

## **Ticket to Work: Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the Ticket to Work Program?**

The Ticket to Work program is a voluntary employment assistance program created by the Social Security Administration (SSA) for SSI and/or SSDI beneficiaries who would like to go to work. The goal of the program is to help individuals on Social Security Disability benefits (SSI and/or SSDI) go to work and move towards self-sufficiency. This program offers employment assistance to SSI and/or SSDI beneficiaries from different service providers called Employment Networks or ENs and State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies like New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR). These ENs or State VR agencies are available to help you reach your employment goals.

### **Who is eligible for the Ticket to Work program?**

An individual who:

1. Receives SSI and/or SSDI benefits
2. Is between the ages of 18 to 64
3. Wants to work and begin to develop self-sufficiency

### **Do I have to use my Ticket?**

No, you do not have to use your Ticket. The Ticket to Work is a voluntary program. You have the choice on whether or not to use your Ticket and which agency you would like to work with for employment supports. You **DO NOT** have to use your Ticket to keep your benefits.

### **Do I need a paper Ticket to Work to utilize the program?**

No, in fact the Social Security Administration (SSA) is no longer sending out paper Tickets to beneficiaries. If you are unsure if you have a Ticket, contact the Beneficiary helpline at 1-866-968-7842 (voice) or 1-866-833-2967 (TTY).

### **What are the benefits of participating in the Ticket to Work program?**

1. You have choices on which agency you want to work with to help you go to work.
2. There is no cost to you for employment support services.
3. There are necessary goods and services available to assist with your employment goal.
4. You may choose to receive Benefits planning regarding how work will impact your benefits.
5. You will receive protection from medical Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs).

### **Who provides employment support services under the Ticket to Work program?**

1. Employment Networks
2. State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies like the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR)

### **What are Medical Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs)?**

A CDR is a medical review that determines disability benefits eligibility. It is Social Security's process of obtaining complete and current information about your condition to decide if your SSI and/or SSDI benefits should continue.

### **How can I get more information on the Ticket to Work program?**

1. Call the Ticket to Work Beneficiary helpline at 1-866-968-7842 (voice) or 1-866-833-2967 (TTY).
2. Visit the Ticket to Work website at [www.chooseworkttw.net](http://www.chooseworkttw.net). Contact NMDVR's Ticket to Work coordinator at 505-954-8500 or 1-800-224-7005 (toll free).
3. Watch this short video on Ticket to Work called "Meet Ben: An Introduction to Ticket to Work." Click here to get to the video link: <http://www.chooseworkttw.net/about/index.html>

### **How do I get Ticket services from New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR)?**

1. Come into the nearest NMDVR office and request to fill out a referral form. Link: <http://www.dvrgetsjobs.com/NMDVRLocations/NMDVRLocations.aspx>
2. Once you have completed the referral form and returned it to the staff, the office will work with you to schedule an orientation or an initial interview. (The exact process may differ slightly across offices.) Please let the office know that you have a Ticket.
3. At this initial meeting, you will learn about the employment support options available to you through NMDVR and the Ticket to Work program.
4. It is a mutual decision to work with NMDVR. Once NMDVR has determined that you are eligible and will benefit from vocational rehabilitation services, and you decide that you want to work with NMDVR on reaching your employment goals, your services at NMDVR will begin.
5. Your Ticket will be "in use" with NMDVR once you have made the informed choice that you want your Ticket to be "in use" with NMDVR and SSA has recorded the information. As long as you are Ticket eligible, the date of your Ticket assignment will be the date both, you and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC), sign the completed original vocational rehabilitation plan.

### **How is my Ticket placed "in use" with NMDVR?**

1. You make an informed choice to put your Ticket "in use" with NMDVR.
2. NMDVR sends your initial vocational rehabilitation plan date to SSA. Once SSA records your initial plan date, your Ticket is placed "in use" with NMDVR.
3. It is important to follow-up with MAXIMUS to make sure that your Ticket is "in use." Contact the Beneficiary helpline at 1-866-968-7842 (voice) or 1-866-833-2967 (TTY), about 1 month after your initial plan is signed to ensure your Ticket has been placed "in use" with NMDVR.

### **Do I have to assign my Ticket to Work to NMDVR?**

Ticket assignment is optional. Your vocational rehabilitation services will not be affected if you do not assign your Ticket to NMDVR; however, if your Ticket is not assigned to NMDVR, you will not have medical CDR protection. In addition, if you decide not to assign your Ticket to NMDVR you must inform your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC).

### **Once I have my Ticket “in use” or assigned to NMDVR or an EN, what do I need to do?**

1. Work together with your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) or EN to meet the yearly Timely Progress Review requirements that SSA has set-up. (See below to find out more about the Timely Progress Review requirements.)
2. Inform your VRC or EN of any earnings, trainings or education that you are receiving.
3. Complete and return the Timely Progress Review forms that the Ticket to Work program sends to you yearly via mail. Your VRC or EN can assist you with this. It is important to provide accurate information on these forms.
4. Contact the Ticket to Work Beneficiary helpline, 1-866-968-7842 (voice) or 1-866-833-2967 (TTY), about 1 month after signing your initial employment plan to ensure that your Ticket has been placed “in use” with NMDVR or assigned to an EN. (If it is not “in use” or assigned, follow-up with your VRC or EN.)

### **Can I receive services from both NMDVR and an EN at the same time?**

No, you cannot receive Ticket to Work services from NMDVR and an EN at the same time. You can use your Ticket to receive employment support services from the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) **or** you can use your Ticket to receive employment support services from SSA approved service providers called Employment Networks or ENs. However, you can use your Ticket with NMDVR and when your VR case is closed you may assign your Ticket to an EN for continued employment supports.

### **What is Partnership Plus?**

1. A program through Ticket to Work that helps you maintain employment supports after your VR case is closed.
2. Sequential employment support services for a Ticket participant with a State VR agency and an EN.

### **How does Partnership Plus work in New Mexico?**

1. Your VRC will assist you with a referral to an EN as you near VR case closure.
2. You will receive a participant referral letter from your VRC at or near your VR case closure.
3. The VRC will give you an EN list for all ENs, local and national, that serve your area.
4. A direct referral to an EN may be given to you upon request.
5. You have a choice on whether you want to work with an EN and whom you want to work with after your VR case is closed.
6. The EN has a choice on whose Ticket they accept for assignment.

7. The EN would like to see you close to or at Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level earnings. SGA for 2014 is \$1070/month (or \$1800/month for Beneficiaries with a visual impairment).
8. If you are not at or close to SGA, the EN is less likely to take your Ticket.

### **What is the difference between the Ticket status of "in use" and assignment of my Ticket?**

For you, the participant, "in use" and assignment mean basically the same thing. Once your Ticket is "in use" or assigned you have protection from medical Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs). In order to keep the medical CDR protection while your Ticket is "in use" or assigned, you will need to meet the yearly Timely Progress Review requirements set up by the Social Security Administration (SSA).

The difference between "in use" and assignment status means more to the EN or State VR Agency. For a VR agency, the status of the Ticket determines how the provider may receive payment for employment services that were provided to you, the participant.

For your purposes it is important to remember that when your VR case closes at NMDVR, your Ticket will be taken out of "in use" status. After VR case closure, you will no longer have protection from medical CDRs. Your Ticket will be available to assign to an EN.

### **What happens to my Ticket once my NMDVR case closes?**

1. Your Ticket is taken out of "in use" status the date your VR case is closed.
2. If your medical CDR protection has not lapsed, upon your VR case closure you will have a 90-day grace period in which you keep your medical CDR protection. If you assign your Ticket to an EN during those 90 days, your medical CDR protection will continue. If you do not assign your Ticket to an EN within those 90 days, your CDR protection will stop after those 90 days.
3. You can still assign your Ticket to an EN after those 90 days. If your medical CDR protection was intact at VR case closure, you will regain medical CDR protection once you assign your Ticket to an EN.
4. If your medical CDR protection lapses after VR case closure and you do not assign your Ticket to an EN, medical CDRs will be reinstated. This does not mean that SSA will request a medical CDR from you right away. Medical CDRs are done on a schedule of 1, 3, 5 or 7 years and will remain on that schedule unless there is another reason to initiate one. To find out the other reasons that SSA may start a medical CDR visit:  
<https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/poms.nsf/lnx/0413001005>
5. If you assign your Ticket to an EN, but your medical CDR protection had stopped during your VR case due to not meeting yearly Timely Progress Review requirements, you will have a chance to make it up. The EN you are working with can help you make-up the TPR requirement you missed.

### **What happens to my benefits when I start working?**

1. Talk with a Benefits Advisor.

2. If you are currently working with NMDVR or have been in an employment plan with NMDVR in the past, you can contact one of the NMDVR Benefits Advisors. If your town is not listed below, please contact the Benefits Advisor that serves a city or town close to yours.
3. NMDVR has benefits advisor in all areas:
  - a. Jessica Banda: Roswell, Hobbs, Carlsbad, Clovis and Artesia
    - Phone: 575-624-6024
  - b. Norma Campos: Albuquerque Metro Area, Belen and Edgewood
    - Phone: 505-841-6450
  - c. Karen Wiley (interim): Las Cruces, Silver City, Anthony, Alamogordo and Socorro
    - Phone: 505-827-3526
  - d. Stefan Strohmyer: Santa Fe, Espanola, Los Alamos and Rio Rancho
    - Phone: 505-827-3526
  - e. Karen Wiley: Las Vegas, Taos, Raton, Farmington and Gallup
    - Phone: 505-954-8543
4. If you have not worked with NMDVR, Benefits Advisement services are available through the Southern Nevada Independent Living Center.
  - a. Phone: 1-800-870-7003 (toll free)
  - b. E-mail: [Wipa@sncil.org](mailto:Wipa@sncil.org)

**What are Timely Progress Reviews (TPRs)?**

Timely Progress Reviews (TPRs) are yearly reviews of Ticket to Work participant’s progress towards employment. SSA does these reviews. Once a participant’s Ticket is “in use” or assigned they will be expected to meet these requirements on a yearly basis. The requirements look at earnings, education and training in a given year. The participant will receive notification from the Ticket to Work program when a TPR is due. The participant should complete the questionnaire accurately and return it to the Ticket to Work program. If a participant does not meet these requirements, they will lose medical CDR protection. The participant is able to make up the requirements for a given TPR period and regain protection from medical CDRs.

**Timely Progress Review Benchmarks:**

Each 12-month Review Period	<u>WORK/EARNINGS</u> Requirement  <u>OR</u>	<u>EDUCATION</u> Degree or Certification program <u>OR</u>	<u>TRAINING</u> Technical, Trade or Vocational program <u>OR</u>	<u>COMBINATION</u> of Work/Earnings and Education/Training
1 <sup>st</sup> Review (after 12 months of Ticket use)	3 out of 12 months with <b>Trial Work Level (TWL) **</b> earnings.	Completed a high school diploma or GED in first 12-month period <u>or</u> completed 60% of full-time course load for a college academic year.	Completed 60% of full-time course load for an academic year.	Completed a combination of the <b>work/earnings</b> requirement <b>plus</b> the <b>education/training</b> requirement that totals at least 100%.

<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Review</b> (13-24 months of Ticket use)	6 out of 12 months with <b>TWL **</b> earnings.	Completed 75% of full-time course load for a college academic year.	Completed 75% of full-time course load for an academic year.	Completed a combination of the <b>work/earnings</b> requirement <b>plus</b> the <b>education/training</b> requirement that totals at least 100%.
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Review</b> (25-36 months of Ticket use)	9 out of 12 months with <b>Substantial Gainful Activity</b> (SGA) ** level earnings.	Completed a <b>2-year</b> program or a <b>4-year</b> program <b>or</b> completed an <b>additional academic year</b> of full-time study.	Completed the 2-year program and earned the degree or certificate.	Completed a combination of the <b>work/earnings</b> requirement <b>plus</b> the <b>education/training</b> requirement that totals at least 100%.
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Review</b> (37-48 months of Ticket use)	9 out of 12 months with <b>SGA**</b> level earnings.	Completed an additional academic year of full-time study.	<b>N/A</b>	Completed a combination of the <b>work/earnings</b> requirement <b>plus</b> the <b>education/training</b> requirement that totals at least 100%.
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Review</b> (49-60 months of Ticket use)	6 out of 12 months at <b>SGA**</b> level earnings with <b>no SSDI</b> or <b>SSI cash benefits</b> in months worked.	Completed an additional academic year of full time study <b>or</b> completed a 4-year degree program.	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>6<sup>th</sup> Review</b> (61-72 months of Ticket use)	6 out of 12 months at <b>SGA**</b> level earnings with <b>no SSDI</b> or <b>SSI cash benefits</b> in months worked.	Completed a 4-year degree program.	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>7<sup>th</sup> Review</b> (73-84 months of Ticket use and <b>All Subsequent 12-Month Periods</b> )	6 out of 12 months at <b>SGA**</b> level earnings with <b>no SSDI</b> or <b>SSI cash benefits</b> in months worked.	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>

\*In 2015, earnings over \$780 are considered Trial Work Level. (In 2014, earnings over \$770 are Trial Work Level)

\*\*In 2015, earnings over \$1090 (over \$1820 for beneficiaries with a visual impairment) are considered Substantial Gainful Activity level. (In 2014, earnings over \$1070, over \$1800 for beneficiaries with a visual impairment, are considered Substantial Gainful Activity level.)

### **Who is MAXIMUS?**

MAXIMUS is a private company that has contracted with the Social Security Administration (SSA) to manage the Ticket to Work program.

### **Who can I contact if I have concerns about Employment Networks or State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies regarding the Ticket to Work program?**

Disability Rights New Mexico (DRNM) is a statewide agency that provides protection and advocacy for individuals with disabilities. DRNM has contracted with the Social Security

Administration (SSA) to provide protection and advocacy for beneficiaries involved in the Ticket to Work program. DRNM wants to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities who receive SSI/SSDI and who want to return to work. Their goal is to help SSI/SSDI beneficiaries overcome barriers to maintaining employment or to return to work.

DRNM Contact Information:

State-wide Toll Free: 1-800-432-4682

Email: [info@drnm.org](mailto:info@drnm.org)

Website: [www.drnm.org](http://www.drnm.org)