

**SSA /Ticket to Work Program Partnership Plus Agreement
between
The Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)
and**

Employment Network (EN)

THIS AGREEMENT, dated this _____ date of _____, 2014 by and between the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), with its principal place of business at 1521 N. 6th Street, Harrisburg, PA, 17102 and _____, an Employment Network (hereinafter “EN”), with its principal place of business at _____, sets forth the mutual understandings between the parties with respect to their collaborative relationship in connection with the Ticket to Work Partnership Plus program.

WITNESSETH:

WHEREAS: OVR is the agency within the Commonwealth responsible for promoting the employment of individuals with disabilities through the provision of vocational rehabilitation , job training and placement services pursuant to the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, *as amended, (29 U.S.C. § 701 et. seq)*; and

WHEREAS: The Ticket to Work Program provides most people receiving Social Security benefits (beneficiaries) more choices for receiving employment services. Under this program, the Social Security Administration (SSA) issues tickets to eligible beneficiaries who, in turn, may choose to assign those tickets to an Employment Network (EN) of their choice to obtain employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, or other support services necessary to achieve a vocational (work) goal.

WHEREAS: EN is an organizational entity (State or local, public or private) that entered into a contract with the Social Security Administration (SSA) with the intention of coordinating and delivering employment services, VR services, and/or other support services under the Ticket to Work Program. These services are provided by the EN to SSA beneficiaries who have assigned their Tickets to the EN which has accepted the Ticket.

WHEREAS: Under the “Partnership Plus” program, a Ticket Holder may receive OVR services to meet his/her intensive up front service needs and, after the VR case is closed, assign his/her Ticket to an EN to receive ongoing support services.

WHEREAS: OVR and the EN mutually desire to coordinate services to individuals with disabilities receiving services under the Rehabilitation Act and with the Individual Work Plan services available from the EN under the Ticket to Work program;

NOW THEREFORE, the following sets forth the mutual understanding of OVR and the EN:

THE PARTNERSHIP PLUS PROGRAM:

- Addresses the need to remove barriers which prevent customers from achieving Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) or their full competitive employment potential.
- Builds on and strengthens the existing partnership between OVR and the EN around the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for customers.
- Ensures best practices and ethical standards are maintained and that the customer's rights and informed choices are respected.
- Provides the Ticket Holder access to a coordinated and seamless service transition between OVR and the EN's employment retention services.
- Maximizes revenue available through the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program so the EN will have an additional source of revenue to assist more customers to increase their economic self-sufficiency and through the Cost Reimbursement Programs so OVR can provide services to a greater number of individuals.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

OVR Roles and Responsibilities

1. OVR will open cases consistent with statutes, regulations and policy and explain the Ticket to Work and Partnership process. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) will review options with each customer determined eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services under the Ticket Program.
 - The VRC will discuss the ticket and Partnership Plus with the customer
 - at the time of Application,
 - during development of the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE),
 - during the job development process, and
 - at closure.
 - The VRC will initiate the discussion of the Ticket to Work program at the time of Application and provide the customer with a Fact Sheet explaining the program and its benefits. The VRC will explain that by signing the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) the Ticket will be considered "IN USE SVR" until the time of closure by OVR or until the customer chooses to remove their Ticket from OVR
 - The VRC will assist the customer in making an informed choice as to whether to place the Ticket IN USE SVR or to assign it to an EN

2. If the customer chooses to assign his/her Ticket to OVR, OVR will, through Electronic Reporting, place the Ticket "IN USE-SVR" with the Program Manager, Operations Support Manager (OSM). If a customer elects not to participate in the Ticket to Work Program, he/she will be asked to sign a form indicating this choice. The VRC will forward the signed form to the Statewide SSA/TTW Coordinator for review. The Statewide SSA/TTW Coordinator will then send the form to OSM to request an Exception in order to allow OVR to submit a claim for cost reimbursement.

3. When the customer is successfully employed at (SGA) or is expected to achieve SGA and all of the services for the IPE have been fulfilled, the VRC will discuss closure. Prior to a successful closure of a customer's case, the VRC will discuss options available for the customer to obtain services and supports from an EN in order to retain and advance employment. The VRC and the customer will review the choices available so that the customer can select the most appropriate EN.

- For customers who need additional VR-funded post employment services and support, the VRC will identify the availability of resources and ticket re-assignment to an EN, if applicable. If the customer opts to transfer his/her Ticket to an _____EN, OVR will assist the customer in doing so.
- OVR closes the case when appropriate.

4. The Social Security Coordinators in each district office will be the Ticket liaisons for the EN's.

EN's Roles and Responsibilities

1. Identify a staff person(s) to be a liaison for each OVR district office associated with this agreement.

2. Once a customer's ticket has been assigned to EN, the EN will work with the customer to develop the Individual Work Plan (IWP) and submit it to OSM.

3. EN will provide long-term follow up and job retention services for the customer and, as deemed appropriate, the customer's employer, as outlined in the customer's IWP to ensure the customer's continued employment success.

4. When the customer has gross earnings above SGA, _____(EN) may begin submitting for Phase 2 milestone and outcome payments as the customer maintains and advances in employment.

5. For the first 12 months, _____(EN) will submit monthly progress notes to the VR district office SSA Coordinator.

- Wages (gross monthly earnings)
- Progress toward achieving SGA
- Summary of job-related services being provided by _____(EN)

6. The status report also includes written documentation to OVR pertinent to meeting OSM monitoring requirements regarding the customer.

Joint Responsibilities

1. OVR and _____(EN) will coordinate information in an effort to facilitate and streamline all the required reporting for both the Cost Reimbursement program and the Ticket to Work program, as well as monitor the implementation of this Partnership Plus agreement.
2. The Ticket liaisons identified by OVR and _____ (EN) will work together as needed to ensure that the informed choice of customers served under this agreement is respected. This will ensure that VRCs and EN front-line staff are informing customers of the options spelled out under *Roles and Responsibilities* of this agreement, including their option not to participate in the Ticket to Work program and still receive OVR services.
3. OVR and _____ (EN) will work together to identify and address barriers preventing customers from achieving sustained levels of SGA earnings.
4. OVR and _____(EN) will coordinate with the designated SSA administrative entity that is to provide benefit and work incentive counseling services to customers. This counseling will include information on how to maximize their earnings potential, utilize Social Security work incentives, and fully understand the impact of employment on their federal and state benefits and health care coverage.
5. Outcome/Milestone payments available under the Ticket to Work program and approval of OVR Cost Reimbursement claims depend upon the accurate reporting of beneficiary earnings. OVR and _____(EN) will work together to determine the most effective and efficient mechanism for tracking customer wages and benefit status data over an extended period of time.
6. _____(name of EN) and OVR will evaluate the effectiveness of this Partnership Plus agreement six (6) months after assignment of the first ticket and annually thereafter to determine whether any adjustments are necessary.

Specifically, the parties will evaluate the following:

- The administrative burden associated with the Ticket Program and with the reporting requirements included in this agreement:
- Patterns or trends of Ticket Assignment including how many referrals made under this agreement are accepted for services by _____ (EN) and how many are not.
- The number of customers referred to _____ (EN) for services who later find it necessary to seek post-employment services paid

for by OVR.

- The wages and number of hours worked by customers who choose to assign their Tickets under this agreement
- Success in identifying and addressing barriers to customers achieving self-sufficiency through work
- Protection of customer rights and choices under this agreement.

AMENDMENTS AND EXIT CLAUSE

The parties may agree to amend the agreement at any time. However, such amendment shall not take effect until the agreement is in writing and signed by both parties. Either party can terminate the agreement by providing the other party thirty (30) days written notice of termination of the agreement.

General Statements

- **Nothing in this agreement creates a guarantee that EN will receive any Ticket assignments.**
- The agreement will not in any way impede any of the parties from entering into other agreements regarding the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999.
- Nothing in the agreement shall in any way take precedent over the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.
- Nothing in the agreement shall interfere with the existing fee-for-service agreement that _____(EN) has with OVR.

Signed _____

Date _____

President and CEO

Signed _____

Date _____

Executive Director
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation