

Overview

The NEW Ticket to Work Program



In 2008, the Social Security Administration (SSA) issued revised regulations that significantly improved the Ticket to Work (Ticket) program. SSA believes these changes will:

1. Encourage more organizations to become Employment Networks (ENs) and increase the types and number of ENs available to serve Ticket Holders.
2. Promote partnering between organizations and expand the range of services available to Ticket Holders.
3. Offer public and private entities exciting opportunities to obtain flexible funding by becoming ENs and helping Ticket Holders enter and maintain employment.
4. Improve the coordination of the Federal, state and local services available to beneficiaries, particularly the coordination of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and EN services and the various SSA Work Incentives.

Regulatory Improvements of Particular Interest

Ticket eligibility has expanded to include ALL adult beneficiaries, ages 18 through 64, who receive cash benefits from Social Security based on disability under the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) program and/or the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.

- Total potential payments for SSI and SSDI beneficiaries are now approximately the same.
- ENs can earn payments earlier in the employment process, more often, and at higher rates.
- Two sets of Milestone payments are available based on gross earnings:

- » Phase 1 Milestone payments are based on gross earnings at the Trial Work level (\$700/month in 2009), which in many cases equates to part-time work, and permits beneficiaries to receive a mix of benefit payments and earnings as they explore work.
- » Phase 2 Milestone payments are based on gross earnings at the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level which encourages the use of SSA Work Incentives.
- If a Ticket is “in use” (assigned) and the Ticket Holder is determined to be making “timely progress” in moving towards self-supporting employment, the Ticket Holder’s medical Continuing Disability Reviews will be postponed. The new regulations expand the criteria for measuring timely progress to include both educational attainment and work.
- SSA can now pay a State VR agency and an EN for providing sequential services to the same Ticket Holder (referred to as Partnership Plus). This applies when VR serves the beneficiary under the VR/SSA Cost Reimbursement program, the VR agency closes the case, and the beneficiary subsequently assigns the Ticket to an EN for job retention or ongoing support services.

Outcome Payment System

The new Ticket regulations made two significant changes to the EN Outcome payment system.

The total amount of potential Outcome payments increased by 27% to \$676 a month for SSDI and \$386 a month for SSI in 2009.

The total payments available under the Milestone-Outcome payment system were increased to 90% of total payments available under the Outcome only payment system.

New EN Milestone-Outcome Payment System (2009 figures)*

Payment Type	Beneficiary Earnings	SSDI Payment Amount	SSI Payment Amount
Phase 1 Milestones			
Milestone 1	\$350 for one calendar month	\$1,211	\$1,211
Milestone 2	\$700/mo. x 3 mos. w/in 6 mos. (cumulative)	\$1,211	\$1,211
Milestone 3	\$700/mo. x 6 mos. w/in 12 mos. (cumulative)	\$1,211	\$1,211
Milestone 4	\$700/mo. x 9 mos. w/in 18 mos. (cumulative)	\$1,211	\$1,211
Total Potential Phase 1 Milestones		\$4,844	\$4,844
Phase 2 Milestones			
	Gross Earnings > SGA (\$980/\$1640)**	\$363 a month for up to 11 months	\$207 a month for up to 18 months
		\$363 x 11 = \$3,993	\$207 x 18 = \$3,726
Total Potential Phase 1 + 2 Milestones		\$8,837	\$8,570
Monthly Outcome Payments			
	Earnings > SGA (\$980/\$1640/month)** and federal cash benefit = \$0	\$363 a month for up to 36 months	\$207 a month for up to 60 months
		\$363 x 36 = \$13,068	\$207 x 60 = \$12,420
Total Potential Milestone and Outcome Payments		\$21,905	\$20,990

* The payment rate in effect at the time the Milestone or Outcome is attained is the rate that will be paid for that particular month, regardless of when the payment request is submitted.

** The 2009 monthly SGA amounts are \$980 for non-blind and \$1,640 for blind individuals.

Important Reminder

Total EN payments depend on many variables and differ among Ticket Holders. SSA determined that Phase 1 Milestone payments will be awarded based on an EN providing initial services, including job placement, that lead to employment. This means that one or more of the Phase 1 Milestones may not always be available to an EN. Two situations that can impact the availability of Phase 1 Milestones are:

1. **Partnership Plus:** When a State VR agency serves a beneficiary under the new Partnership Plus option, the beneficiary may initially receive VR services to meet his/her intensive up-front service needs and, after the VR case is closed, the Ticket Holder may assign his/her Ticket to an EN and receive job retention services or ongoing support services. While the EN has the potential to earn Phase 2

Milestone and Outcome payments, the Phase 1 Milestone payments are not available to the EN if VR closed the case with the beneficiary in employment. To learn more about Partnership Plus, visit: www.socialsecurity.gov/work/documents/PartnerPlusD8x11108.pdf

2. **Recent Work Rule:** If a Ticket Holder worked with earnings at or above the Trial Work level (\$700 in 2009) during the 18 months prior to assigning his/her Ticket to an EN, the four Phase 1 Milestones may or may not be available to the EN depending on when the work occurred. MAXIMUS has created a tool to explore a Ticket Holder's recent work history. Visit: www.yourtickettowork.com/training_2 and click on "18th Month Prior Earnings Tool."