

Public Benefits and the Transition to Employment Series: Resource for People living with HIV/AIDS and Those Pursuing the New York State Certified Peer Worker Certification

Topic: Understanding Ticket to Work

About this Series:

This series is prepared by the NYSDOH AIDS Institute to provide general information about the impact of earning income on a person's eligibility for different public benefits. This information is especially important for people seeking certification and employment as a New York State Certified Peer Worker. Each individual's circumstances are different and a number of factors may impact a person's eligibility for public benefits, including their: health status; number of dependents; income to be earned; type of income; other resources or benefits received; and other factors. Individuals should consult with the appropriate benefits program representative, or other expert about their situation, prior to making decisions about accepting reimbursement for work as a Peer Worker.

What is Ticket to Work and who is eligible?

The Ticket to Work (TTW) program provides access to job support, employment training, vocational rehabilitation, job referrals, and other employment support services for people ages 18 through 64 who are receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.

Visit <https://www.chooseworkttw.net/> for information regarding the TTW program.

What does it cost to participate?

Participation in the program is completely free and voluntary. Individuals do not have to take part in the program to keep their disability benefits. The "Ticket" does not have any cash value, and cannot be cashed.

Why should I participate in the Ticket to Work program?

The TTW program provides access to the services and supports to obtain, maintain, and advance in employment from State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, or from service providers in contracts with the Social Security Administration (SSA), called Employment Networks (ENs). The TTW program promotes financial independence for people who are currently receiving SSDI and/or SSI benefits.

By utilizing a “Ticket” you can:

- Return to work or begin to work without automatically losing disability benefits
- Return to your benefits if you have to stop working
- Continue receiving healthcare benefits while employed
- Become excused from Continuing Disability Reviews (routine reviews by the SSA to determine that you continue to be disabled) while using the “Ticket” and making progress with work or educational goals

What happens when working with a State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agency?

In New York State, ACCES-VR (formerly known as VESID) is the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency for individuals with disabilities (other than blindness).

If you choose to work with ACCES-VR, you will create your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) with an ACCES-VR counselor. The IPE will outline the Vocational Rehabilitation services that will enable you to become employed. You and the ACCES-VR counselor will approve and sign the plan before your services begin.

While working with ACCES-VR under an IPE, your “Ticket” is not available for assignment to an Employment Network. When you have completed your VR services and your case is closed with ACCES-VR, you can then assign your “Ticket” to an Employment Network to receive additional services to help you keep or advance in your employment (through Partnership Plus). Your ACCES-VR counselor will assist you with this process, if requested.

What is Partnership Plus?

Through Partnership Plus, you may receive VR services to meet your overall employment service needs, and when your VR case is closed, assign your “Ticket” to an Employment Network to receive more ongoing services and supports. These services and supports may help you maintain your employment, advance in the job, and/or build your skills to increase your earnings. A “Ticket” holder can be served by ACCES-VR and an EN, but the services must not be provided at the same time.

Assigning your “Ticket” to an Employment Network after your case is closed with ACCES-VR is an option, and makes the Continuing Disability Review protections of the TTW program last longer. To continue protection from the Continuing Disability Reviews, you need to assign your “Ticket” to an Employment Network within 90 days after your ACCES-VR program is completed/your ACCES-VR case is closed. You may still assign your “Ticket” to an Employment Network after 90 days, but you will not be protected from Continuing Disability Reviews after the 90 days, until you assign your “Ticket”.

What is an Employment Network?

An Employment Network (EN) is an employment service provider. ENs are agencies or organizations which entered into an agreement with the SSA to provide or coordinate employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, and other types of support for people to achieve their employment goals under the TTW program. The EN can provide the right mix of free employment support services to best meet your needs.

How do I find an Employment Network (EN)?

There are over 125 Employment Networks throughout New York State. You can contact any EN to consider if that EN is right for you. An EN has the right to decide who it will accept a “Ticket” from, based on its ability to meet the needs of the “Ticket” holder.

To find out about ENs, you may:

- Check the online directory: <http://www.chooseworkttw.net/findhelp/>
- Call the Ticket to Work Helpline toll-free at 1-866-968-7842, (TTY 1-866-833-2967)
- Send an email to support@choosework.net

What happens if an Employment Network (EN) accepts my Ticket To Work?

Your “Ticket” will be considered assigned at the time you and the EN agree to work together by signing an Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE). The IPE defines your employment goals and the specialized services necessary for you to achieve them. When a person chooses to receive services from an EN, the SSA considers that person to be using the “Ticket”, making the person protected from Continuing Disability Reviews.

Once you assign your “Ticket” to an EN, you begin what may be a seven-year program of job training, education, and work. Timely Progress Reviews are required during the first six years, but vary depending on whether you are a student during those years (work requirements apply if you are not a student). During the seventh year, you must complete six months of work at the Substantial Gainful Activity level and not receive any SSDI or SSI benefits, due to work, during those six months. You will need to promptly report any earnings, as well as when you start or stop working, to your local SSA Office and you must also report your earnings to your EN.

Keep in mind that the TTW does not replace any of the SSA’s Work Incentives, which can help you to transition from benefits to financial independence. For more information, you may call the SSA at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778), or go online to:

<https://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/generalinfo.htm>

You may review the [Red Book](#), for more information about the employment-related provisions of the SSDI and SSI programs.

You can learn more about the Ticket to Work program or work incentives by accessing Work Incentive Seminar Event (WISE) webinars, which are free and online, at <https://www.chooseworkttw.net/webinar/>

What if I am dissatisfied with my Employment Network?

If the EN you have chosen is not providing the services you desire, ENs have a process to help with your concerns. If this process is not successful and you are not satisfied, you can un-assign the “Ticket”. You have the right to take back your “Ticket” and choose another EN.

If you are not satisfied with your EN, you may ask for help by calling the Ticket to Work Helpline toll-free at 1-866-968-7842 (TTY 1-866-833-2967), or email support@choosework.net.

What if I receive a Ticket, but cannot begin the TTW program?

If you receive a “Ticket”, but decide you are unable to begin the TTW program, ***your current level of benefits will not be affected.*** If you decide to use your “Ticket”, but then need to discontinue your involvement in the TTW program, you may reenter the program at a later date. If you lose your paper “Ticket”, there isn’t any need to worry. Your Social Security number (SSN) can be used to give you access to the program.

To learn more about the New York State Certified Peer Worker Initiative, call the HIV Education and Training Programs at 518-474-3045 or visit <https://www.hivtrainingny.org/Home/PeerCertification>

Before making any decisions about changing your employment status, contact your local Social Security Office and speak to a Claims Specialist about your specific circumstances.