

## Who and What of Employment Services

### Quick Reference Guide

**HCBS Employment Services:** These are services paid for by the Community HealthChoices waiver – Benefits Counseling, Employment Skills Development, Career Assessment, Job Finding, and Job Coaching. It is important to note that these employment services cannot be accessed first, as Medicaid is payer of last resort. Refer to CHC HCBS service definitions for more information regarding referrals that must be made by SC (or self-referral) and attempted before proceeding to authorize one of these 5 services.

**PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR):** Serves people with disabilities who present a substantial impediment to their employment. Services are provided to individuals who can benefit from and who need assistance to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain employment. It is important to note that there is an eligibility process. A referral does not guarantee service and/or service in a timely fashion. Therefore, it is important to document dates of referrals, as well as provide support to connect with other entities such as PA CareerLink®.

- Please reference OVR's Referral Instructions guide for how to refer, which begin by creating or signing into account with [www.pacareerlink.pa.gov](http://www.pacareerlink.pa.gov). Participant must have an email address to complete the referral. If the participant already has a PA CareerLink® account, the referral will follow that section of the instructions. Be sure to document the date of referral.
- Know that if a participant had a VR Counselor in the past, it does not mean that the case is still open. A participant calling the VR Office does not create a referral application.

**PA CareerLink®:** [American Job Centers](#) across the state of PA, providing free help to all job seekers for a variety of career and employment-related needs. In PA, centers provide both virtual and in-person services; workshop calendars can be accessed for specific centers through the website. It is encouraged for participants to get connected with their local center to learn of “hot jobs,” training opportunities, and more! With this localized approach, PA CareerLink® can bridge gaps in disability services.

**Ticket to Work (TTW) Program:** Social Security's Ticket program is a free and voluntary Social Security program for Social Security disability beneficiaries ages 18-64 who want to work. It is a good fit for those with disabilities who want to improve their earning potential and are committed to preparing for long-term success in the workplace. Participants who receive Social Security benefits because of a disability and are aged 18-64 probably already qualify for the program. The Employment Networks will discuss [work incentives](#) based on the individual's specific benefits, which may include and are not limited to Protection from Medical Continuing Disability Reviews, Expedited Reinstatement, and Trial Work Period.

- Ticket to Work Help Line: 1-866-968-7842 (V) or 1-866-833-2967 (TTY). Lines are open from 8am to 8pm EST. The Help Line provides general information about the Ticket to Work Program, the WIPA program, and how work affects Social Security benefits. The Help Line also provides an intermediary service to screen and refine referrals to the WIPA projects in efforts to identify the individuals who NEED individualized WIPA services and to facilitate and encourage the connection.

**Work Incentive and Planning Assistance (WIPA):** Centers are staffed by certified Benefits Counselors (specifically Community Work Incentives Coordinators – CWICs) to provide beneficiaries with disabilities information to make informed decisions about work through individualized, in-depth, employment focused benefits counseling and work incentives planning. The mission of the WIPA program is to

promote employment and financial independence for beneficiaries of the Social Security disability programs. In PA, there are currently 4 centers that serve participants based on county of residence. CWICS help: verify all benefits information; identify and connect with services or supports needed to overcome barriers to employment; understand how paid employment will affect all federal/state/local benefits; identify, use, and manage Social Security work incentives. They can also support beneficiaries with reporting wage information to Social Security, help beneficiaries successfully manage benefits over time, analyze healthcare coverage options so beneficiaries can determine which options offer the best coverage at the most affordable price, and resolve benefits problems. While any eligible beneficiary who contacts a WIPA project should receive basic information and referral services based on presenting needs, there is a priority of service with individualized services are typically reserved for beneficiaries who are closest to employment. Beneficiaries with general questions should contact the Ticket Help Line for assistance.

- Priority Group 1: Individuals who are currently working or engaging in self-employment and have both a need for and interest in receiving individualized work incentives planning and assistance services.
  - Urgent needs within this group may include: beneficiaries working at a level that may result in an overpayment of benefits; working beneficiaries who have encountered a problem that might result in resignation, cutting back on hours, or otherwise reducing earned income; working beneficiaries considering a promotion, a second part-time job, a job or career change, or becoming self-employed.
  - Least urgent needs within this group may include: working (or self-employed) at such a low level that no work incentives will be used; no ability or interest in working more than they currently are.
- Priority Group 2: Beneficiaries who are actively pursuing employment or self-employment and who are interested in receiving work-related benefits counseling. This group includes:
  - Beneficiaries with a clear employment goal who are conducting an active and regular job search; and
  - Beneficiaries with a clear employment goal who have taken active steps to prepare for achieving that goal.
    - Examples include: participating in an education or training program related to the employment goal; participating in a work-study program, on-the-job training (OJT) opportunity, apprenticeship, paid or unpaid internship, or other job preparation program; in the process of developing a business plan, securing financing for business start-up, or otherwise preparing to pursue the self-employment goal; have an approved PASS, a pending PASS, or are good candidates for PASS development; have a Ticket assigned (or “in use”) with the State VR Agency or an Employment Network (EN) with a signed Individual Plan for Employment (IPE)/IWP and are actively engaged in the services stipulated in the plan
- Social Security prioritizes serving transition aged youth interested in work as a WIPA priority separate from priority groups 1 and 2. Transition aged youth are defined by Social Security as 14-25 years old. WIPAs prioritize transition aged youth even if they are in the earlier stages of considering work or preparing for work.

**Note that there are many avenues of support as it relates to employment. These are the key ones you will need to know to effectively support participants.**