

The Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program

To promote the increased employment of people with disabilities, the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (TWWIA) was enacted on December 17, 1999. The purpose of the law is to:

- increase Social Security Administration (SSA) beneficiary choice in obtaining employment services, vocational rehabilitation services and other support services;
- remove barriers that require people with disabilities to choose between health care coverage and work; and,
- assure that more Americans with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in the workforce and lessen their dependence on public benefits.

The disability advocacy community, including NJP&A, advocated strongly for the passage of TWWIA, and since its passage, has worked closely with the Social Security Administration on the implementation of the Act. NJP&A's Executive Director, Sarah W. Mitchell, was also appointed by President Clinton to be Chairperson of the twelve member Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Advisory Panel to report to the President and Congress and advise the Commissioner of Social Security on the Ticket Program as well as other work incentive programs.

What Does the New Law Do?

TWWIA establishes the **Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program (the Ticket to Work program)**. The Ticket Program provides that eligible Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries with disabilities will receive a Ticket that they can use to obtain employment services, vocational rehabilitation services or other support services from an approved provider of their choice.

The law also expands Medicaid and Medicare coverage to more people with disabilities who work. The law gives states the option of providing Medicaid coverage to more people ages 16-64 with disabilities who work. It also extends Medicare Part A (Hospital) premium-free coverage for four and one-half years beyond the current limit for disability beneficiaries who work. States also may permit working individuals with income above 250 percent of the federal poverty level to purchase Medicaid coverage. Additionally, there is a provision that creates an experiment in which medical assistance will be provided to workers with impairments who are not yet too disabled to work.

When Will the Program Begin in New Jersey?

The Ticket Program will be phased in over a three-year period, starting in 2001. Thirteen states -- Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Vermont, and Wisconsin -- will begin the Program in 2001. Additional states will be added in 2002 and 2003, so that the Ticket Program will be available in all states, including New Jersey, by January 2004.

Protection and Advocacy Services and the Ticket

Protection and advocacy (P&A) programs are authorized under the Act to assist SSA beneficiaries seeking to obtain, retain and regain employment and to provide advocacy services in support of their rights as beneficiaries.

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As New Jersey's designated P&A program, NJP&A will assist New Jersey SSA beneficiaries in addressing barriers to employment and in resolving disputes and differences with providers or other organizations. Protection and advocacy services will also address issues related to obtaining, maintaining or advancing employment, particularly those issues that may interfere with or serve as a barrier to beneficiaries working (e.g., overpayment problems).

P&A services to be provided include:

- Education and training of Social Security Beneficiaries, family members, individuals with disabilities, employers, attorneys, government agencies, service providers, community organizations, and advocacy groups about employment, work incentives, and other work related issues, including available civil rights protections under law.
- Information and referral to inform individuals/groups of individuals of the types of services and assistance that may be available to them in return to work efforts, including methods to apply for and access those services.
- Investigation and review of any complaint of improper or inadequate service assistance by a vocational provider, work incentive planner, employer of other entity involved with return to work efforts.
- Assistance with the resolution of complaints through mediation, negotiation or other good faith efforts of dispute resolution.
- System advocacy to identify and correct deficiencies in those systems which are providing services and or supports to individuals attempting work.
- The provision of legal counsel and litigation services when such services become necessary to protect the rights of the individual under law.

Where Can I Get More Information?

The Social Security Administration (SSA) maintains a Website on the Ticket Program and the Act at <http://www.ssa.gov/work>. The Ticket to Work Advisory Panel also maintains a Website at <http://www.ssa.gov/work/ResourcesToolkit/resourcestoolkit2.html>. SSA has also contracted with MAXIMUS, Inc., to serve as the Program Manager for the Ticket Program. MAXIMUS is a private organization that will help Social Security manage the program. One of its main duties is to provide information to beneficiaries and the general public about the Ticket Program. Contact information for Maximus is listed below. NJP&A is also available to provide current information on the implementation of the Act.

MAXIMUS is the SSA-contracted Program Manager for the Ticket Program. It has trained staff who can answer all questions related to the Ticket Program. 1-866-968-7842 (1-866-YOURTICKET); TTY (1-866-833-2967) (1-866-TDD 2 WORK).



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