

Fact Sheet

TICKET TO WORK AND WORK INCENTIVES IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1999

The President signed the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 on December 17. This new law:

- increases beneficiary choice in obtaining rehabilitation and vocational services;
- removes barriers that require people with disabilities to choose between health care coverage and work; and
- assures that more Americans with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in the workforce and lessen their dependence on public benefits.

The provisions of the law become effective at various times, generally beginning one year after enactment. They are described below.

Establishment of the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program

The program will be phased in nationally over a three-year period beginning January 1, 2001, with the first Tickets issued early in 2001.

Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability beneficiaries will receive a "Ticket" they may use to obtain vocational rehabilitation (VR), employment or other support services from an approved provider of their choice.

The Ticket program is voluntary.

Expanded Availability of Health Care Services

The law includes several enhancements to Medicaid and Medicare that are effective October 1, 2000.

States will have the option to provide Medicaid coverage to more people ages 16-64 with disabilities who work.

States will have the option to permit working individuals with incomes above 250 percent of the federal poverty level to buy in to Medicaid.

The law creates a new Medicaid buy-in demonstration project to provide medical assistance to workers with impairments who are not yet too disabled to work.

The law also extends Medicare coverage for people with disabilities who return to work. It extends Part A premium-free coverage for 4 1/2 years beyond the current limit for Social Security disability beneficiaries who return to work.

Expedited Reinstatement of Benefits

Effective January 1, 2001, when a person's Social Security or Supplemental Security Income disability benefits have ended because of earnings from work, he or she would be able to request reinstatement of benefits.

Beneficiaries must be unable to work because of their medical condition.

They must file the request for reinstatement with Social Security within 60 months from the month of their termination.

While Social Security is making a new determination, beneficiaries may receive up to six months of provisional benefits, including Medicare and Medicaid, as appropriate.

If Social Security decides that the medical condition no longer prevents the individual from working, the provisional benefits paid would not be considered an overpayment.

Continuing Disability Reviews

Effective January 1, 2001, Social Security cannot initiate a continuing disability medical review while a Social Security or SSI disability beneficiary is using a ticket. Cash benefits may be subject to termination if earnings are substantial.

Effective January 1, 2002, work activity by a Social Security disability beneficiary who has received Social Security disability benefits for at least 24 months could not be used as a basis for conducting a disability review. However, the individual would be subject to regularly scheduled medical reviews. Again, cash benefits may be subject to termination if earnings are substantial.

Work Incentives Advisory Panel

The law establishes a Work Incentives Advisory Panel within Social Security composed of 12 members appointed by the President and Congress. The Panel is to advise the Commissioner and report to Congress on implementation of the Ticket program. At least one-half of the Panel members are required to be individuals with disabilities, or representatives of individuals of disabilities, with consideration given to current or former Social Security disability beneficiaries.

Work Incentives Outreach Program

The law directs Social Security to establish a community-based work incentives planning and assistance program for the purpose of disseminating accurate information related to work incentives. Social Security will establish a program of grants, cooperative agreements or contracts to provide benefits planning and assistance, including the availability of protection and advocacy services, and outreach.

The law also directs Social Security to establish a corps of work incentives specialists within Social Security.

Protection and Advocacy

The law authorizes Social Security to make payments to protection and advocacy systems established in each state to provide information, advice, advocacy and other services to disability beneficiaries.

Demonstration Projects and Studies

The law extends Social Security Disability Insurance demonstration authority for 5 years. Under the law, Social Security is required to conduct a demonstration project to test reducing Social Security Disability Insurance benefits by \$1 for each \$2 that a beneficiary earns over a certain amount or amounts.

The implementation dates and locations for this demonstration will be announced.