSA sends a 620 untimely filing denial in error, e-mail Raquel at the VR Helpdesk. She will review and reprocess the claim immediately if SSA is in error. If it is a VR error, the VR will need to upload a new claim into the first in and first out queue

### **New Region 1 Coordinator**

Sandy Rodriquez is SSA’s new Region 1 Coordinator responsible for Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Her e-mail is Sandy.Rodriquez@ssa.gov.

## **Questions and Answers**

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

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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 VR State Agency Call will be held on **Tuesday, October 20, 2020, at 1 p.m. ET.**