

CHAPTER 21: TICKET TO WORK

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SECTION 1: Overview

The “Ticket to Work Program” was created as part of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999. Its purpose is to expand the number of service providers available to SSDI and SSI beneficiaries in obtaining services necessary to find, enter and retain employment. The goal of the program is to reduce or eliminate their dependence on Social Security and SSI cash benefits.

Under the Ticket to Work Program, the Social Security Administration pays Employment Networks (employment service providers) outcome and milestone payments if they assist SSI/SSDI beneficiaries become employed above defined income thresholds. DBVI operates as an Employment Network under the Ticket to Work program.

SECTION 2: Definitions

A. “Ticket to Work” is a document provided by the Social Security Administration to disabled and blind SSDI and SSI beneficiaries that they can use to access employment services, vocational rehabilitation services and other support services to enable them to go to work. Services can be obtained from state VR agencies and other qualified Employment Networks. The program is entirely voluntary.

B. “Maximus” is the organization Social Security has hired to assist in the administration of the Ticket Program.

C. Continuing Disability Review (CDR): SSA reviews disability cases periodically to see if the person with a disability still meets disability criteria. SSA performs two types of reviews, a medical continuing disability review and a work continuing disability review. Under a work review, SSA looks at earnings to determine if an individual is eligible for monthly benefits. A medical review determines if an individual is meeting the

medical requirements to collect disability. If the person does not meet the medical requirements, SSA may stop the disability benefits.

D. Employment Network: An Employment Network is an organization or individual who provides employment services under the Ticket to Work program.

SECTION 3: GENERAL PROCEDURES

The following are guidelines for VR counselors for the Ticket to Work Program. The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that DBVI receives the maximum appropriate milestone/outcome and reimbursement payments for customers who become employed as a result of DBVI services. It is important to note that the Ticket Program and the payment mechanisms built into the program should not influence the rehabilitation counseling process.

A customer must have an open case and be in Status 12 or higher in order for DVR to accept Ticket assignment. A customer must sign a Social Security form 1365 to assign his/her Ticket to DBVI. Counselor should consider whether Ticket assignment or Traditional Reimbursement would be the best option for each eligible consumer. Consult with the Ticket Captain for the most updated guidance. It is important to note that once a Ticket is assigned Traditional Reimbursement is eliminated as an option.

Intake

During the intake process the counselor will identify if the customer is an SSI/SSDI recipient. Most SSI/SSDI beneficiaries between the ages of 18 and 65 are eligible for the Ticket to Work Program. If the customer is an SSI/SSDI beneficiary, the counselor should proceed as follows:

1. Discuss Ticket assignment with the customer at the point the IPE is signed.

a. Use the Ticket to Work FAQ for DBVI Customers (available on the DVR Intranet) to explain the program. Inform the customer that participation in the Ticket to Work program is completely voluntary. Explain to the DBVI customer that it will not affect his/her DBVI services in any way if they

choose not to assign their Ticket to DBVI or assign their Ticket to another agency.

b. Explain to the DBVI customer that the reason DBVI is requesting Ticket assignment is so the Division can receive payment if they go to work above the thresholds for payment. Any money DBVI receives goes toward services for other DBVI customers.

c. Also explain to the customer that by assigning their Ticket they will receive suspension of SSA Medical reviews for a minimum of one year. This only applies if this is the first time the customer has ever assigned their Ticket.

d. If appropriate, encourage the customer to consult with a Benefits Counselor regarding the potential impact of the employment plan on his/her benefits and healthcare coverage.

2. If the customer agrees to assign their Ticket to Work to DBVI:

a. Complete an electronic SSA form 1365 (found on the DVR Intranet under Forms or check with the Ticket Captain for most updated form) and have the customer sign the form. Give the customer page 2 of the 1365, the Privacy Act Statement. The DBVI counselor must also sign the 1365.

b. Submit the 1365 form to the Ticket to Work Administrator with a copy of the IPE.

c. The Ticket to Work Administrator will submit the 1365 and IPE to Maximus to request Ticket assignment.

3. If the customer decides not to assign his/her Ticket to DBVI:

a. Send a copy of the IPE to the Ticket to Work Administrator with a notation that the customer has decided not to assign their Ticket to DBVI. *In these cases DBVI can still potentially receive payment under the SSA cost reimbursement program.*

4. The customer has assigned the Ticket to a provider who does not have a partnership agreement with DBVI:

a. The counselor will encourage the customer to reassign the Ticket to DBVI if the customer is dissatisfied with the other Employment Network's services

- or if s/he is not receiving any significant services from the other EN.
- b. If the customer chooses to keep the Ticket assigned to the other EN, notify DBVI Ticket Administrator via phone or e-mail.

5. What if a customer becomes Ticket eligible after they have signed their IPE?

- a. It is not unusual for a DBVI customer to start receiving benefits after they have signed an IPE. Also, high school students do not become eligible for the Ticket to Work until they turn age 18. If their case is still open with DBVI, counselors should request they assign their Ticket to DBVI.

SECTION 4: CDR REVIEWS

SSA reviews disability cases periodically to see if the person with a disability still meets disability eligibility criteria. SSA performs two types of reviews, a medical continuing disability review and a work continuing disability review. Under a work review, SSA looks at earnings to determine if an individual is eligible for monthly benefits. A medical review determines if an individual is meeting the medical requirements to collect disability. If the person does not meet the medical requirements, SSA may stop the disability benefits.

Under the Ticket to Work program, when a customer assigns his/her Ticket to DBVI (or another Employment Network), SSA will not do a medical CDR for one year following the date of his/her Ticket assignment.

SSA will suspend medical CDR's for up to five additional years if the beneficiary is considered to be making timely progress. Timely progress is defined as follows:

Timeline	Required benchmarks for timely progress to continue suspension of Medical Reviews
By End of Year One	Three months of work at a Trial Work Level (defined by SSA) or 60% of full time participation in a post-secondary education or vocational training program.
By End of Year Two	Six months of work at a Trial Work Level (defined by SSA) or 75% of full time participation in a post-secondary education or vocational training program.
By End of Year Three	Nine months of Work at a Substantial Gainful Activity level (defined by SSA) or completion of a two year degree.
By End of Year Four	Nine months of Work at a Substantial Gainful Activity level (defined by SSA) or completion of an additional year of post-secondary education.
By End of Year Five	Six months at zero benefits as a result of employment or completion of an additional year of post-secondary education.
By End of Year Six	Six months at zero benefits as a result of employment or completion of a four year degree

The timely progress rules and the potential impact of a medical CDR are very complex. It is strongly recommended that the VR counselor refer a customer to a benefits counselor if they have concerns about these provisions.

SECTION 5: EMPLOYMENT NETWORK PARTNERSHIPS

DBVI has partnership agreements with all the Vermont Designated Agencies and Specialized Service agencies that provide supported employment services and JOBS program services. As part of this agreement all the Designated Agencies in Vermont have agreed to participate in DBVI/Designated Agency Employment Network Partnership. DBVI and the agencies will operate as a single Employment Network. DBVI will act as the administrative agent for the Ticket program and all Tickets will be assigned to DBVI.

DBVI counselors should follow the procedures in Section II regarding Ticket assignment for customers served through supported employment and JOBS programs.

SECTION 6: CHANGES IN PROCEDURES

It is not uncommon for SSA or Maximus to change or add administrative procedures to the Ticket to Work Program. Therefore, VR counselors should periodically check the DVR intranet or consult with the local staff person who is the Ticket to Work Liaison (Ticket Captain) about Ticket procedures. It is also important to print the ticket form each time from the DVR intranet site.