

Disability Benefits Counseling Services

FREE RESOURCE FOR SSA DISABILITY BENEFICIARIES RETURNING TO WORK

The Social Security Administration (SSA) encourages disability beneficiaries to work to their fullest capability. SSA provides work supports that help beneficiaries try work, obtain items necessary for work, save income, maintain cash and medical benefits for a period of time, and easily access benefits in the future.

When a beneficiary requests Disability Benefits Counseling Services, the Benefits Counseling advice is specific to that beneficiary. The information includes guidance about available options towards reaching employment and financial goals, and it helps the beneficiary make informed choices about work. Benefits Counseling Services can help people make informed choices about work and communicate effectively with SSA.

Individuals Eligible to Receive Disability Benefits Counseling Services

Disability Benefits Counseling Services are available to Social Security Disability beneficiaries who are working or are actively looking for work. Social Security Disability beneficiaries include individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Childhood Disability Benefits (CDB), or Disabled Widow(er) Benefits (DWB).

What Disability Benefits Counseling Services Cost

Disability Benefits Counseling Services are free of charge. There is never a cost to the beneficiary for services provided.

How to Locate a Disability Benefits Counseling Services Provider

The Social Security Administration lists Disability Benefits Counseling providers on their Ticket to Work website: <https://choosework.ssa.gov/findhelp/>. Enter your zip code to connect with local resources and services. Disability Benefits Counseling Services are provided by Work Incentive Planning and Assistance Projects (WIPA), many Employment Networks (ENs) and many Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) offices.

If you cannot find Disability Benefits Counseling Services in your area, contact the Ticket to Work Helpline at 1-866-968-7842 (V)/1-866-833-2967 (TTY).

Request Disability Benefit Counseling Services When You ...

- ✓ Plan to start or return to work;
- ✓ Plan to accept or seek a higher-paying job;
- ✓ Plan to start your own business;
- ✓ Are concerned about stopping work; or
- ✓ Have questions about how work will affect your disability benefits or any other public benefit you receive.

Disability Benefits Counseling Services Providers Offer Beneficiaries the Following Information and Support Services

- ✓ Information and Referral: Provides basic information in response to inquiries about all Federal and State benefits programs, and/or referral to government agencies and other community resources.
- ✓ Problem Solving and Advocacy: Addresses specific Federal and State benefits and Work Incentive issues and may include advocating on behalf of the beneficiary with other agencies.
- ✓ Benefits Analysis and Advisement: Assesses real or potential effects of employment or similar changes that could impact a beneficiary's overall financial well-being and inform beneficiaries of various options available and the projected outcome of each.
- ✓ Benefits Support Planning: Assists the beneficiary to construct a plan to promote effective monitoring and management of their benefits programs and work incentives.
- ✓ Benefits Management: Provides benefits monitoring and management assistance when the beneficiary is working at a level that is likely to affect the status of their cash benefits, medical benefits, or financial well-being.

Work Incentive Seminar Events (WISE)

The Social Security Administration sponsors Work Incentive Seminar Events (WISE) monthly. WISE webinars cover general information about work supports, employment

options and other return to work information for Social Security disability beneficiaries. All WISE webinars are recorded and archived. To register for a live event, or to view a recorded event, go to: choosework.ssa.gov/webinars-tutorials/index.html.

Checklist Items to Prepare for Disability Benefits Counseling Services

- ✓ Proof of your benefit status
 - Bring your recent award letter from SSA stating which benefit you receive
OR
 - You can order your free Benefits Planning Query (BPQY) by calling the Social Security Administration at: 1.800.772.1213 or by visiting your local SSA office.
- ✓ Written list of your work history since your receipt of benefits
 - Start with a resume, if you have one, and add more details, including: 1) all dates of employment; 2) earnings throughout the duration of employment; and 3) periods of time that you were not employed.
- ✓ Proof of your medical insurance
- ✓ SNAP (Food Stamp) award letter
- ✓ Letters you have received from SSA over the past several months
- ✓ If you are on a Medicaid Waiver, proof of the name of the waiver/effective date
- ✓ Proof of any rental support you are receiving (i.e., subsidized or public housing, or contributions from other household members)

What to Do if You Have Concerns

If you have concerns, have difficulty accessing Disability Benefits Counseling Services, or you have been asked to pay for those services, contact your local Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security Benefits (PABSS). PABSS can provide advocacy, information and limited legal support to help beneficiaries resolve Benefits Counseling Services and employment-related concerns. Visit the Ticket to Work Find Help page for more information: choosework.ssa.gov/findhelp/.

For additional information on Disability Benefits Counseling Services, email info@ndi-inc.org.

Information for this Effective Strategy Handout was compiled from choosework.ssa.gov/findhelp/.