

## **Ticket to Work – A Status Report**

The Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program, signed into action by former President Clinton in December 1999, is accepting an unlimited number of proposals from organizations across the country. These organizations, serving as Employment Networks (ENs), can be any public or private entity or association of entities that provide directly or arrange for appropriate jobs or employment services including job readiness, placement, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), training, support and/or retention services for individuals with disabilities. The goal of the Program is to increase the choices for Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities in obtaining employment, vocational rehabilitation or other support services from public and private entities. Beneficiaries may choose whom they want to go to for services, and in return, that EN or VR agency can collect incentive payments for helping beneficiaries go back to work and off Social Security benefits.

By Fall 2004, almost 10 million Tickets will be released throughout the country. Individuals with Developmental Disabilities received 1,206,780 of those tickets. This figure represents persons who receive either SSI or SSDI because of a primary self-disclosed Developmental Disability. The numbers of persons with Developmental Disabilities who are Ticket holders are also captured in other Social Security Administration impairment codes. Therefore, the actual number of persons with Developmental Disabilities receiving a Ticket to Work is likely larger than the number cited. Of the current 1,125 approved Employment Networks 1,052 have indicated a willingness to work with individuals who have a Developmental Disability.

For the past several years, The Ticket to Work Advisory Panel has been holding quarterly meetings to discuss the Program, and to receive commentary from ENs and the general public about what is working and not working about the Program. Several months ago, the panel released an EN Advisory report, which collected the advice and strategies from ENs across the nation. This report outlines major regulatory and Programmatic changes recommended by ENs, VR and the panel. You may view this report at [www.ssa.gov/work/panel](http://www.ssa.gov/work/panel).

The major recommended changes include amending the payment system, devising a national marketing campaign to beneficiaries and ENs, easing the relationship between VR and ENs, providing more resources at the local SSA level for informing beneficiaries of the Program, and increasing funding for other resource agencies such as the Benefits, Planning, Assistance and Outreach (BPAO) grantees and Protection and Advocacy Systems.

Throughout the last several years, SSA has been responding to public commentary about the Program. The payment system has undergone several changes, including an increase in milestone payments and an elimination of the requirement that a check stub must be submitted for each monthly payment. SSA has also hired a national marketing firm Fleishman-Hillard to conduct a marketing campaign to beneficiaries. SSA also plans to release final regulatory changes in early 2005 designed to expand beneficiary eligibility

to receive Tickets under this Program; to clarify the rules for assignment of a beneficiary's Ticket to VR; to revise the rules for payment when a beneficiary receives services from both a State VR agency and an EN; and to revise the rules for milestone and outcome payments to ENs, in order to increase the incentives for providers of employment and other support services to participate in this Program.

If you'd like to provide commentary to the panel, or to join their list serve, please visit [www.ssa.gov/work/panel](http://www.ssa.gov/work/panel). The next panel meeting will be held in August in California. For more information on the Ticket to Work Program, please call 1-866-968-7842 or visit [www.yourtickettowork.com](http://www.yourtickettowork.com).

Members of AAMR and other interested organizations and individuals can obtain additional information concerning the Ticket to Work program are welcome to contact Brian DeAtley at 703.636.6636 or at [bdeatley@nish.org](mailto:bdeatley@nish.org)