

**A GUIDE TO THE GOALS, BENEFITS AND PROCESSES OF  
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION'S  
TICKET TO WORK PROGRAM  
FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES  
WHO DESIRE TO WORK AND VOLUNTARILY PARTICIPATE**

**PREPARED FOR  
THE FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
MANAGEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF**

**APPLICABLE TO OTHER COUNTY BOARDS OF DD  
AND EMPLOYMENT NETWORKS**

**Prepared by**

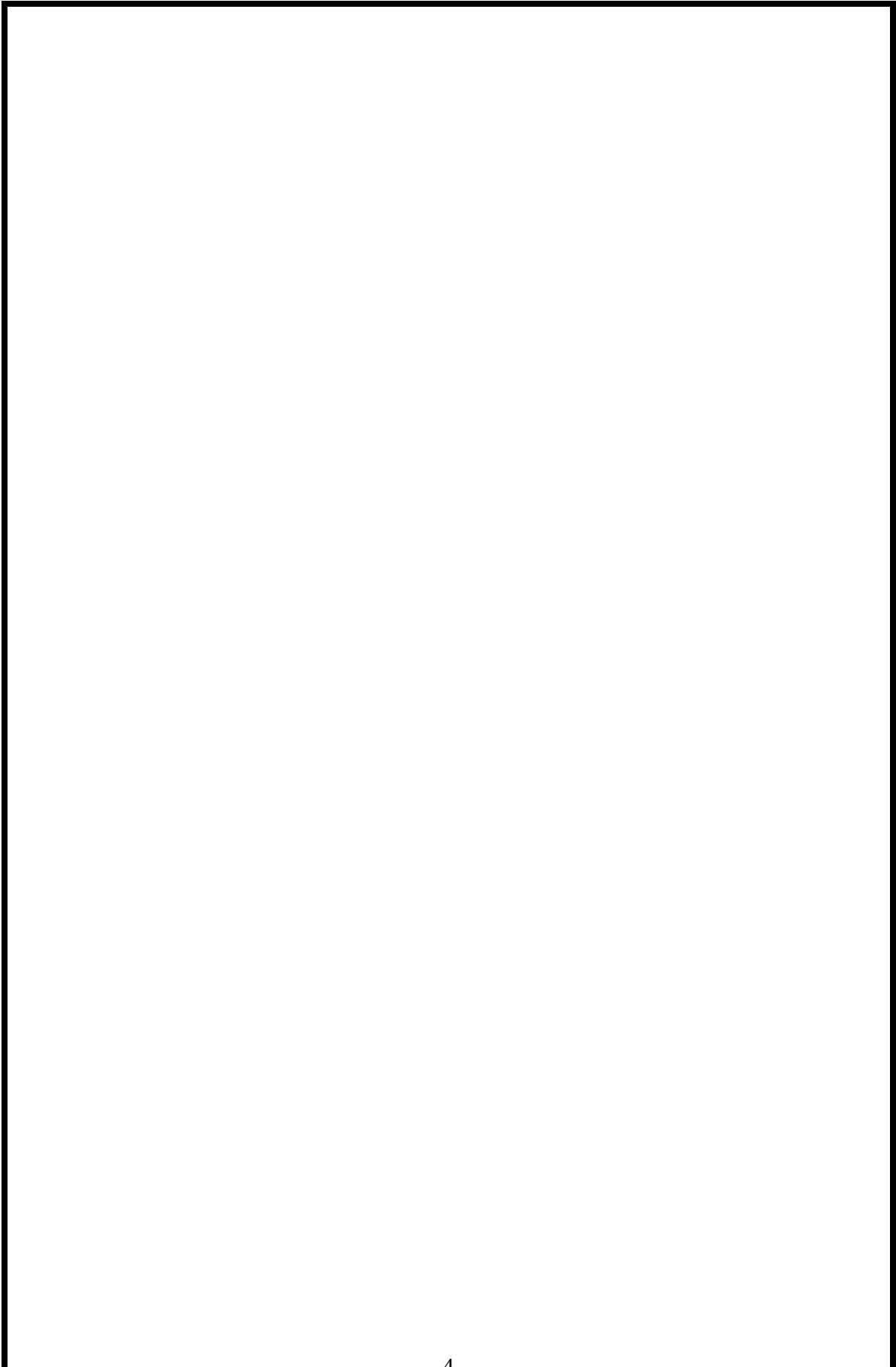
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Executive Summary

<b>I. Introduction and Goals of Ticket to Work</b>	<b>7-8</b>
<b>II. Understanding the factors that Make Competitive Employment for People with Developmental Disabilities a Real and Great Opportunity</b>	<b>9-10</b>
<b>III. The Process of Ticket to Work</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Step Number One: Data Collection</b>	<b>13-14</b>
<b>Step Number Two: Identifying Key Individuals for Voluntary Participation in TTW and Determination of Ticket Availability for Assignment to the County Board of DD.</b>	<b>15-16</b>
<b>Step Number Three: Making Contact with Individuals who are TTW Eligible and Prime Candidates for meeting Milestones and or Outcomes</b>	<b>17-19</b>
<b>Step Number Four: Completing the Individual Work Plan, which Enrolls the Individual in Ticket to Work and Assigns the Ticket to the Board</b>	<b>21-25</b>
<b>Step Number Five: Implementing the Individual Work Plan</b>	<b>27-30</b>
<b>Step Number Six: Submitting Requests for Payment to MAXIMUS</b>	<b>31-35</b>
<b>Concluding Thoughts</b>	<b>37</b>



## **Executive Summary**

This document explores the goals, background, benefits and the processes for the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program. Numerous appendices are made throughout to provide a good orientation to source documents that will be used in TTW implementation or particular references shoring up the TTW intention.

**Chapter I** introduces and discusses the goals of the reformed Ticket to Work. A comparison between the original and reformed regulations is presented through a chart from SSA. Then a number of goals are discussed within the TTW program. They are intended to assist professional staff of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities to discuss with individuals with developmental disabilities who desire to or are working how TTW can assist them in acquiring and retaining employment along with creating conditions for improved earnings, increased self-reliance, and greater independence. It also details how the CBDD can obtain outcome payments from SSA totaling as much as \$22,000 over six or more years in assisting individuals to meet particular earning levels that are for trial work as well as substantial levels, significantly above the usual individual with a disability. Benefit protections for keeping Medicaid while working and a safety net for expedited reinstatement of SSI or SSDI cash benefits are detailed.

**Chapter II** discusses the factors that are creating an evolution for supported and competitive employment for many youth and adults. Included in this chapter are the effects of school inclusion on transitioning youth to work. Another factor is the role of supported living in advancing independence on one's residences. Also explored are the improved understanding of individuals, families, advocates and professional staff on the variety of benefits that a person with a developmental disability may receive and how does gainful employment affect these. Ohio's new Medicaid Buy-In for Workers with Disabilities is introduced as an important vehicle for maintaining essential Medicaid benefits including Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services waivers while working. Also, the notion that many benefits that employers provide will be available to individuals who meet the business's definition of full-time which usually is at or above thirty hours a week.

The Social Security's "Benefits Planning Query" is presented as a means to gain improved understanding of the benefits one receives and other information stored in SSA files including work history. Finally, as the mainstream work force ages and retires, there will be improved opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities to fill the vacancies.

**Chapter III** details the processes of Ticket to Work through discussion of how TTW is implemented for individuals who want to voluntarily participate. The chapter is broken down into steps namely:

- 1) Data collection of potential TTW eligible individuals including essential information related to TTW;
- 2) Identifying Key Individuals for Voluntary Participation in TTW and Determination of Ticket Availability for Assignment to the County Board of DD;

- 3) Making Contact with Individuals who are TTW Eligible and prime candidates for meeting Milestones and or Outcomes;
- 4) Completing the Individual Work Plan, which Enrolls the Individual in Ticket to Work and Assigns the Ticket to the Board;
- 5) Implementing the Individual Work Plan;
- 6) Submitting Requests for Payment to MAXIMUS.

Essential documents in these processes are discussed and referenced in attached appendices.

**Concluding Thoughts** on Ticket to Work and the changes it portends are made as a conclusion to the document.

## **I. Introduction and Goals of Ticket to Work**

Ticket to Work was originally implemented by the Social Security Administration around 2000. Its major goal was to assist people with disabilities who receive cash benefits from SSA to receive the assistance to become gainfully employed and transition off these cash benefits. It was the intention of SSA to enable more people with disabilities to enter the mainstream workforce. Historically, the employment of people with disabilities has greatly lagged behind the mainstream workforce. The original Ticket to Work program did not work well for many people with complex needs and characteristically low wage earnings. It did not have a phase-in approach for those individuals who need trial periods of work to adjust to and work longer hours necessary for moving off Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI). A complete review of the original and new regulations is contained in **Appendix A**.

A continuing major goal of the SSA is to reduce the number of people with disabilities who are on SSI/SSDI by providing incentives for them to reach substantial gainful activity, which in 2010 is \$1,000 of gross earnings and is adjusted annually. Once this level is sustained over time (\$1,433 for SSI recipients), benefits may zero out as income from work increases.

A second goal is to create incentives that allow individuals to try out work and retain SSI and SSDI while getting paid at or above trial work levels which were earnings of at least \$720 a month. This trial work level is a good opportunity for those people who are below this level over the past eighteen months and want to and are capable of earning gross wages at the TWL. It is also a great opportunity for those entering the labor force as new employees and gain progress through the TWL.

A third goal is to protect health care and support benefits such as Medicaid home and community based waivers and Basic Medicaid that most individuals need in spite of gainful employment. Ohio adopted in 2007-08 a Medicaid Buy-in Program for Workers with Disabilities as described in Attachment One. This program allows individuals to earn up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level around \$27,000 in 2010 and still maintain their Medicaid benefits. 1619 b provisions are also available for individuals who are working, zero out on SSI and gain the protection of this regulation to maintain Medicaid. See **Appendix B**.

A fourth goal is to create a safety net that allows an individual a five year window to have SSI or SSDI restored if the individual has "zeroed out of cash benefits and subsequently loses employment. SSA provides a six month expedited return to SSI or SSDI and monthly cash benefit payments for six months while SSA reviews the case for continuing payments.

The fifth goal is to provide outcome payments to enrollment networks like County Boards of Developmental Disabilities as a financial reward for assisting individuals to increase work and earnings meeting trial work levels and substantial gainful activity. These payments are for reaching particular outcomes and do not represent a conflict with any other payments that the board might receive from other federal, state or local sources. Over the course of about eight years, the board can receive up to \$23,000 in payments from SSA for assisting eligible individuals. These payments can be used for additional employment supports like job development, job coaching and follow along services as

well as other uses with the exception of matching other federal monies. See **Appendix C**.

## **II. Understanding the factors that Make Competitive Employment for People with Developmental Disabilities a Real and Great Opportunity**

There are several significant factors that have increased the attraction and importance of employment for youth and adults with developmental disabilities. Inclusion in regular classes in the public schools has allowed graduating youth to want integration into the mainstream community and avoid segregation. Increasingly, youth with developmental disabilities have not experienced segregation away from their peers who are not disabled. Upon graduation and transition to adulthood, they will prefer regular employment.

Another important factor has been the evolution of supported living. Since the 1990s, county boards of developmental disabilities have led the nation in assisting adults to live in homes of their choosing, with one or two other persons with disabilities, in communities of their choosing and with services and providers being chosen by them. Many of the adults being worked with commonly live wither with families or in their own residences. This dynamic and change from past segregation creates another impetus for employment. Being able to purchase for one self the things needed for community life.

A third factor is better understanding by individuals and their families about the value of certain benefits versus others. There are programs like Ticket to Work that seek to reduce reliance and dependence on cash benefits like SSI or SSDI and promote significantly more income through substantial work and earnings, well above amounts from cash benefits. TTW also has an expedited return to employment within five years after having zeroed out of cash benefits. This provision allows reinstatement to SSI or SSDI for six months without needing a new application. An individual on SSDI can work, zero out of cash benefits and remain eligible for Medicare for ninety-three months.

Another benefit program that is critical to be retained is Medicaid. For most people with developmental disabilities, Medicaid provides health care and other services and supports like professional assistance within ones home, particular therapies, transportation, respite care and employment supports. It can be under the form of Medicaid Basic, Medicaid Home and Community Based Services and ICF:MR services. Since 2000, states have been allowed to set up Medicaid Buy-In for Workers with Disabilities programs. Currently, more than forty states offer them. Ohio adopted its MBIWD program in 2008. It allows workers with disabilities:

- 1) to maintain the aforementioned Medicaid programs while working;
- 2) to have increased earnings to 250 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) (\$27,000) in 2010,
- 3) to increase allowable assets to over \$10,000;
- 4) to eliminate Medicaid spenddown and patient liability payments, which can range from nothing to over \$5,000 a year with a small premium comparably for those at or above 150 percent of the FPL (currently about \$16,000). See Attachment

Individuals with developmental disabilities should also be able to receive any benefits that non-disabled workers receive by working thirty hours or more per week and being considered full-time. For many years, workers with disabilities have not received these benefits because of their less than full-time status. There are also programs like the

Work Opportunity Tax Credit and other federal monies that can create employer incentives to hire people with disabilities.

It is important to assist individuals with developmental disabilities to fully understand their benefits and the interaction of them. The Social Security Administration conducts a program called the Benefits Planning Query as follows:

***“Benefits Planning Query (BPQY)***

*Analysis of a person’s disability and work status is the first step in planning a successful return to work initiative. A BPQY provides information about a beneficiary’s disability cash benefits, health insurance, scheduled continuing disability reviews, representative payee, and work history, as stored in SSA’s electronic records. It is an important planning tool for an AWIC, PASS Specialist, benefits counselor, or other person who may be developing customized services for a disability beneficiary who wants to start working or stay on the job.*

*We provide BPQYs to beneficiaries, their representative payees and their authorized representatives of record upon request. Beneficiaries can request a BPQY by contacting their local SSA office or by calling SSA’s toll free number, 1-800-772-1213 between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. People who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may call our toll-free TTY/TDD number, 1-800-325-0778, between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.*

*If someone other than the beneficiary, representative payee, or authorized representative (a benefits counselor, for example) wishes to receive a BPQY, they must submit two forms SSA-3288 (Consent for Release of Information) that have been signed by the beneficiary: one to authorize the release of Social Security records and the other to authorize the release of Internal Revenue Service earnings records. Both releases must contain the beneficiary’s Social Security Number or the Claim Number of the person under whose work record the benefits are paid.”*

This benefit analysis coupled with an evaluation of wages from a variety of employment possibilities can assist the individual with a developmental disability to make an informed decision on participating in work, increased work/earnings, career decisions and the decision to give up cash benefits and join the MBIWD.

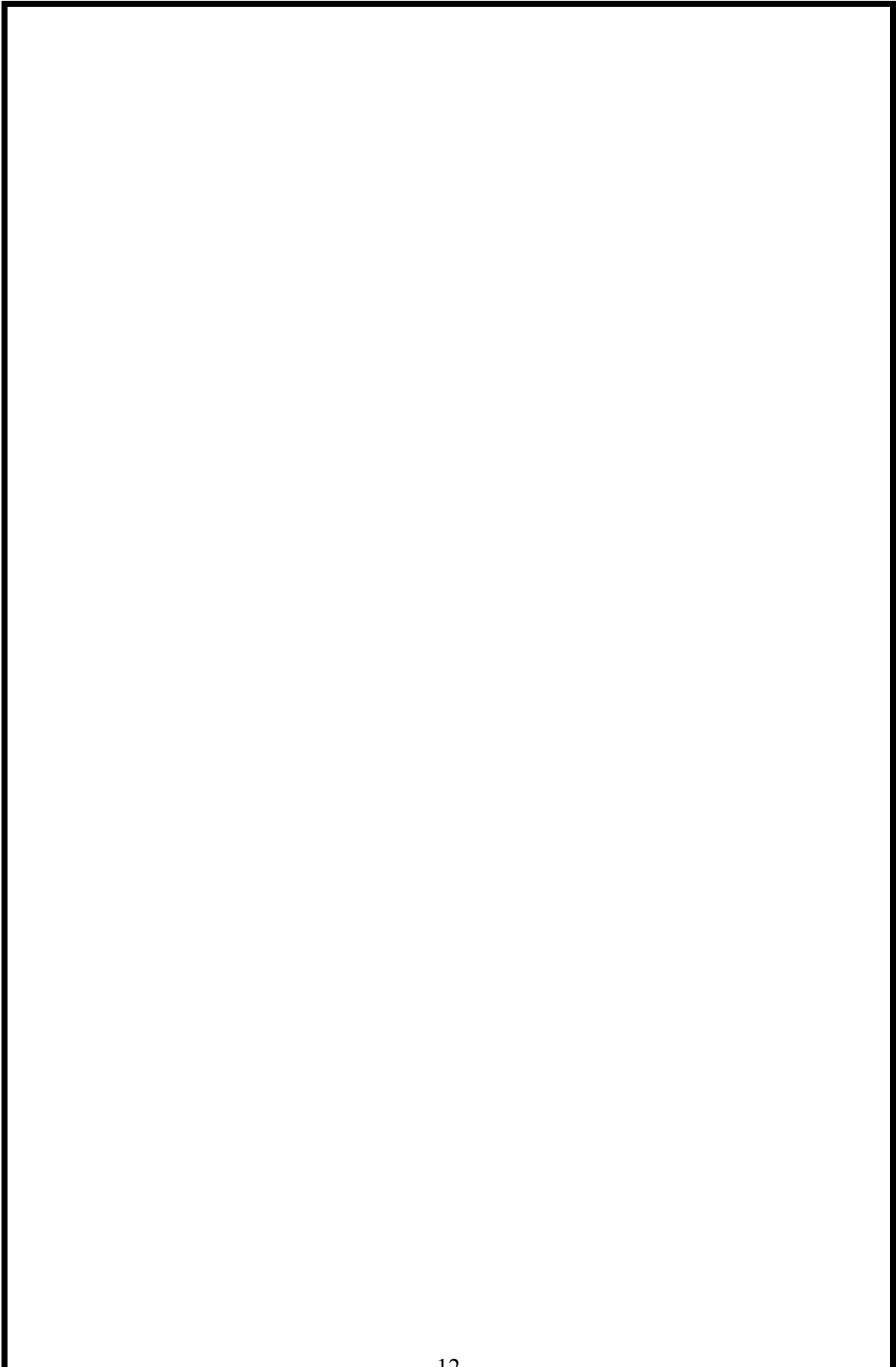
As the mainstream work force ages and retires, there will be many additional vacancies with business and industry. Obviously, a major untapped resource are people with disabilities including youth with disabilities graduating from high school who desire and are clearly capable of filling many of these vacancies.

All of these factors provide improved circumstances for people with developmental disabilities to acquire and retain gainful employment. As the economy improves, more opportunities will present themselves as well. Ticket to Work and the Medicaid Buy-In for Workers with Disabilities represent important instruments to make this happen.

### **III. The Process of Ticket to Work**

In 2008, every individual who was on SSI or SSDI was sent a "Ticket" in the mail. The Ticket allows the individual to participate on a voluntary basis in the Ticket to Work program and to assign the ticket to an enrollment network. Absence of an actual "ticket" is no problem as the ticket eligibility is determined through the applicable social security number and not the physical presence of a ticket.

An enrollment network is an adult employment supports agency that has applied for and been approved by the Social Security Administration to participate in the Ticket to Work program, assisting individuals to acquire and retain employment, meet milestones and outcomes and receive outcome payments for their work. The Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission, several other county boards of dd, mental health boards, and private agencies are approved as enrollment networks across Ohio.



### Step Number One: Data Collection

The following information is needed baseline to survey which of these individuals might be effective candidates for participation in Ticket to Work on their own voluntary basis. See **Appendix D**.

Name	SSN	SSI or SSDI	Average Monthly Wages Total Wages divided by months of employment in last 12 months	Medicaid Basic, Waiver, ICFMR or None	Subsidies Per month	Month for Annual IHP Renewal of IHP
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The rationale for collecting this information is as follows:

**Name:** This is important for obvious reasons and is a usual component of most databases allowing information from several sources to be merged and combined.

**SSN:** The Social Security Administration and its contractor, MAXIMUS, for the administration of Ticket to Work principally use the individual's social security number for information and identification requests. It also represents the individual's "Ticket".

**SSI or SSDI:** To participate in TTW, an individual must be receiving SSI or SSDI. It is also important for determining the benefits of an individual participating in TTW because of regulatory differences in the program for these different cash benefits. Also, it is important to be aware that Social Security oftentimes moves working people on SSI to SSDI when they accumulate six quarters or more out of twelve of pay-in for social security retirement benefits. So an individual might be on SSDI and the existing file record says SSI. It is good to check with the individual or the local Social Security Administration for exact status.

**Average Monthly Wages:** Total Wages Divided by months of employment in last 18 months: Since TTW is based on gross earnings, it is critical to have accurate wage records in the possession of the enrollment network for those who are receiving job supports by the board from any of the three programs. This information is required for determining whether the individual is at the Trial Work Level of \$720 a month and which of four milestones is the individual eligible. It is needed for determining substantial gainful activity of \$1,000 a month for the outcome payments. This information is routinely used for other benefit planning like Medicaid for the calculation of spend downs and patient liability and allowed asset levels in SSI, Medicaid and the Medicaid Buy-In Program for Workers with Disabilities (MBIWD). Wage information is the key component for payment requests in Step Number Six.

**Subsidies:** Subsidies are payments made to individuals who have lower productivity levels than other workers for the same work with some of the work being performed by job supports and/or being paid a usual rate for the job when performing below expectations. The SSDI deducts these subsidies from gross earnings for workers under this program. So an individual could have gross earnings of \$1,200 a month with a \$400 subsidy and SSDI only looks at the non-subsidized earnings of \$800. While \$1,200 is above substantial gainful activity, in the eyes of the SSDI regulations, the individual is not yet at that level.

Under SSI, subsidies are not deducted. In the above stated case, an individual who earns \$1,200 even though \$400 is a subsidy is regarded to be at the substantial gainful activity level of over \$1,000. For a discussion of this issue and a SSA reference please see the SSA Red Book 2010 **Appendix D**, page 21.

**Month of Annual IHP Renewal:** This date may be a convenient time to enroll working individuals on TWW as well as reviewing the IWP along with other reviews.

An excel file of this information is in **Appendix E**.

**Step Number Two: Identifying Key Individuals for Voluntary Participation in TTW and Determination of Ticket Availability for Assignment to the Enrollment Network.**

After the data has been collected and analyzed, several target groups of individuals working can be identified as follows:

Group I: Individuals on SSI with subsidies or SSDI minus subsidies who are earning \$1,000 or more per month in gross earnings Target Phase 2 Outcomes;

Group II Individuals on SSI and earning above \$600 a month regardless of subsidies Target Phase I Milestones \$720;

Group III Individuals on SSDI and earning over \$600 a month in real earnings not counting subsidies Target Phase I Milestones \$720;

These individuals are most feasible for TTW enrollment and meeting the ticket goals. Other individuals can be selected based on their interest after receiving information from staff and desiring to increase wages.

Based on these determinations and prior to any discussions with individuals related to their participation, the Enrollment Network Lead Manager for TTW faxes a letter to MAXIMUS asking for the assignability of all of the SSNs (without names) of potential candidates. MAXIMUS will return a listing of the SSNs in these three categories:

- 1) Assignable meaning the individual may assign the ticket to the enrollment network;
- 2) Not Assignable: Meaning the individual has assigned the ticket to another enrollment network and must notify them of desiring to reassign the ticket to Employment Network;  
and
- 3) Not in database meaning that the individual is not receiving SSI or SSDI.

Group I Assignable can be worked with immediately to voluntarily participate in Ticket to Work and assign the ticket to the EN.

Group 2 Not Assignable. Individuals, if desiring to reassign their ticket to the EN, must notify the agency that they previously assigned their ticket to, such as the Ohio Rehabilitation Service Commission, that they want to “unassign” their ticket. A standard letter for such request is in Appendix F.

If the Employment Network is providing employment supports to the individual, justifiably the board should be getting the TTW payments. If an RSC case has not been closed, then it is justifiable for RSC to get the ticket proceeds. Most of the tickets were probably assigned, the individual ceased getting services for the previous assigned employment network and the ticket was just never reassigned. Now the opportunity presents itself for such re-assignment.

Group 3: If the EN records indicate that the individuals are on SSI or SSDI and MAXIMUS is saying they are not; then checking with the individuals and their representatives should be undertaken. Reconciling the information with MAXIMUS is

critical before proceeding on any TTW enrollment. An individual who is not receiving SSI or SSDI is not eligible to participate in TTW.

### **Step Number Three: Making Contact with Individuals who are TTW Eligible and Prime Candidates for meeting Milestones and or Outcomes**

The Employment Networks its designated staff of job developers, program managers and other support personnel along with designated service coordinators need to fully understand the benefits of TTW for certain employed individuals, potential issues and ways to make the program work effectively for those who choose to participate. It is also important for individuals who are working to understand ways to maintain Medicaid basic, ICFMR and Home and Community based waiver services while working through either 1619 b for those on SSI and beyond \$1,433 a month in earnings and the Medicaid Buy-In Program for Workers with Disabilities. These two programs will be discussed in a separate document and information can be readily received from the Service and Support Administration Department.

Before any meeting with individuals, it is helpful to send out written documentation of the TTW program, the goals of the program and its benefits.

This information should include:

1. Employment Networks Information on the Ticket to Work Program: Your Ticket to a Job, Increased Wages and Greater Independence, May 25, 2010 See **Appendix G.**
2. Fact Sheet: Medicaid Buy-In for Workers With Disabilities (MBIWD) from ODJFS, January 2009 See **Appendix B.**
3. Frequently Asked Questions on Ticket to Work See **Appendix H.**

Shortly thereafter, the EN's employment supports or Service coordinator contact for the individual should schedule a short informal meeting to discuss Ticket to Work and other work incentives like the MBIWD in accordance with the above documents. The board representative should be totally knowledgeable related to the above documents and identify that the program can lead the individual to:

- 1) Have vocational goals and earnings identified and a clear path for meeting those goals and earnings over the next five years or so with identified supports from the EN;
- 2) Earn greater income potentially well above the cash benefits under SSI and SSDI;
- 3) Obtain possible advancement because of willingness to work more hours increasing career opportunities with businesses;
- 4) Gain possible new benefits through work;
- 5) Develop more independence in one's life, greater freedom, improved self-reliance, real life work and social opportunities, and improved inclusion with the mainstream workforce;
- 6) Get SSI and SSDI benefits started again by SSA through expedited reinstatement if employment should be lost,
- 7) Eliminate current Medicaid spenddown and patient liability that may be paid by the individual or board;
- 8) Earn up to \$27,000 or more per year and still maintain Medicaid benefits;
- 9) Have greater allowed asset limits under the MBIWD; and

- 10) SSA outcome payments to the board for meeting outcomes with the individual, which allows increased funding for employment supports for those who want to work and other services to individuals who are in need.

It also needs to be explained that the program is voluntary and if after a trial period, the individual may choose to continue the program or to leave the program at no penalty. Previously referenced, in **Appendix D**, is the Social Security Administration's Red Book for 2010, which basically is:

**“A SUMMARY GUIDE TO EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES UNDER THE SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY INSURANCE AND SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME PROGRAMS”**

This guide is an important reference for a lot of questions related to employment and how cash benefits of SSI and SSDI are affected by such employment. Having answers to such questions as “what if I lose employment, can I get back my cash benefits?” is important.

The answer can be found on Page 28 as follows:

**“Expedited Reinstatement (EXR)**

*SSDI and SSI eligible*

**What is EXR?**

*EXR is a safety net for those persons who successfully return to work and later lose their entitlement to SSDI or SSI benefits and payments. If your cash payments ended because of your work and earnings, and you stop work within 5 years of when your benefits ended, we may be able to start your benefits again.*

**How does EXR help you?**

*If you have stopped receiving benefits due to your work, you may be able to restart them again without a new application. The EXR provision allows a person to receive up to 6 months of temporary cash benefits while SSA conducts a medical review to determine whether the person can be reinstated to benefits. The person may also be eligible for Medicare and/or Medicaid during the provisional benefit period.*

**Who can be reinstated?**

*You are eligible to request EXR if you meet all the following requirements:*

*Previous entitlement to SSDI benefits was terminated due to performance of SGA; or previous SSI disability/blindness eligibility was terminated because of excess earned income or a combination of earned and unearned income;*

*Not performing SGA in the month you apply for EXR;*

*Be unable to work at the SGA level due to your medical condition;*

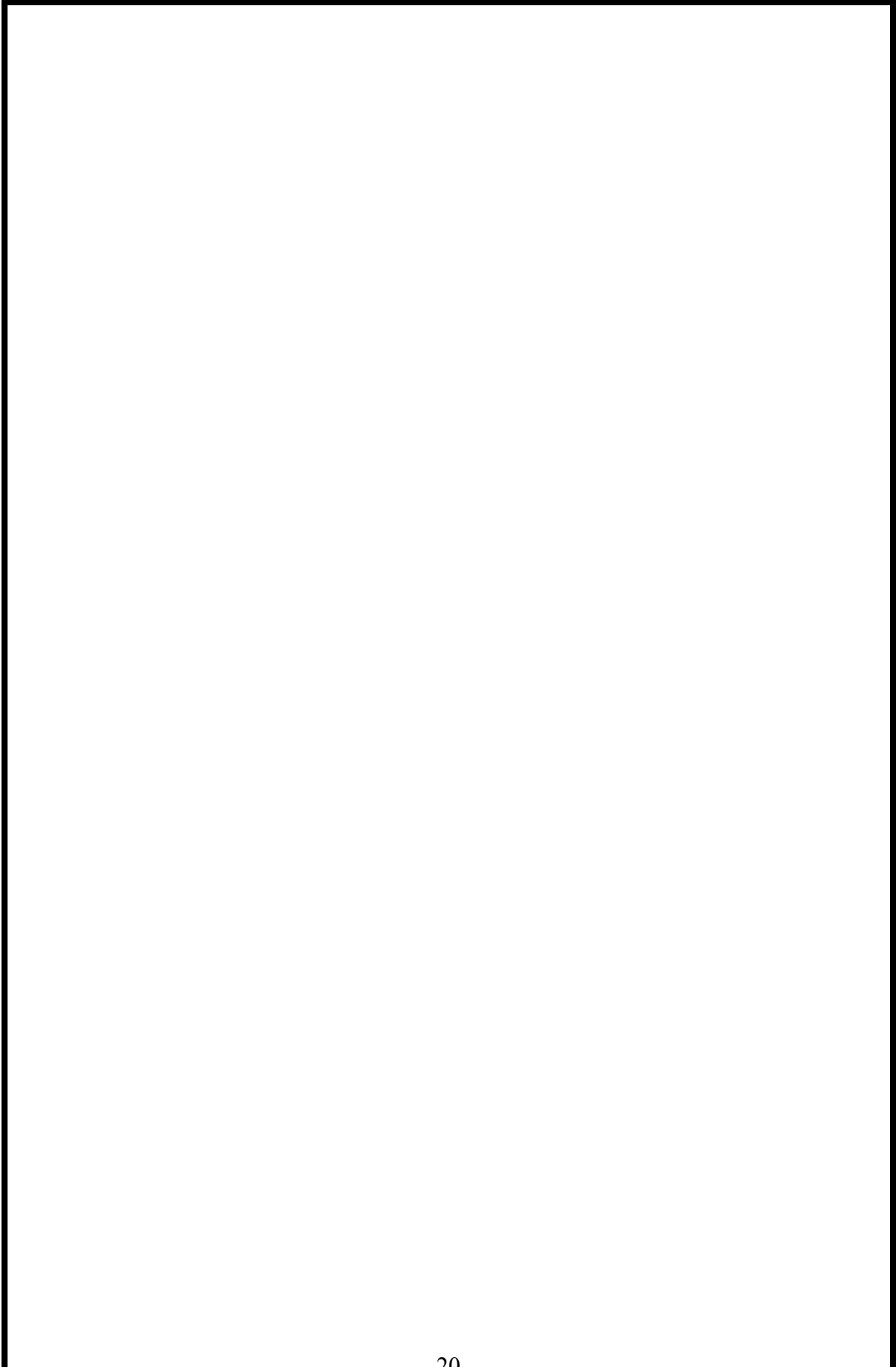
*Have a current medical impairment(s) that is the same as, or related to, the original disabling impairment(s); and*

*Request EXR within 5 years from the month we terminate your benefits.”*

Because of the differences in SSI and SSDI and how employment is handled under the two programs, familiarity with the entire Red Book is encouraged. Be aware a new version comes out annually and the old version may not be totally applicable.

After this meeting which should take about thirty minutes and could be done as a follow-along visit, the individual should be asked if there is interest in pursuing the Ticket to Work program and if on Medicaid, to participate in the MBIWD. For those wanting to participate in TTW, schedule a meeting of about 45 to 60 minutes to go over the program in more detail and complete the Individual Work Plan.

For those wanting to participate in the MBIWD, please notify the applicable service coordinator assigned to the individual by the County Board of DD. Enrollment on the MBIWD can save the individual and the board payments to Medicaid for spenddown and patient liability of as much as thousands of dollars per year as well as protecting Medicaid while employed.



## **Step Number Four: Completing the Individual Work Plan, which Enrolls the Individual in Ticket to Work and Assigns the Ticket to the Board**

### **Overview of the IWP**

The Individual Work Plan is the instrument that sets goals and projected earnings on a short-term basis of one year and a long-term basis for up to five years. It also delineates supports the board will offer, earnings history, terms and conditions related to employment, and the rights and responsibilities of the individual and the board in the IWP. The IWP template is in **Appendix I**.

### **Participants in the IWP meeting**

The individual may have any representatives including family members, guardians, providers, representative payees or other advocates present for the meeting. The board should have the employment supports person assigned to the individual (who should chair the meeting) and the individual's service coordinator as well as any other staff directly involved with the individual in terms of job supports.

### **The parts of the plan are as follows:**

Basic information for the individual and the board is filled out on the top of the first page.

#### **1. What Is Your Specific Vocational Goal And Expected Monthly Earnings Amount?**

Goals need to be measureable and objective. It is best to identify the title of the job, name of the business, weekly projected work hours and pay rate for the individual and whether the individual will attempt to attain the trial work level of \$720 a month or substantial gainful activity of \$1,000 or more per month. Also, it is important to perhaps specify "or more" after these wage levels since SSA will probably raise these amounts in January 2011 and thereafter. Obviously the calculated work hours and pay rate need to equate to either the TWL or SGA. If the individual currently is making less than either but is seeking to get to that level, specify a date when that level is to be achieved through increase in hours or wages or both. If the individual is not currently working, then goals will be oriented to acquiring employment using the same parameters with a stated deadline.

The long-term goal should be directed in terms of career aspirations for the individual and ways to get there. It may include additional education to necessary training. It certainly is fine to maintain the current job if that is the desire of the individual. Within this five-year time frame, SGA of \$1,000 or more must be a goal even if it may not be attained.

#### **Short Term Goal (in the next 3 to 12 mos.):**

I want to continue working as a kitchen maintenance assistant at the Hilton Easton and I want to increase my hours from twenty hours per week to twenty-five or more hours per week by December 1, 2010 and to maintain my rate of pay at \$8.10 an hour. I will consider other part-time employment if I cannot increase my hours with the Hilton Easton.

**Expected Monthly Earnings Amount (in the next 3 to 12 mos.):**

\$720 a month or more

**Long Term Career Goal (throughout the next 5 years):**

By October 1, 2012, I would like to work as a banquet setup person and waiter for the banquets section at the Hilton Easton or a comparable employer. I am willing to take training for this new position and would want to work forty hours a week and have an hourly wage of at least \$10.00 per hour. I also want to have company benefits given to any other such employee.

**Expected Monthly Earnings Amount (throughout the next 5 years):**

\$1,680 per month or more

**2. What Supports/Services Have You and Your Counselor Agreed Would be Required for You to Reach Your Short Term Goal?**

**During the job search phase and the first nine months of employment:**

Typically follow along at least once per month is put in here. It maintains regular contact with the individual and the business, hopefully assisting in retention of employment and resolving any work related issues in a timely manner. It is easier to preserve and maintain employment than it is to obtain new employment.

If the individual is seeking a new job than job development can certainly be specified. If the individual has new job responsibilities than a job coach may be required. If the individual needs training for a new position than perhaps some type of career development may be specified.

**After your first 9 months on the job (job retention supports and career advancement, if any):**

Same as above but specific to the long-term goal.

**3. Work History**

Please check all that apply

I had **no earnings in the last 18 months.**

I had **some earnings** in the last 18 months.

None of my earnings were in the last 6 months.

Some of my earnings were in the last 6 months. **(Please describe those earnings in the chart below, listing your most recent employer first.)**

Employer	Start Date	End Date	Wage Per Hour	Hours Worked Per Week

**NOTE to EN:** As a convenience, you may attach a completed 18-Month Prior Earnings Worksheet (available at [http://www.yourtickettowork.com/training\\_2](http://www.yourtickettowork.com/training_2)) or just use it for your own information.

This section uses actual gross earnings records and employment start and end dates. For any individual at the Trial Work Level of \$720, an eighteen-month look behind must be completed to identify Phase I Milestones for which the individual still has eligibility. If an individual works at \$720 or more a month for nine months or more within eighteen months, no eligibility exists for the Trail Work Level. The Look Behind document is an interactive tool and is located in **Appendix J**.

Wage records need to be obtained and maintained by the board for the Ticket to Work program. Here are several ways to get past records:

1. Pay stubs can be obtained from the individual to maintain a work history and to complete the above table.
2. Another approach that the IWP authorizes is to get a pay record from each employer as identified in the above box showing start and end dates, pay rates and hours worked for at least the last eighteen months. This approach may be the most accurate and efficient for staff to document the records.
3. Also, if the records are maintained by the board or ARC Industries for individuals in enclaves or on-site crews, these pay records can fully complete this task.
4. If there is difficulty in getting pay records over five months back, these can be obtained from MAXIMUS. See Appendix K. More recent records, less than five months, are not yet in the SSA system. These will need to be gained from the individual or employer.

Future pay records are vital to document achievement of the TWL milestones and SGA outcomes for MAXIMUS to approve payment to the board. Collecting pay stubs at each monthly follow along or other visit with the individual is a good practice so these records are available for payment requests.

4. **Terms and Conditions Related to the Provision of Services** (If there are no terms and conditions, then that must be stated):

Any accommodation that is necessary for work and the results of work may be included here.

- A. Usually transportation to and from work and who pays for that is a condition;
- B. Health and safety considerations such as not working on certain equipment, avoiding hazardous conditions or material and anything else that could injure or cause the death of the individual or other persons should be identified.
- C. When the individual lives at home, parents sometimes want specification that the individual will replace SSI/SSDI that went for room and board with equivalent payments from their earnings.
- D. If the individual is earning a wage and is on or wants to be on Medicaid, there should be specification to apply for Ohio's Medicaid Buy-In Program for Workers with Disabilities by a date perhaps up to sixty days out. This responsibility is

delegated to the service coordinator and should be handled by that coordinator on a timely referral basis.

E. Other conditions or terms that may be necessary and are agreeable to the individual and the board.

**5. The last part “Consumer Rights and Responsibilities should be filled in with the E throughout and go over all parts of this section verbally or through appropriate alternative communication modes with the individual asking if it is understood. Then the individual (or guardian) can sign when agreeable.**

**CONSUMER RIGHTS & REMEDIES**

(Insert EN name in the blanks below, unless otherwise stated)

As a consumer of The Employment Network Name you have the following rights:

- 1) The Employment Network Name may not request or accept any compensation from you for the costs of services and supports we provide you.
- 2) This IWP may be amended by you or The Employment Network Name if both parties agree.
- 3) The Employment Network Name may end this relationship if no longer able or willing to provide services as planned.
- 4) You may unassign your Ticket at any time if you are dissatisfied with the services and supports being provided by The Employment Network Name.
- 5) If you and The Employment Network Name are unable to resolve any disputes about the services and supports being provided, the internal dispute resolution process will be available to you. You may also contact the State Protection and Advocacy Program for assistance.
- 6) The Employment Network Name has informed you the beneficiary of the annual progress reviews and the Timely Progress Review guidelines.
- 7) Your personal information including your Social Security number and information about your disability will be kept private and confidential.
- 8) Only qualified employees and/or providers will be used to furnish services.
- 9) If any medical or related health services are provided, they will be provided under the supervision of persons licensed to prescribe or supervise the provision of these services in the State in which the services are performed.
- 10) A copy of this IWP will be provided to you in an accessible format.

**I declare under penalty of perjury that I have examined all the information on the form and any accompanying statements or forms, and it is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.**

By signing below, I agree to the terms of this IWP and give my permission to The Employment Network Name to contact employers on my behalf to verify or obtain evidence of work or earnings.

Beneficiary's Signature:

EN Representative's Signature:

Date:

Date:

Each individual is to get a signed copy of the IWP after the board representative currently, the Director of Employment Services, signs it. Staff including job developers, job coaches, program managers, staff support personnel and service coordinators assigned to and working with the individual on the plan must be alerted to the existence of the plan and have routine access to the plan.

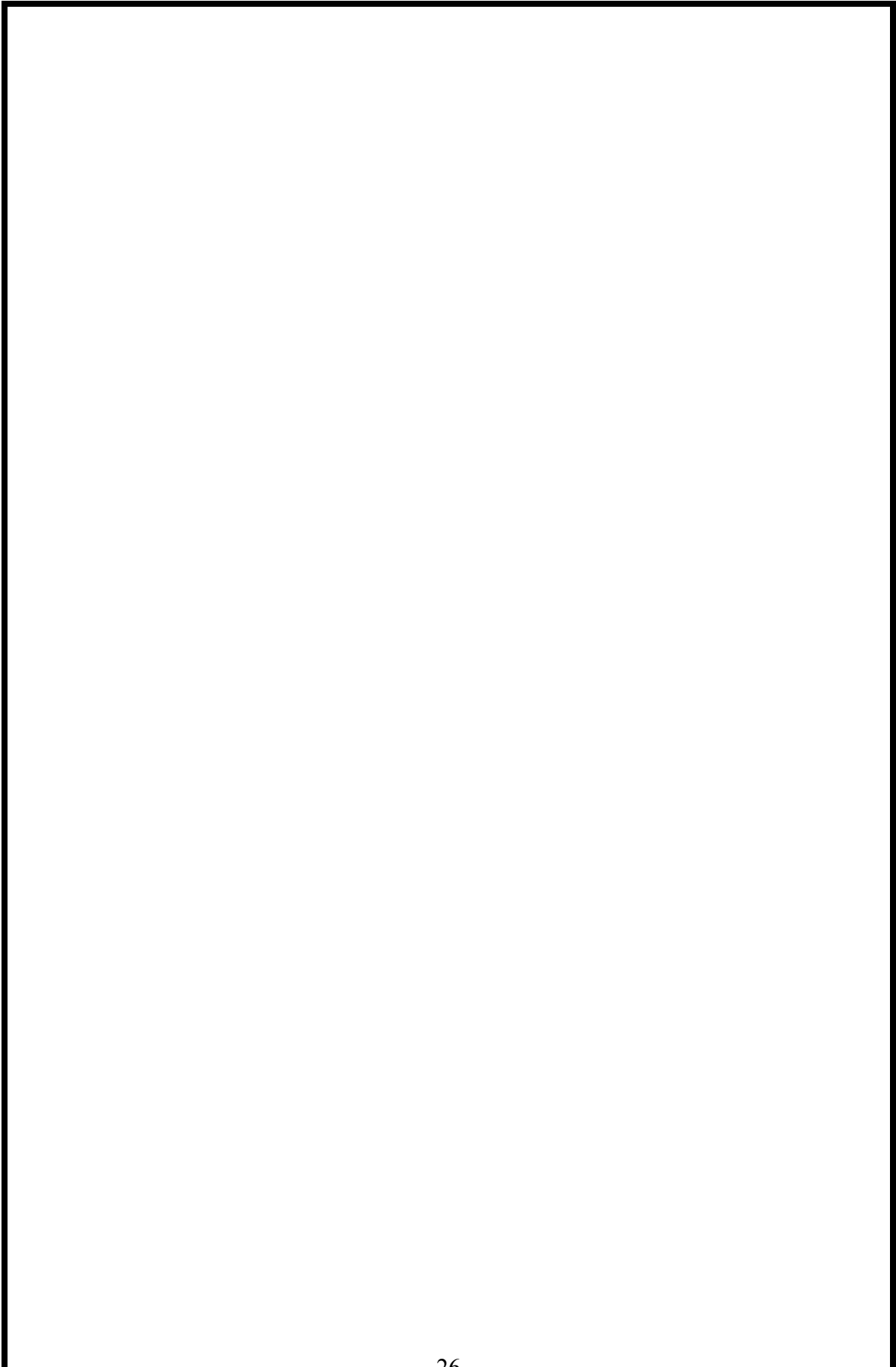
Once the IWP is completed and signed, it needs to be faxed to MAXIMUS, a company that is helping Social Security manage the Ticket to Work program. Once received by them, the individual is enrolled in Ticket to Work and with supports provided by the employment network.

The current MAXIMUS representative for Ohio is

Barry Carlson, EN-VR, Account Manager  
Federal Services  
2000 Duke Street  
Suite 200  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Office 703-236-3403  
Fax 703-683-0927

[barrycarlson@maximus.com](mailto:barrycarlson@maximus.com)



### **Step Number Five: Implementing the Individual Work Plan**

Since the plan represents an agreement and the strategy for the individual's participation in TTW, there must be a professional employment staff member assigned to work with the individual on plan implementation. The TTW individual work plan may represent a departure from past practice. In the past, many individuals, families, representatives, advocates and professional staff across the Nation have sought to limit working hours and wages of individuals with disabilities so as to protect cash benefits from SSI and SSDI. This practice serves to keep many capable adults with disabilities tied to particular benefits, while well intentioned have a consequence of keeping them poor.

The IWP speaks of vocational goals based on particular earnings levels and progression toward high levels in anticipation of zeroing out SSI and SSDI. Some individuals may not make their goals, while others will make their goals and others will greatly exceed their goals. The Employment Services Professional needs to work with the individual to meet their goals. Some possible ways to address the goals are through an array of employment supports including job development, acquisition, job coaching, and follow-along as follows:

- 1) Assisting the individual to acquire and retain employment if not yet working. (Please note, TTW does not require an individual to be employed to be eligible for TTW. However, to reach TWL and SGA goals, it requires gainful employment.)
- 2) Working with the business to increase weekly hours or wages if working but not yet at the TWL or SGA;
- 3) Assisting the individual to gain additional part-time or alternative work to meet the vocational goals;
- 4) Assisting the individual in learning and performing new tasks as part of increased job responsibilities, more hours and increased earnings;
- 5) Ensuring that the individual routinely meets work responsibilities through follow along visits;
- 6) Collecting pay stubs to verify earnings on at least a monthly basis;
- 7) Working with the individual to achieve long-term goals over the next one to five years which may involve change of positions within a company or obtaining a new position with another company and any necessary training;
- 8) Referring the individual for specific training to meet career goals to an educational or vocational training entity;
- 9) Other tasks needed to accomplish specific vocational goals.

Another task after the filing and approval of the Individual Work Plan is to update the 18 month Look Behind for Phase 1 Milestone payments. An individual who is seasonally employed, was laid off, or has any other monthly earnings over the past 18 months below the Trial Work Level of \$720 a month may be eligible for Milestones 1-4 with payment to the board of some Phase 1 payments. It is well worth while to experiment with this Look Behind instrument with each individual's pay record to identify the multiple range of possibilities. Milestone payments are at \$1,275 per individual per milestones.

In the event payment records are not complete, an earnings inquiry request from Ticket to Work may be submitted to MAXIMUS. It is an online request form and can be used after the Ticket has been assigned essentially after the IWP is completed and submitted to MAXIMUS. See **Appendix K**.

The directions for this request are as follows:

Submit this online Earnings Inquiry Request by filling in the fields below and clicking "Send" to request earnings information for Ticket-holders assigned to your organization prior to submitting payment requests. Upon receiving this Earnings Inquiry Request (EIR), MAXIMUS will review quarterly wage earnings records available to Social Security and respond in writing indicating whether the requested Ticket-holder has reported earnings at or above three times Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) for each calendar quarter available. Wage earnings at this level in a quarter may mean that the beneficiary earned over SGA for each of the three months within the quarter. This, in turn, may indicate that your EN is eligible for payment. Because there is some lag time between the actual earnings period and the data appearance in Social Security administrative records, only calendar quarters ending over five months ago will be available.

Here are some limiting factors related to the requests

- Only written EIR requests will be accepted. Responses will not be given to verbal requests.
- Because the quarterly wage records available to Social Security store earnings data for only the last 8 quarters, the oldest information available is 8 quarters plus 8 months back (for lag time), or just over 2 ½ years.
- Earnings information is first available 8 months after the time period in which it was earned: 3 months for the end of a quarter plus 5 months for the records to appear.
- Earnings information is not available for time periods prior to the date of Ticket assignment.
- This earnings information is intended to give the board an indication of the beneficiary's level of earnings to assist staff in deciding if a request for a payment should be made. **The information does not guarantee that the board is eligible for EN payment. Several other variables apply when granting EN payment.** Even if the beneficiary is reported with earnings over three times SGA for a quarter, the only way to determine if a beneficiary has achieved payment outcomes is to submit a payment request to MAXIMUS. Unfortunately, not all earnings information is available in Social Security administrative records. For example, earnings may not be available for Ticket-holders who are self employed or work for the Federal government.

Another important ongoing task is to assess the individual's timely progress within the TTW program. The individual's participation in the Ticket to Work program began when the individual signed an agreement with an employment network or state vocational rehabilitation agency. With their help, the individual developed an employment plan. While you are in the program, SSA through MAXIMUS will review individual progress in achieving the goals of your employment plan every 12 months.

MAXIMUS, Inc., will review each individual's progress. The following table explains how they determine whether each individual is making timely progress. In addition to the

items in this chart earning a high school diploma/GED will satisfy the educational requirement for the first 12-month review.

<b>12-month Review period</b>	<b>Work requirement</b>	<b>Degree or certification program</b>	<b>Technical, trade or vocational program</b>
First year	3 out of 12 months with trial work period level earnings.	Completed 60 percent of full time course load for 1 year.	Completed 60 percent of full time course load for 1 year.
Second year	6 out of 12 months with trial work period level earnings.	Completed 75 percent of full time course load for 1 year.	Completed 75 percent of full time course load for 1 year.
Third year	9 out of 12 months with substantial gainful activity level earnings.*	Completed a 2-year program or, for a 4-year program, completed an additional academic year of full time study.	Completed the program.
Fourth year	9 out of 12 months with substantial gainful activity level earnings.*	Completed an additional academic year of full time study.	
Fifth year	6 out of 12 months at substantial gainful activity level with no Social Security disability or SSI benefits.	Completed an additional academic year of full time study or completed 4-year degree program.	
Sixth year	Work criteria are same for 5th and subsequent 12-month periods	Completed 4-year degree program.	

*\*In 2010, earnings of \$1000 or more (\$1,640 if you are blind) are considered substantial.*

If MAXIMUS should find that the individual is not making progress in the Ticket to Work program, they may begin a medical review to see if the individual is still disabled. For the vast majority of people with developmental disabilities this will not be a problem. The individual may continue in the Ticket program even if MAXIMUS should find that the individual is not making progress.

Whenever the individual is making progress again, you should contact MAXIMUS.

They will make a decision about the progress. As long as the individual meets the

disability rules, qualifies to participate in the Ticket to Work program and starts making progress as expected, MAXIMUS will not begin a medical review.

## **Step Number Six: Submitting Requests for Payment to MAXIMUS**

This section has been excerpted from “**A REFERENCE GUIDE FOR EMPLOYMENT NETWORKS AND STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES FUNCTIONING AS EMPLOYMENT NETWORKS**” April 2010 (Excerpted and modified for form)

### **Payment Request Guide**

This guide provides Employment Networks (EN) with a quick reference to the process of requesting payment. The guide is designed to explain how to request a payment, and what to provide in order to expedite the processing of your request. Please note that references to ENs include State Vocational Rehabilitation (SVR) Agencies acting as ENs, unless otherwise noted. If you have any questions about the payment process or have specific questions about a payment request you have submitted, or are preparing to submit, please call the MAXIMUS toll free number at 866-949-3687.

### **PART I - PREPARING TO SUBMIT A PAYMENT REQUEST**

Before you submit your request for payment, you will need to ensure that the following have occurred:

- A. You have received notification from MAXIMUS confirming ticket assignment.
- B. You are familiar with the current Trial Work Level (TWL) and Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) earnings thresholds.  
For 2010, TWL is \$720 per calendar month, and SGA for non-blind ticket holders is \$1,000 per calendar month. For blind ticket holders, the SGA amount is \$1,640 per calendar month. The beneficiary has earnings from work that meets TWL (for Phase I Milestones) or SGA level (for Phase 2 Milestones and Outcome Payments).  
Attainment Month needs to be completed (premature request).

### **PART II - PAYMENT METHODS**

When your organization decided to become an EN, you completed the Request For Proposal (RFP). In doing so, you chose one of the two payment methods available to ENs; the Outcome Payment Method or the Milestone-Outcome Payment Method. Employment Networks have the option to change the payment method once per calendar year. Please note that the new payment method will only apply to tickets assigned after the change. The Employment Network should choose the Milestone-Outcome Method.

#### **The Milestone-Outcome Payment Method**

ENs who choose this method are able to submit for payment sooner than with the Outcome Payment method. This payment method consists of Phase 1 and Phase 2 Milestones as well as Outcome payments.

#### **Phase 1 Milestones**

All four Phase 1 Milestone payments are based on TWL earnings.

### **Phase 1, Milestone 1**

As soon as the ticket holder has one calendar month of TWL earnings, the EN can submit for this payment (see **Appendix C** for 2010 Payments at a Glance chart). In fact, there are two situations in which the EN can submit for Phase 1, Milestone 1 with at least half of TWL earnings (\$360 for 2010). Many times ticket holders begin working towards the middle of the month. Let's say a ticket holder begins working on March 15 and earns \$400 for the month. In April, the ticket holder works the entire month and earns \$800.

### **Phase 1, Milestones 2 - 4**

In order to be eligible for these payments certain requirements should be met

Milestone 2: 3 months of earnings at TWL within a 6 month period

Milestone 3: 6 months of earnings at TWL within a 12 month period

Milestone 4: 9 months of earnings at TWL within an 18 month period and completion of **Certification of Services form See Appendix L.**

### **Phase 2 Milestones**

All Phase 2 Milestone payments are based on SGA earnings and single calendar months. Once the ticket holder fulfills Phase 1 Milestones, they are eligible for Phase 2 Milestones. Once SGA is met, you can submit a request for payment and can receive up to 18 payments of \$220 a month for SSI recipients and up to 11 payments of \$382 a month for SSDI and concurrent (receiving SSDI and SSI) recipients.

### **Outcome Payments (under the Milestone/Outcome Payment Method)**

All outcome payments are based on SGA earnings and single calendar months. You can submit for an Outcome payment when the ticket holder's federal cash benefits are suspended due to their earnings and earnings are at SGA Level. There are up to 60 payments of \$220 for SSI recipients and up to 36 payments of \$382 for SSDI and concurrent recipients.

### **Outcome Payment Method**

#### **(Not Currently Applicable to the Employment Network)**

Under this method there are no Milestone payments available. Other differences are the dollar amounts of each payment and the total value of the ticket, which is slightly higher under this payment method. There are up to 60 payments of \$409 for SSI recipients and up to 36 payments of \$711 for SSDI recipients. What remains the same is the requirement that the ticket holder's earnings are at SGA Level and their federal cash benefits are suspended due to their earnings. For every month that these requirements are met you can submit for an Outcome payment.

### **PART III - WHAT TO SUBMIT**

Documenting earnings is required because the determination to cease a ticket holder's benefits is an action taken very seriously by SSA, and each ticket holder deserves due process. Therefore, you must submit evidence of the ticket holder's earnings and the EN Payment Request Form to MAXIMUS when requesting a payment under the Evidentiary Payment Request (EPR) Process.

#### **Primary Evidence of Earnings**

It is necessary to provide legally acceptable evidence that documents the ticket holder's earnings from work. Below is a description of types of evidence that are acceptable:

- a) Unaltered copy of the pay stub;
- b) Employer prepared and signed earnings statement;
- c) Records from third-party sources that present earnings broken down by month, such as The Work Number;

These forms of evidence must include the following information:

- 1) Ticket holder's name and Social Security Number
- 2) Employer's address (if available)
- 3) Employer's name
- 4) Ticket holder's earnings for the claimed month
- 5) Pay period beginning and ending dates, and pay date
- 6) Gross earnings for the claimed month
- 7) Year-to-date gross earnings

#### **EN Evidentiary Payment Request (EPR)**

An EN can use the EPR process to submit a payment request after the close of an earnings period (month, quarter, or longer). To do so, the EN must submit a completed EN Payment Request Form to MAXIMUS to request payment for the given earnings period, along with an accepted primary source of earnings evidence. This EN Payment Request Form is included in **Appendix M**.

#### **EN Certification Payment Request (CPR)**

If primary evidence of earnings is unavailable, the EN can request payment using the CPR process described below. The CPR process can be used for both Outcome and Milestone payment requests. ENs should be aware that CPR payment requests take longer to process due to the fact that SSA must verify earnings before payment can be made. In addition, a signed repayment agreement, included in the EN Payment Request Form, is required of the EN.

An EN can use the CPR Process to submit a payment request after the close of an earnings period (month, quarter, or longer). To do so, the EN must submit a completed EN Payment Request Form to MAXIMUS to request payment for the given earnings period, along with an accepted source of secondary earnings evidence.

The form must include the following information:

- a) The Employment Network's name and Employer Identification Number (EIN);
- b) The ticket-holder's full name and Social Security number (SSN);
- c) The months for which payment is requested;
- d) The name of the ticket-holder's employer;
- e) The signed repayment agreement by the EN agreeing to repay any payments received that were not due;
- f) The signature of an EN representative in the organization and date; and
- g) One of the following acceptable forms of secondary evidence:
  - 1) Earnings Inquiry Request (EIR) response from MAXIMUS indicating that the beneficiary had earnings of over 3 times SGA or TWL for the quarter in question
  - 2) Details of a recent contact with either the beneficiary or employer stating the beneficiary had earnings necessary to qualify for payment
  - 3) National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) data
  - 4) Self-Employment Income (SEI) Form for self-employed ticket-holders

#### **PART IV - PAYMENT REQUEST FORM**

The EN Payment Request Form can be mailed or faxed to MAXIMUS along with the necessary documentation. The form can be downloaded at [http://yourtickettowork.com/payment\\_options](http://yourtickettowork.com/payment_options).

MAXIMUS Ticket to Work Program  
Attn: Payments Department  
PO BOX 1433  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Fax: 703-683-3289

For detailed instruction on how to complete the form, please refer to the EN Payment Request Form tutorial. After we receive your payment request, we review the documents to ensure the necessary information has been included. If the information is incomplete, we will contact you to acquire the missing information. We evaluate the documents you submit to verify authenticity, and we certify that the documents presented are sufficient evidence to document earnings.

The next step is for us to submit the information to SSA with either a recommendation for payment to be issued, or further action. The amount of time required for SSA action varies according to the type of action necessary. SSA processes the request:

- 1) Payment request processed and approved - SSA will electronically transfer the payment to the established EN bank account on file.
- 2) Payment request processed and denied - The EN will be notified of the denial via the EN Payment Status Report.
- 3) Field office development activities required (for Certification Payments) - SSA field office staff verify earnings, and other significant beneficiary data.

If 30 days have passed since your payment request was sent to SSA by MAXIMUS, and a payment or denial have not been issued, then you may contact your Account Manager for more information.

### **Automatic Payment Requests**

There is also an automatic payment request form, which can be used with individuals who consistently are earning at the SGA level or above. This document is in **Appendix N**.

### **EN Payment Status Report**

Employment Networks will receive weekly status reports of all their EN payments received by MAXIMUS. This report is available every Friday and reflects year-to-date payment activity data. The report is available in electronic format only and includes: the date each payment request was received by MAXIMUS, beneficiary name, payment option, dollar amount paid, claim month(s), and the status of each payment request submitted. This form is the only way to track if a payment is denied or approved.

### **PART V - THE AUTOMATED CLEARINGHOUSE PAYMENT ENROLLMENT FORM**

**(ACH)** The Automated Clearinghouse Payment Enrollment Form (ACH) is submitted as part of the application package to become an Employment Network. The ACH Form provides the Social Security Administration with the information needed to issue payment to an EN when a payment request has been approved.

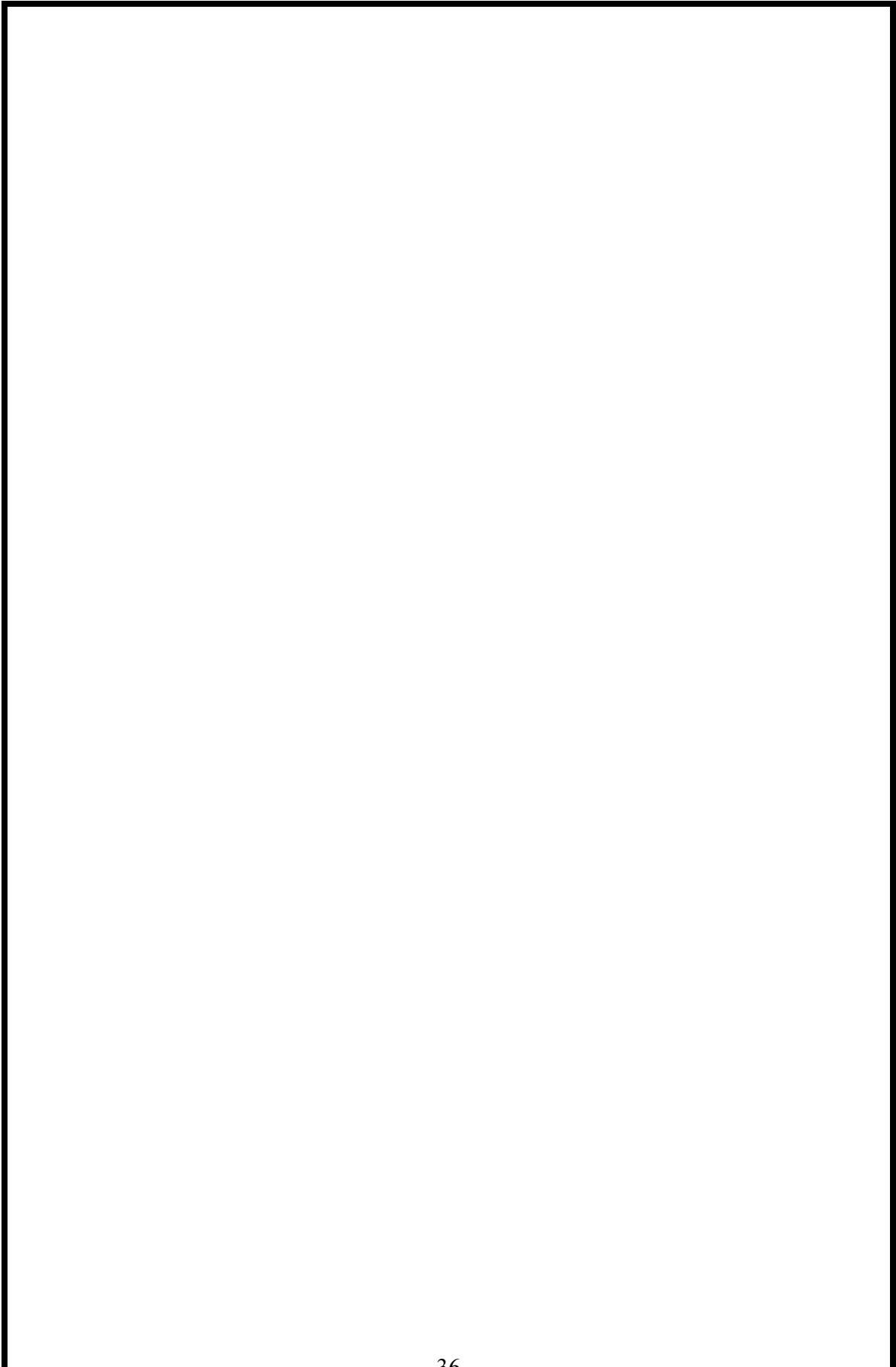
An EN must resubmit the ACH Form to MAXIMUS if there are any changes to the original banking information See **Appendix O**.

The following information is required:

EN Signatory Authority Signature

Name, title and signature of bank official

EN Contract Change Form (emailed or faxed) from EN Signatory Authority requesting the banking information update see **Appendix P**.



## Concluding Thoughts

Throughout this guide, an attempt has been made to identify the rationale for and effective ways to implement Ticket to Work. TTW can promote employment that is beneficial to individuals with developmental disabilities and greatly improve their lives. Some individuals will have the capability to improve work outcomes through more hours, increased longevity, higher earnings and benefits that other workers without disabilities obtain through working thirty hours or more per week. It is well documented the loyalty of persons with disabilities to their employers and this program allows them to gain greater rewards and earnings accordingly.

The outcome payments made to the Employment Network can be an enhancement that allows additional supports to be given to individuals who also desire employment. As was previously briefly discussed, a letter from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) states that Ticket to Work payments are not in conflict with Medicaid payments. They are also not in conflict with other federal, state and local monies, thus they do not take away from other revenue sources or even eliminate them because they are not a supplant. See **Appendix Q**.

The board can realize over \$20,000 in additional monies under TTW when an individual progresses through Milestone and Outcome payments. This funding can be important especially during state budgetary cutbacks.

While the TTW program seems cumbersome, it truly is very simple in design, based on individual earnings through trial work levels and substantial gainful activity. It is a cultural change from past practices of restricting hours and hourly rates to avoid loss of cash benefits through SSI and SSDI. To successfully implement TTW, employment supports staff must engage a different way of thinking including one's expectations and performing away from past practice. TTW and its processes have to be engaged by the employment supports professionals to be successfully implemented in partnership with the individuals participating in the program.