

8 things to know about Ticket to Work

The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 was signed into law at the end of 1999 by former President Bill Clinton. The bill was originally proposed to provide disabled individuals with the tools and support they need to reenter the workforce. Today, the Ticket to Work program helps millions of Americans transition from their disability benefits to the financial freedom afforded to them through work. The Ticket to Work program includes many service offerings, and we have put together this list of eight important things to know about the program for those who may be interested in utilizing the services.

1 Individuals receiving benefits through the SSDI or SSI programs are eligible to participate

The Ticket to Work program is open to beneficiaries currently receiving payments from one, or both, of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) two disability programs: Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Beneficiaries typically become eligible to participate in the Ticket to Work program as soon as their cash benefits from either program begin.

2 Only beneficiaries between age 18 and 64 can utilize Ticket to Work

The Ticket to Work program is currently open to SSDI or SSI beneficiaries between the ages of 18 and 64. At the time of the program implementation, Social Security beneficiaries would reach **full retirement age** at age 65. Rather than devoting resources helping a retirement-aged beneficiary transition back into the workforce, resources were diverted to assist younger beneficiaries. Despite SSA's gradual move of full retirement age to 67, beneficiaries remain ineligible to partake in Ticket to Work once they turn age 65.

3 The Ticket to Work program is free and voluntary

There is no cost involved for participating in the Ticket to Work program. If a SSDI or SSI beneficiary has interest in returning to work, he or she can choose to activate their "ticket" for services such as benefit coordination, career counseling, job accommodations, resume assistance, and vocational rehabilitation. There is no requirement for beneficiaries to utilize the services offered to them through Ticket to Work should they wish to return to work. If beneficiaries wish to work with outside assistance or potential employers directly, they can do so with no penalty.

4 Ongoing monthly benefits will continue while participating in Ticket to Work services

If a SSDI or SSI beneficiary chooses to participate in Ticket to Work services such as career counseling or vocational rehabilitation, he or she can do so with the knowledge that their monthly benefits will continue with no reduction or pause in payment. When beneficiaries reenter the workforce, their benefits will continue, at least for a period of time, while their earnings remain under the established thresholds for SSDI or SSI benefits or both. While it is important for all beneficiaries to report any earnings to their local Social Security office, SSI recipients have stricter income requirements, so it is even more vital to do so.

5 Partaking in the Ticket to Work programs keeps health care coverage intact

Assuming monthly cash benefits – either SSDI or SSI or both – continue, beneficiaries remain eligible for health care coverage. Should monthly SSDI cash benefits end, but the impairments of a beneficiary continue to meet SSA's disability criteria, Medicare coverage can continue for at least an additional seven and a half years. Medicaid eligibility may continue as well, but the requirements for continued coverage may vary by state if SSI benefits should end. Beneficiaries should connect with their local Medicaid agency to determine their eligibility for continued Medicaid coverage should SSI benefits end.

6 Continuing Disability Reviews are paused for beneficiaries utilizing Ticket to Work

To provide additional support of beneficiaries attempting to reenter the workforce, the Social Security Administration will suspend any future medical Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs) on a beneficiary's claim, if a ticket is assigned and the beneficiary is participating in Ticket to Work services. This gives the beneficiary additional peace of mind that benefits are not in jeopardy of being suspended while working towards a self-supporting earnings level. The CDR suspension will remain in place as long as the beneficiary meets the **Timely Progress guidelines** toward vocational goals.

7 Should cash benefits end, beneficiaries may be eligible for an Expedited Reinstatement

If, due to a return to work, SSDI or SSI benefits end, a beneficiary may request Social Security grant an **Expedited Reinstatement** to restart benefit payments if he or she is unable to continue working. SSA does not require a new application to be filed for benefits to be restarted as long as previous benefits ended within the last five years. Beneficiaries can choose to receive provisional benefits – at their full benefit rate – for up to six months while a final determination is made about the reinstatement.

8 Ticket holders can choose to work with an Employment Network

Through the Ticket to Work program, beneficiaries have the option to work with either an Administrative Employment Network (AN) or an Employment Network (EN). ENs are authorized to work with Social Security and will have tickets assigned to them directly by SSA. The EN will handle all work on the ticket from the administrative work through job assistance advocacy. On the other hand, ANs will do all the "front of house" administrative work on tickets they receive from prospective ticket holders and assign out the job assistance advocacy to an experienced service provider.

Have questions? We can help.

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