

JOB TRAINING & PLACEMENT REPORT



for professionals who support employment for people with disabilities

The New and Improved ‘Ticket to Work’

Make Program Pay Off For People with Disabilities – and Your Organization

By Dan O’Brien

Just as there are many myths about the ability of people with disabilities to successfully hold down a job, there are a number of myths about Social Security’s *Ticket to Work* program. The program, like any new undertaking, has experienced bumps along the way.

However, due to some great strides in recent years, *Ticket to Work* is beginning to achieve impressive results for people with disabilities, service providers, and employers.



The proof is in the pudding! In the past 2-1/2 years since the new *Ticket* regulations were published, we have witnessed a:

- ▶ 148% increase in the number of *Tickets* assigned to Employment Networks (ENs);
- ▶ 48% increase in the number of ENs providing employment services (have *Tickets* assigned);

- ▶ 110% increase in the number of ENs getting jobs for beneficiaries (ENs received payment);
- ▶ 200% increase in the number of beneficiaries who ENs got a job for or supported in keeping a job (earnings generated payments to ENs);
- ▶ 488% increase in the dollar amount of Milestone payments to ENs; and
- ▶ 231% increase in the dollar amount of Outcome payments to ENs.

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‘Ticket’ Program 101

❖ Voluntary program for people age 18 through 64, who are receiving cash benefits under the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) program and/or the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program based on disability or blindness;

❖ Provides *Ticket* Holders with expanded choices to obtain services and supports to assist them in preparing for work, entering or returning to the workforce and maintaining employment; and

❖ Pays approved service providers, referred to as

“Employment Networks” or “ENs” when the *Ticket* Holders whom they serve go to work and achieve designated levels of work and earnings. (Rather than fees for services, these payments are compensation for assisting beneficiaries to achieve employment-related Milestones and Outcomes as they move toward self-supporting work).

For more information, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/work or contact the *Ticket* Program Operations Support Manager at 1-866-949-3687 or the toll-free TDD line: 1-866-833-2967.

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As professionals actively involved in supporting people with disabilities to gain greater independence, the *Ticket* program is worth considering for anyone not utilizing it at present. The following are answers to some of the commonly asked questions about *Ticket to Work*:

Q: *Who can become an EN in the Ticket program – and is it a difficult process?*

A: Any qualified entity, including employers, can become an EN. An EN may be public or private, as long as the EN is qualified and has experience in coordinating and/or delivering employment, vocational rehabilitation or other support services to job seekers with disabilities. An EN may be an agency, an organization, a consortium of organizations, or an individual.

Certain entities, like State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies and Department of Labor One Stop Career Centers, are automatically qualified as ENs under the *Ticket* program. If your organization is interested in becoming an EN, Social Security's Operations Support Manager can assist you with this process. Call 1-866-949-3687 or the toll-free TDD line: 1-866-833-2967.

Q: *How are service providers paid? Can they make money?*

A: First, service providers must apply to Social Security and become approved ENs. If an EN elects the Milestone payment system, the EN will receive payments for assisting the *Ticket* Holder in achieving certain employment-related milestones (e.g., earning a certain amount of money for a month) – and also pertaining to payments when the

Ticket Holder is no longer receiving disability benefit payments from Social Security.

If the EN expects most beneficiaries he/she serves to go off the rolls quickly, the other payment system, which is based on outcomes only, should be considered.

Total potential *Ticket* payments to an EN exceed \$22,000 per *Ticket* Holder. So, yes, ENs can make money! In fact, Social Security has paid ENs more than \$48 million based on *Ticket* Holders' successful employment.

Q: *Can a VR agency – and a Ticket EN serve an individual?*

A: Yes. Under new rules that went into effect in July 2008, when a State VR agency serves a beneficiary under the Partnership Plus option, the beneficiary may initially receive VR services to meet his/her intensive upfront service need. Once the VR case is closed, it is important to note that the *Ticket* still has value. Many people have not grasped this important change. After the VR case is closed, the *Ticket* Holder may assign the *Ticket* to an EN and receive other ongoing support services to support job retention and increase his/her earnings. Some payments may not be available to the EN, so consult www.ssa.gov/work for details.

Q: *How can I find Ticket Holders to serve?*

A: There are a number of ways to connect with *Ticket* Holders:

➤ Consider your current customer/client base! Do you know which ones are *Ticket* Holders? All people with disabilities ages 18-64 and receiving Social Security Disability Insurance and/or Supplemental Security Income payments have a *Ticket*. Social Security's *Ticket* Operations

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Support Manager can help you determine if your client is a *Ticket* Holder. You may also wish to let people know that you are an approved EN.

➤ The *Ticket* Operations Support Manager maintains an EN Directory that lists all of the active ENs that are eligible to serve beneficiaries. The directory is posted to the *Ticket* website, which is available for interested beneficiaries to find an EN based on their geographic service area.

➤ Social Security's Beneficiary Access and Support Services (BASS) Manager maintains a call center that receives

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Ticket to Work *cont'd from Page 2*

calls from the public and refers *Ticket* Holders to ENs.

➤ ENs can participate in Work Incentives Seminars (WISE) in their local communities. These are small gatherings of 10 to 20 beneficiaries, hosted by the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) project, with local ENs and other community partners invited to attend. A WISE gives ENs the opportunity to meet with *Ticket* Holders interested in work and to discuss the services and supports the EN can provide. Social Security also hosts WISE webinars and teleconferences.

Q: *Can a service provider use Ticket-generated payments concurrent with other funding sources, such as Medicaid reimbursement?*

A: Yes. On Jan. 28, 2010, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services issued a letter to State Medicaid Directors on this subject. The letter clarified that *Ticket* Milestone and Outcome payments to ENs do not conflict with regulatory requirements and do not constitute an overpayment of federal dollars for services provided because EN payments are payment for an outcome, rather than for a Medicaid service rendered.

The letter indicated that state agencies and/or providers interested



Editor's Notebook

Whether you're a geek, a technophobe, or something inbetween (like me), there's

no doubt that technology has greatly impacted our lives. Terms like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, among others, were unheard of when I started editing this newsletter in 2004.

Given this fact, it's no surprise that subscribers have increasingly asked for more articles related to technology in *JTPR*.

We've published articles about this important topic before, but we're happy to address this issue again with two articles in this month's newsletter.

First, Russ Sickles presents some interesting ideas how blogging can be used to enhance job development in this month's *Training Connection* insert.

Second, Julie Holmquist offers advice on the benefits that social networking sites offer to youth with disabilities in this month's *Training Tool-Kit*.

Improving employment outcomes for persons with disabilities, especially in a sluggish economy, is difficult. ...but I'm convinced that supported employment professionals who are receptive to the outside-the-box thinking that technology presents, will reap the benefits in the future.

We'll continue to publish additional articles about the impact of technology on supported employment and persons with disabilities, as time and space permit. Until next time.

Mike Jacquart

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in participating in the *Ticket* program as ENs **are encouraged to do so**. The full letter is located at the following link: www.cms.gov/smdl/downloads/SMD10002.pdf.

Anyone with additional questions about the *Ticket* program should either check out www.ssa.gov/work and/or call one of the two toll-free numbers listed previously in this article.

Summary

The changes that Social Security made to the *Ticket* program are working! We have aggressively addressed the service issues surrounding the application process for ENs, as well as issues concerning *Ticket* assignment and payment processing.

Also in place is the "One *Ticket* Experience," which ensures that potential ENs get the assistance

they need, beginning with the application process, and continuing through training and ongoing availability.

Professionals engaged in job placement for people with disabilities that aren't utilizing the *Ticket* program are leaving significant money on the table! Together, we can make *Ticket to Work* pay off in a big way – for your organization – *and* for persons with disabilities who want to work. ■

Dan O'Brien has worked in the supported employment and rehabilitation field for 25 years. He managed a large Employment Program at a mental health center; worked in the VR system, first overseeing Community Rehabilitation and Supported Employment contracts and then was the Oklahoma VR Program Manager for Ticket to Work as well as all employment and job placement service contracts. Dan has worked for Social Security since July 2005 and currently serves as the Acting Associate Commissioner for the Office of Employment Support Programs.

Grant Recipients Announced

The VCU RRTC and the Partnership for People with Disabilities recently received a five-year grant totaling \$2.2 million from the U.S. Dept. of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education.

In addition, the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts-Boston will receive a \$330,000

grant to fund a coordinating center to support Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) grantees.

This effort is, in addition to other programs around the country that are working to transition students with cognitive disabilities into higher education.

The VCU RRTC (Virginia Commonwealth University

Rehabilitation Research and Training Center) project will design and implement a college transition and postsecondary program at VCU for young adults with intellectual disabilities between the ages of 18 to 26. The VCU on-campus program will also be replicated on two Virginia community college campuses. ■

Source: *Worksupport.com e-Newsletter.*

Quick Ideas

Addressing the Interview Blues

By Jeffrey Gitomer

Countless job seekers, whether they know it or not, start to "lose" the job they're applying for within the first five minutes of a job interview.

Applicants leave with hiring managers saying, "We'll be in touch." But they never call – and instead of asking what went wrong, job seekers blame the interviewer.

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Not looking in the mirror is a big mistake. All interviewers are looking for reasons why they should hire you. These are among the leading reasons why candidates fail to land a job:

➤ **Failure to prepare** – If there was ever a time to "do your homework," preparing for a job interview is it! This includes researching the company. In a day and age when SO MUCH information is available online, such as company websites, etc., there's just no reason to not know *anything* about the prospective employer.

➤ **Failure to ask the right questions** – Job seekers should always ask what they can do for *the employer*, not what the company can offer the candidate.

➤ **Failure to listen or say the right thing** – Candidates should never speak negatively about their last job or employer. Instead, job seekers should always display enthusiasm and eagerness to succeed. The key is

to *think* first, and answer intelligently, not quickly.

➤ **Failure to respond in a career-oriented fashion** – It's true that the candidate might need a "job," but the interviewer usually wants to know more than that – such as "goals," or "future plans." This usually translates into a "career," not just a job.

➤ **Failure to ask for the job** – While applicants want to make sure the position is a good fit, too many times job seekers make the mistake of not being assertive and asking for the job if it really interests them. This doesn't mean begging certainly – rather, it involves appearing confident in oneself and one's abilities.

Summary

If your job-seeking client has a job interview tomorrow – ensure that he/she gets ready *tonight*. ■

Jeffrey Gitomer is the author of [The Sales Bible](#) and [The Little Red Book of Selling](#). For more information, check out Jeffrey's website at www.trainone.com.

Key Traits Found in Office MVPs

There's no room for a weak link on a Super Bowl team. Similarly, even one poor performer can hurt a company's ability to make strategic plays and score new business. That's why the pressure is on for hiring managers who are looking to add strength to their talent bench, according to administrative staffing firm OfficeTeam.

"When companies are operating extremely lean, hiring errors take a greater toll on the team, since each employee is bearing a heavier workload," said OfficeTeam executive director Robert Hosking.

"Today's managers are well aware of the high stakes when selecting new hires and striving to find professionals who can contribute immediately and build a long-term career with their firms."

OfficeTeam shares their hallmarks of top performers – and lists how job candidates should be prepared to describe those traits:

➤ **A winning mindset** – The best employees are optimistic and yet realistic. Candidates should be able to describe how they have handled a mistake at work. Strong performers acknowledge challenges without sugarcoating answers. Candidates who can't think of problems are either wearing rose-colored glasses or they aren't being honest.

➤ **Willingness to change plays midstream** – Persistence is an important trait, but it's even better when combined with adaptability. High-achieving employees don't give up on problems but tackle them from multiple angles. Potential hires should be able to relate how they were able to adjust something that wasn't working in order to improve the outcome.

➤ **Quickness on their feet** – This is especially important for candidates who will be working closely with customers. Applicants should be able to describe how they would handle an irate cus-



tomers – and give the rationale behind the response. The answer will reveal how quickly the individual thinks on his/her feet.

➤ **An eye on the prize** – Top performers strive for success in everything they do and have a sense of what it means to them. Candidates should be able to describe their greatest work achievement.

➤ **Ability to make tough calls** – Valuable employees can be counted on to exercise good judgment and make difficult choices. Applicants should be prepared to walk the hiring manager through a complex decision they had to make. They should relay how they gathered facts and came to their ultimate conclusion.

➤ **Good sportsmanship** – High performers put ethics first in all situations and don't climb over others on their way to the top. Candidates may be asked to describe an ethically challenging situation and how they handled it. ■

Source: OfficeTeam (www.officeteam.com).

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Making the Most Out of Paychecks

For someone who is looking for work or who has dealt with long bouts of unemployment, a job offer can be a relief – and it becomes even more important to understand how to manage their finances.

Goodwill Industries® recognizes that people need more than a job and a paycheck to become financially stable. Local Goodwill® agencies are helping individuals keep more of their paychecks, protect their financial assets, and build financial stability for themselves and their families.

Good Assets Mean Stable Futures

At Goodwill Industries of Central Texas (Austin), information to help people become financially stable is fully integrated in job-training programs and offered to people in the community.

Program participants learn everything about managing their money – from the basics, such as crafting a budget and opening a bank account, to more advanced subjects like reading a credit report, negotiating with creditors, and understanding the pitfalls of high-interest payday loans.

The Austin Goodwill served as the pilot site for the Good A\$\$et\$ program, which is funded by the Bank of America Charitable Foundation. Those enrolled in good A\$\$et\$ set financial goals for themselves and learn to manage their money with the help of Goodwill staff.



Good A\$\$et\$ is making a difference in people's lives, including James Hunter, a production supervisor for the Austin Goodwill's Computer Works store. He worked with a Goodwill financial specialist to learn to more effectively budget and save his money.

"Good A\$\$et\$ has provided the structure necessary to motivate me into improving my financial standing," Hunter says.

Providing 'Key' to Change

When staff at Tacoma Goodwill Industries (WA) realized that some program participants had difficulties distinguishing "wants" from "needs" after they started earning paychecks, the organization made financial strengthening an integral part of its efforts.

The Goodwill also realized that participants were getting caught up with payday lenders or check-cashing businesses that charge high fees and interest.

"We realized that it is just as important to know how to manage your paycheck as it is to earn a paycheck," says Dani Small, financial literacy program manager.

Students in the Tacoma Goodwill financial strengthening program – *Key to Change* – complete 16 hours of instruction.

A small class of 20 people gives students a comfortable environment in which they can openly talk about their finances. They learn how to budget, manage debt, read credit reports,

negotiate with creditors, and save for retirement.

Key Bank's involvement – and that of the Key Foundation – has been critical to the success of the program.

Success Story

After taking the *Key to Change* course, LaTasha Smith (seated in above picture) was able to get a better handle on her finances, which helped her move to a different neighborhood and set a better example for her daughter.

She's also set bigger goals for herself, which include earning her business administration degree and owning her own home.

Smith notes that life without the skills she learned would have been difficult. "I wouldn't have the self-esteem," she says.

"Discipline is hard for someone who was never taught how to be financially independent." ■

Source: Reprinted/excerpted with permission from "Working!" a publication of Goodwill Industries International (www.goodwill.org).

Editor's note: What successful programs are working at YOUR agency or organization that you'd like to share with other supported employment professionals? Give us a call or email – remember, the "squeaky wheel gets the grease."

Match the Right Program with the Right Funder

Anyone who's ever written a grant knows that while grant writing isn't simple, researching who to write the grant to can be even more difficult.

Many nonprofits prepare grant proposals for large state and federal organizations. That's understandable since they often have the most money available to fund projects. However, the larger the organization, the more competition there often is for grant money, too.

Foundations are one funding stream that's overlooked by many

nonprofits. Local foundations are often a good bet. Be sure to search by the types of projects they fund and then look to match the project for which you're funding.

Even in a technological age, a personal approach still often works best. Ask staff members to review the list of community foundations in your area to see if anyone has a working relationship with any of these potential funders.

Certainly, a great deal of funding research today can be done online. Check out an organization like the Foundation Center

(www.foundationcenter.org), GuideStar (www2.guidestar.org), the Council on Foundations (www.cof.org) and the Disability Funders Network (www.disabilityfunders.org).

It cannot be overstated: You must determine if you're trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. In other words, if your organization's mission and the funder's don't line up, you're probably not going to get any money no matter how good your project. This takes time, but it's time generally well spent. ■

Assistive Technology

What's New in AT?

What is it? Adesso Smart Cat USB Touchpad

What does it do? The Adesso Smart Cat USB Touchpad, model GDU-410, is a touch pad designed for individuals with fine motor disabilities.

How does it work? This device provides cursor control using a right-or left-hand finger. It features one-touch vertical and horizontal scroll and zoom, glide extend, and a Cirque driver.

Who makes it? Adesso, Inc., 160 Commerce Way, Walnut, CA 91789, (909) 839-2929, www.adesso.com.

What is it? Freedom Alert

What does it do? The Freedom Alert is an emergency alert system

designed for individuals with cognitive, balance, mobility, or severe physical disabilities.

How does it work? This system allows full two-way communication through the wireless pendant. This system calls up to four phone numbers programmed by the user, four programmed numbers and then 911, or 911 only.

Who makes it? LogicMark, LLC 8625 Hampton Way, Fairfax Station, VA 22039, (800) 519-2419, www.logicmark.com.

What is it? Mechanics Series

What does it do? The Mechanics Series is a pre-vocational job skills training system designed for individuals with learning, cognitive, or vision disabilities.

How does it work? This series of books can be used by both high school students and adults and are designed to help develop job readiness and pre-vocational job skills. Lessons include information contained in traditional textbooks but at lower reading levels, with larger fonts and can be used independently or in groups.

Who makes it? Phillip Roy, Inc., P.O. Box 130, Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785, (800) 255-9085, www.philliproy.com. ■

Source: ABLEDATA (www.abledata.com), which adds over 1,000 assistive technology products to its database each year. ABLEDATA records are provided for informational purposes only. Products contained in ABLEDATA have not been examined, reviewed, or tested.

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Factors Affecting Jobs in Health Care

It's no secret that many of the fastest-growing jobs can be found in health care. In fact, this industry is projected to generate more than a million new jobs through 2018, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

But *where* will these jobs occur? *What* will they be? And *how soon* will they be created?

To answer these questions, a variety of factors must be taken into account, according to experts Dr. Saul Wischnitzer and Edith Wischnitzer, co-authors of the recently released book *Top 100 Health-Careers*. They explain these factors below:

Geographic Location

Health services employers are unevenly distributed in this country. As a result, there are job opportunities in some areas — and scarcities in others. For instance,

there is a shortage of health-care professionals in both rural and inner-city areas — even though rural areas are underpopulated and inner-city areas are overpopulated.

Population shifts due to changes in economic opportunities also affect the number of job opportunities. For example, when people began flocking to the West Coast and Sun Belt states, thousands of new job openings were created for health-care workers.

Expanding Careers

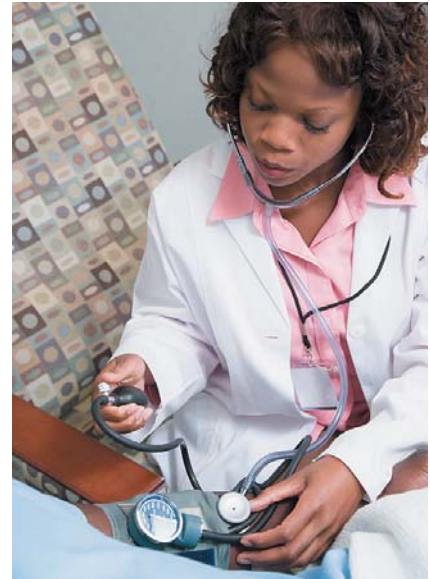
The time it takes to diagnose and treat patients is both valuable and costly. As a result, there has been an ongoing trend to reassign certain routine tasks to suitably trained and qualified allied health workers.

This means that workers such as physician assistants and dental hygienists are in high demand. With the restructuring of the medical profession under managed care, the use of physician assistants in a wide variety of settings is increasing significantly.

Technological Advances

Modern technology has created many career opportunities for health-care personnel. Early in the 20th century, for example, the use of X-rays for diagnostic purposes virtually created the field of radiology and the need for qualified technologists and technicians.

In the later part of the 20th century, the development of CAT scans, MRIs, and ultrasound equipment resulted in additional new career opportunities. Today's advances in genetic screening could lead to new careers down the road.



Facility & Service Expansion

Health care is undergoing a major restructuring because of the expansion of HMOs, which put an increased emphasis on primary care and preventative medicine. As a result, the family practice specialty has grown, creating the need for support personnel. On the other hand, cost-cutting efforts on the part of the federal government and HMOs will hold down job opportunities in other fields.

However, increased pressure for services by the growing elderly population has generated strong demand for home-care services in various categories. The lower cost of providing health care at home rather than at inpatient facilities has driven the need for personnel qualified to provide such services. The overall outlook for future funding in this field, however, is uncertain. ■

Top 100 Health-Care Careers is available at www.amazon.com, major bookstores, and from the publisher (www.jist.com or call 1-800-648-JIST).

Fast Facts!

❖ An estimated 73% of employers report that their employees with disabilities did not require any special accommodations.

❖ People with disabilities often have highly developed problem-solving skills (a key trait cited by many hiring managers) because these individuals have had to find creative ways to perform tasks that others may take for granted.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy.