



Ticket Work

The Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program

Recruitment and Enrollment of Employment Networks

Reference Guide for Employment Networks and State Vocational
Rehabilitation Agencies

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Recruitment and Enrollment of Employment Networks

In this section we will discuss the role of the Employment Network (EN) including the requirements for becoming an EN, the expectations of maintaining EN status, and how the ENs will be evaluated. In addition, we will discuss the role of the State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agencies in the Ticket to Work Program. Please note that most references to ENs include State VR Agencies functioning as ENs unless otherwise noted.



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Learning Objectives

The learning objectives of this module are to:

- Define what an EN is,
- Define the responsibilities of an EN,
- Define the process of evaluating ENs,
- Define the functioning of a State VR Agency in the Ticket to Work Program, and
- Describe the process of EN referrals to State VR Agencies



PART I: DEFINITION OF AN EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

An Employment Network (EN) is any qualified public or private entity that has entered into an agreement with the Social Security Administration to provide for the coordination and delivery of employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, and other support services to beneficiaries under the Ticket to Work Program.

Employment Networks are a core component of the Ticket to Work Program. They are responsible for finding, or assisting beneficiaries to find, quality jobs and coordinating, or directly providing the pre- and post-employment services and supports, such as job preparation, skills training, job placement, and retention services, that eligible Supplemental Security (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Ticket-holders who choose to go to work will need in order to be successful in the workplace. ENs can receive payment for Milestones and/or Outcomes when they successfully assist a beneficiary to return to work and demonstrate Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA).

Employment Networks also provide the community with ongoing access to a newly identified, dedicated workforce. The most effective ENs will be the entities that establish and nurture relationships with the business and employer communities to ensure that their beneficiaries have access to employment.

Possible Entities That Can Become ENs

A qualified EN can be a single entity or a group of providers who pool their resources/services to become an EN. The EN can provide the services directly to the beneficiary or have an agreement with other organizations or individuals to provide services that reduce (and eventually eliminate) a beneficiary's dependence on disability benefits.

The following list represents possible entities that, if qualified, can become ENs:

- State agencies administering or supervising the administration of the state plan under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended;
- Any public or private entity, including charitable and religious organizations, that can directly provide, or that can arrange for other organizations or entities to provide employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, or other support services;
- One-stop delivery systems as established under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998;
- Organizations administering Vocational Rehabilitation Services Projects for American Indians with Disabilities;
- Public or private schools that provide vocational rehabilitation or employment services, conduct job training programs, or make services or programs available that can assist students with disabilities in acquiring specific job skills that lead to employment, including transition programs that can help students acquire work skills; and
- Employers that offer job training, support services, or other assistance to help individuals with disabilities obtain and retain employment or arrange for individuals with disabilities to receive relevant services or assistance.

The Minimum Qualifications for ENs

To serve as an EN under the Ticket to Work Program, an entity must meet and maintain compliance with both general and specific selection criteria. The Social Security Administration will not use as an EN any entity that has had its license, accreditation, certification or registration suspended or revoked for reasons concerning professional competence, conduct or financial integrity. The Social Security Administration will not use as an EN any entity that has surrendered a license, accreditation, certification or registration with a disciplinary proceeding pending, or any entity that is precluded from federal procurement or non-procurement programs.

The General Criteria

To qualify as an EN, an entity must meet the following general criteria:

- Have systems in place to protect the confidentiality of personal information about beneficiaries seeking or receiving services;
- Be accessible both physically and programmatically, to beneficiaries seeking or receiving services (examples of “programmatically accessible” include the capability of making documents and literature available in alternate media including Braille, recorded formats, enlarged print, and electronic media; and ensuring that all data systems available to clients are fully accessible for independent use by persons with all disabilities);
- Cannot discriminate on the basis of a beneficiary’s age, gender, race, color, creed, religion or national origin in providing services;
- Have adequate resources to perform the activities required under the agreement with Social Security Administration to be an EN or have the ability to obtain the necessary resources;
- Comply with the terms and conditions of the contract with Social Security Administration, including delivering or coordinating the delivery of employment services, VR services, and/or other support services; and
- Implement accounting procedures and control operations necessary to support the Ticket to Work Program.

Specific Criteria

To qualify as an EN an entity must also meet the following specific criteria:

- Employ staff who are qualified under applicable certification, licensing, or registration standards that apply to their profession including certification or accreditation by national accrediting or certifying organizations, or who are otherwise qualified based on education or experience, such as a college degree in a field related to the services the EN wants to provide, such as vocational counseling, human relations, teaching or psychology;
- Take reasonable steps to assure that if any medical and related health services are provided, such services will be provided under the formal supervision of persons licensed to prescribe or supervise the provision of these services in the state in which the services are performed; or

- An entity must have applicable certificates, licenses, or other credentials if such documentation is required by State law to provide vocational rehabilitation services, employment services or other support services.

Submitting Proof of Qualifications

An Employment Network must assure the Social Security Administration that it is qualified to provide employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, or other support services to disabled beneficiaries, either directly or through arrangements with other entities. Within the RFP, EN applicants must acknowledge that they agree to comply with both the general and specific qualification requirements for ENs as specified in the final regulations. If the state(s) in which the EN provides services require specific licenses or certifications to operate, then the ENs must attach copies of their licenses/certifications when they submit their RFP. If there are no licensing or certification requirements in the state(s) the EN serves, ENs may submit current certification or accreditation that establishes qualifications to provide or arrange for the provision of services.

PART III: EN RESPONSIBILITIES & REQUIREMENTS

ENs will be responsible for a number of service provision and programmatic requirements under the Ticket to Work Program. This section describes these responsibilities.

EN Responsibilities As Participants in the Ticket to Work Program

ENs will be responsible for the following duties:

- Enter into an agreement with the Social Security Administration;
- Designate the geographic area in which they will provide services. This will be designated in the ENs' agreement with the Social Security Administration;
- Provide, either directly or by entering into agreements with other providers of such services, a full range of employment services, vocational rehabilitation services and/or other support services necessary to prepare and place beneficiaries in employment;
- Ensure that services provided to beneficiaries through the Ticket to Work Program are specified in appropriate Individual Work Plans (IWPs);
- Elect a payment method for services provided to clients, when completing the Request for Proposal (RFP);
- Develop each IWP in partnership with each beneficiary receiving services in a manner that affords the beneficiary the opportunity to exercise informed choice in selecting an Employment Network and specific services needed to achieve that employment goal;
- Adhere to all Social Security Administration reporting requirements as outlined in the RFP; and
- Collect and record data in the format prescribed by the Social Security Administration.

Beneficiaries' Rights: Requirements for ENs

The EN must ensure that their clients' rights regarding services are explained and protected. These rights include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Right to privacy regarding personal information, including information about the client's disability;
- Right to a full explanation of the services offered by an EN under the Ticket to Work Program, and to make informed choices regarding the services and the provider who will actually render such services;
- Right to participate fully in the determination of the vocational goal and the development of an IWP, both of which must be in written form with the client's signature indicating consent;
- Right to dispute an EN's refusal of employment or VR services or case termination after an agreement has been signed under an internal review procedure conducted by a party not involved in the initial service refusal or case termination decision;
- Right to refer a dispute first to MAXIMUS for review, and then to Social Security Administration for a decision;
- Right to receive information regarding the availability of the State Protection and Advocacy System in resolving any disputes with an EN;
- Right to appoint an individual or legal services organization as a legal representative to represent the client in any of the client's dealings with an EN;
- Right to have complete access to information in an EN's records concerning the client. If such information consists of medical records, the client has the right to name a representative who would be willing to review the record and inform the client of its contents at the representative's discretion. Such representative may be a physician, other health professional, legal representative or other responsible individual;
- Right to have a copy of the IWP made available to the client in an accessible format chosen by the individual;
- Right to amend the IWP; and
- Right to retrieve the Ticket at any time if the client is dissatisfied with the services being provided (The EN must also explain its right to unassign the Ticket at any time if the EN is no longer willing or able to provide services to the beneficiary.).

Individual Work Plan Requirements for ENs

The Individual Work Plan (IWP) is a required written agreement signed by an Employment Network (other than a State VR Agency) and a beneficiary, or a representative of a beneficiary, with a Ticket. The IWP describes the specific employment services, VR services and/or other support services that will be provided in assisting the beneficiary to obtain an employment goal. The IWP is developed and implemented in partnership when a beneficiary and an EN have come to a mutual understanding to work together to pursue the beneficiary's employment goal under the Ticket to Work Program. The beneficiary and the EN share the responsibility for determining the employment goal and the specific services needed to achieve that employment goal.

In the EN RFP, an entity must agree to the requirement that employment services, VR services and/or other support services will be provided under an IWP for each beneficiary served. An entity applying to become an EN shall agree to the requirement to submit the IWP to MAXIMUS within two (2) weeks (per the RFP) after both the beneficiary and the EN have signed it. MAXIMUS must review the IWP for completeness.

Minimum Requirements for an IWP

At a minimum, the IWP must include the following:

- A statement of the vocational goal developed with the beneficiary, including, as appropriate, goals for earnings and job advancement;
- A statement of the services and supports necessary for the beneficiary to accomplish that goal;
- A statement of any terms and conditions related to the provision of these services and supports;
- A statement that the EN may not request or receive any compensation for the costs of services and supports from the beneficiary;
- A statement of the conditions under which an EN may amend the IWP or terminate the relationship;
- A statement of the beneficiary's rights under the Ticket to Work Program, including the right to retrieve the Ticket at any time if the beneficiary is dissatisfied with the services being provided by the EN;
- A statement of the remedies available to the beneficiary, including information on the availability of advocacy services and assistance in resolving disputes through the State Protection & Advocacy (P&A) System;
- A statement of the beneficiary's rights to privacy and confidentiality regarding personal information, including information about the beneficiary's disability;
- A statement of the beneficiary's or EN's right to seek to amend the IWP (the IWP can be amended if both the beneficiary and the EN agree to the change);
- A statement of the beneficiary's right to have a copy of the IWP made available to the beneficiary, including in an accessible format chosen by the beneficiary;
- A statement that only qualified employees and/or providers will be used to furnish services;
- A statement that if any medical or related health services are provided, they will be provided under the supervision of persons licensed to prescribe or supervise the provision of these services; and
- A detailed listing of the specific employment goals and services with corresponding timeframes to be provided to the beneficiary.

Privacy and Security Requirements for ENs

The EN must ensure that it will protect the privacy and confidentiality of the information it receives from

Social Security Administration beneficiary records. The EN shall certify that it will comply with the following requirements:

- Limitations on the access and use of the beneficiary information supplied by Social Security Administration, including using and accessing the beneficiary information only for the purposes of Social Security Administration Ticket to Work Program, disposing of the information in a safe and secure manner, and not duplicating or disseminating the information within or outside the EN's organization.
- Physical safeguards for protecting the security of the information that would include restricting data access to authorized employees and officials who need the data to perform their official duties in connection with the Social Security Administration Ticket to Work Program, storing the data in a physically secure area, and ensuring that unauthorized personnel cannot retrieve the data by means of computer, remote terminal or other electronic means.
- All personnel who have access to the data will be advised of the confidential nature of the information, the safeguards required to protect the information are in place, and the civil sanctions for noncompliance contained in the Federal statutes.

PART IV: EN REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Employment Networks have reporting requirements to the Social Security Administration, MAXIMUS, and beneficiaries. While many of these items listed under each subsection are specific reporting requirements required under Social Security Administration regulations, other items more accurately describe the responsibilities between three parties (Social Security Administration, MAXIMUS, and the EN).

EN Reporting Requirements to the Social Security Administration

An Employment Network is responsible to the Social Security Administration to:

- Meet the Social Security Administration financial reporting requirements. These requirements will be described in the agreements between the ENs and the Commissioner, and will include submitting a financial report to MAXIMUS on an annual basis;
- Collect and record such data as the Social Security Administration shall require and submit said information in the format prescribed by Social Security Administration;
- Adhere to all requirements in the agreement with the Commissioner and all regulatory requirements of the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program; and
- Notify the Social Security Administration (via MAXIMUS) of the desire to change payment systems.

EN Reporting Requirements to MAXIMUS

An Employment Network is responsible to MAXIMUS to:

- Report to MAXIMUS each time the EN accepts a Ticket for assignment;
- Submit copies of IWPs for each beneficiary with both the beneficiary's and EN's signature (within two (2) weeks of signing);

- Submit copies of any amendments of a beneficiary's IWP to MAXIMUS
- Provide MAXIMUS with copies of agreements established with State VR Agencies;

These agreements should include the following:

- Conditions under which services are provided by the State VR Agency,
- Procedures for resolving disputes under the agreement.
- Submit information to assist MAXIMUS in conducting the reviews necessary to assess a beneficiary's timely progress toward self-supporting employment to determine if a beneficiary is using a Ticket for purposes of suspending continuing disability reviews (Timely Progress Review);
- Report to MAXIMUS the specific outcomes achieved with respect to services the EN provided or secured on behalf of beneficiaries whose Tickets it accepted for assignment.
- Submit report to each beneficiary interested in assigning a Ticket and ensure that a copy of the report is available to the public while maintaining confidentiality of individual beneficiary information. Such reports shall conform to a national model prescribed by Social Security Administration and shall be submitted to MAXIMUS at least annually;
- Submit requests for payment that documents work effort, and proof of the beneficiary's work or earnings.

EN Reporting Requirements to the Beneficiary

The Employment Network is responsible to the beneficiaries to:

- Develop the employment goals and services of the IWP jointly with the beneficiary, adhering to all of the IWP requirements as previously listed;
- Provide a copy of the most recent annual report on outcomes to each beneficiary attempting to assign a Ticket to the EN; and
- Ensure that a copy of the most recent outcome report is included in each beneficiary's file.

PART V: EVALUATION OF EMPLOYMENT NETWORKS

The Social Security Administration will periodically review the results of the work of each Employment Network to ensure effective quality assurance in the provision of services by ENs. This review includes input from the beneficiaries as well as feedback from MAXIMUS. Because these reviews play an important part in assisting beneficiaries in choosing among the available ENs, the results of these periodic reviews must be readily available to beneficiaries. Specifically, the Social Security Administration review consists of requirements in two major areas: Program requirements and reporting requirements.

For Program requirements, the EN must meet the criteria discussed earlier in this module. In addition, the Social Security Administration review ensures that the EN is following specific reporting criteria as discussed. If the EN fails to follow the Program and/or reporting requirements, including minimum performance standards relating to beneficiaries achieving self-supporting employment and leaving the benefit rolls, then the Social Security Administration can terminate its agreement with the EN.

PART VI: STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES AND THE TICKET TO WORK PROGRAM

State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies

The term “State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agencies” applies to a state agency administering or supervising the administration of the State Plan approved under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The term State VR Agency also applies to states that have one agency that provides vocational rehabilitation services to non-blind individuals and another agency that provides services to blind individuals.

State VR Agencies Under the Ticket to Work Program

Each State VR Agency must participate in the Ticket to Work Program if it wishes to receive payments from the Social Security Administration for serving disabled beneficiaries who are issued a Ticket. Although these agencies must participate in the Program, they are not required to function as ENs. A State VR Agency may choose on a case-by-case basis whether it will function as an EN when serving a beneficiary with a Ticket. It may also continue to serve all beneficiaries with Tickets under the Cost Reimbursement Payment system. The State VR Agency must continue to provide services under the requirements of the State Plan approved under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, even when functioning as an EN.

Selecting a Payment Method

As the Ticket to Work Program was implemented in each state, the Social Security Administration notified each State VR Agency in writing about the payment methods available under the Program. The letter asked the State VR Agency to select a payment method when it chooses to function as an EN. To participate as an EN, a State VR Agency selects one of the two EN payment methods available, notifying the Social Security Administration of its choice in writing. The Director of the State VR Agency or the Director’s designee signed this letter.

A State VR Agency participates in the Ticket to Work Program in one of two ways when providing services to a particular disabled beneficiary under the Program. It may select on a case-by-case basis to participate either as an Employment Network or under the traditional Cost Reimbursement Payment system. When the State VR Agency serves a beneficiary with a Ticket as an EN, the State VR Agency will use the EN payment system it has elected for this purpose, either the Outcome Payment Method or the Milestone-Outcome Payment Method. When serving a beneficiary who was not issued a Ticket, the State VR Agency may seek payment only under the Cost Reimbursement Payment system.

A State VR Agency can choose to function as an EN or to receive payment under the Cost Reimbursement Payment system each time that a Ticket is assigned or reassigned to it if payment has not previously been made with respect to that Ticket. If payment has previously been made with respect to that Ticket, the State VR Agency can receive payment only under the payment system under which the earlier payment was made. In other words, a State VR Agency never has to function as an EN when serving a beneficiary with a Ticket if the beneficiary’s Ticket has not been previously assigned to an EN or other State VR Agency, or, if it has been previously assigned, if the Social Security Administration has never made payment under an EN payment system with respect to the beneficiary’s Ticket.

State VR Agencies must continue to provide services under the requirements of the State Plan approved under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, even when functioning as an EN.

State VR Agency: Working with Beneficiaries with Tickets

When a beneficiary approaches a State VR Agency for service, the agency must contact MAXIMUS to ensure that the beneficiary has a Ticket, and if so, whether the Ticket may be assigned or reassigned to the State VR Agency.

Once assignability has been verified and the State VR Agency determines that the beneficiary is eligible for VR services, the beneficiary and a representative of the State VR Agency must agree to and sign an Individualized Plan for Employment or IPE (as specified in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended). In order for the beneficiary's Ticket to be assigned or reassigned to the State VR Agency, the State VR Agency must submit to MAXIMUS the information listed below:

- Statement that the beneficiary has decided to assign or reassign the Ticket to the State VR Agency;
- Statement that an IPE has been developed and signed by the beneficiary and a representative of the State VR Agency;
- Statement of the vocational goal listed on the IPE; and
- Statement of the State VR Agency's selection of payment method (either Cost Reimbursement method or the previously elected EN payment method) under which the Agency will seek payment for services provided to the beneficiary.

This information must be submitted to MAXIMUS in a format prescribed by the Social Security Administration (SSA Form 1365 available on www.yourtickettowork.com) and must include the signature of both the beneficiary, or a representative of the beneficiary, and a representative of the State VR Agency.

If a beneficiary who is receiving services from the State VR agency under an existing Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) has a Ticket available for assignment and decides to assign the Ticket to the State VR agency, the State VR agency must submit the above information to MAXIMUS to ensure the assignment of that beneficiary's Ticket to the State VR agency.

PART VII: STATE VR AGENCIES' REPORTING AND BASIC REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE TICKET TO WORK PROGRAM

Much like other ENs, State VR Agencies have several basic responsibilities and reporting requirements under the Ticket to Work Program. The following subsections explore those responsibilities and reporting requirements.

Basic Requirements for State VR Agencies

State VR Agencies' requirements differ from the requirements set for other ENs as discussed in previous sections. The requirements for State VR Agencies are as follows:

- State VR Agencies must participate in the Ticket to Work Program although they are not required to function as an EN;
- State VR Agencies must continue to provide services under the requirements of the State Plan approved under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, even when functioning as ENs;

- While any entity serving as an EN must select a payment method under the Ticket to Work Program, State VR Agencies may also choose to serve beneficiaries under the Cost Reimbursement system.

State VR Agencies' Reporting Requirements

The State VR Agency is responsible to MAXIMUS for the following:

- Contact MAXIMUS when beneficiaries approach the State VR Agency for service to ensure that the beneficiary has a Ticket that is available for assignment;
- Submit information in a format prescribed by Social Security Administration (SSA Form-1365) that includes the following:
 - Statement that the beneficiary has decided to assign the Ticket to the State VR Agency;
 - Statement that an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) has been developed and signed by the beneficiary and a representative of the State VR Agency;
 - Statement of the vocational goal listed on the IPE, and
 - Statement of the State VR Agency's elected payment system.
- For cases where a State VR Agency provided services functioning as an EN, the State VR Agency will be required to prepare periodic reports on the specific outcomes achieved with respect to the specific services the State VR Agency provided to or secured for disabled beneficiaries whose Tickets it accepted for assignment. These reports must be submitted to MAXIMUS at least annually; and
- Regardless of the payment method elected, a State VR Agency must submit information to assist MAXIMUS in conducting the reviews necessary to assess a beneficiary's timely progress towards self-supporting employment to determine if a beneficiary might be using a Ticket for purposes of suspending continuing disability reviews.

PART VIII: REFERRALS BY EMPLOYMENT NETWORKS TO STATE VR AGENCIES

An EN may refer a beneficiary it is serving under the Ticket to Work Program to a State VR Agency for services only if the State VR Agency and the EN have a signed agreement describing the conditions under which the State VR Agency will provide services. This agreement must be in writing and signed by the State VR Agency and the EN before the EN refers any beneficiary to the State VR Agency for services. The agreement should be broad-based so that it applies to all beneficiaries that the EN may refer to the State VR Agency, although a State VR Agency and EN may want to enter into an individualized agreement to meet the needs of a single beneficiary. MAXIMUS will verify the establishment of these agreements. Each EN is required to submit a copy of the agreement it has established with the State VR Agency to MAXIMUS.

Conditions for Referral Agreements Between ENs and State VR Agencies

The agreement between an EN and a State VR Agency should state the conditions under which the State VR Agency will provide services to a beneficiary when the beneficiary is referred by the EN to the State VR Agency for services. Examples of this information include:

- Procedures for making referrals and sharing information that will assist in providing services;
- Description of the financial responsibilities of each party to the agreement;
- Terms and procedures under which the EN will pay the State VR Agency for providing services; and
- Procedures for resolving disputes under the agreement.

Guidelines for Responding to a Referral When No Referral Agreement Is in Place

If a State VR Agency receives a referral from an EN when no such agreement has been established between the State VR Agency and that EN, the State VR Agency will contact the EN to discuss the need to establish an agreement. If the State VR Agency and the EN are not able to negotiate acceptable terms for an agreement, the State VR Agency should notify MAXIMUS that an attempted referral has been made without an agreement. MAXIMUS will contact the EN to explain that a referral cannot be made to the State VR Agency unless an agreement has been established that determine the conditions under which services will be provided when a beneficiary's Ticket is assigned to the EN and the EN is referring the beneficiary to the State VR Agency for specific services.

PART IX: KEY POINTS

The key points of this unit include the following:

- An Employment Network is any qualified Agency, organization, or other entity that enters into an agreement with the Social Security Administration to provide for the coordination and delivery of employment services, vocational services, and other support services to beneficiaries under the Ticket to Work Program;
- An Employment Network must agree to develop an Individual Work Plan with the Ticket-holder and submit the document to MAXIMUS within two weeks after signing;
- Employment Networks must ensure that Ticket-holders' rights are protected;
- An Employment Network has reporting requirements and responsibilities to the Social Security Administration, MAXIMUS and beneficiaries;
- State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies are required to participate in the Ticket to Work Program, though they do not have to function as ENs;
- A State VR Agency must agree to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment with the Ticket holder and submit SSA Form 1365 to MAXIMUS;
- An Employment Network may refer a beneficiary served under the Ticket to Work Program to a State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency for services if there is a signed agreement between the EN and State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency.