



# Employment Rights Helpline at Equip for Equality

SELF-ADVOCACY ASSISTANCE ★ LEGAL ADVICE ABOUT EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ★ SAMPLE LETTERS & FORMS ★ REFERRALS

## Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS): Ticket to Work Program

**I am on social security, but am thinking about trying to find a job. Does the Social Security Administration have any programs that may help me?**

**Yes.** The Social Security Administration (SSA) has a program called **Ticket to Work** for people who are on social security and who want to find a job.

**What is the Ticket to Work program?**

Ticket to Work is a **free program** that helps you achieve your work goals. Through this program, you can get help with career counseling, job training, job referrals, and other employment support.

**Am I eligible for the Ticket to Work program?**

You are eligible for the Ticket to Work program if you are between the ages of 18 through 64 and get Social Security Disability (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits due to your disability.

**Do I have to be in the Ticket to Work program?**

**No.** Ticket to Work is voluntary. It is your choice whether you want to do it.

**I'd like to do the Ticket to Work program. What do I do?**

The first step is to sign up for the Ticket to Work program. You can sign up by contacting any of the following:

- SSA Ticket Call Center
  - 866-968-7842 (Voice) / 866-833-2967 (TTY)
  - <https://choosework.ssa.gov/>
- Your local SSA office
  - <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>
- The Division of Rehabilitation Services
  - 800-843-6154 (Voice) / (800) 447-6404 (TTY)
  - <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12&officetype=7>

Once you sign up, you will be given a Ticket, which you can then use for employment support services. There is no actual ticket or paper – “ticket” is just the name. You will get a letter saying that you are now in the Ticket to Work program, and you can use that to get help with looking for a job or going to school to get a job.

### **Where do I get employment support services?**

The Ticket to Work program has two types of agencies that can help you find a job or go to school to get ready to do a specific job:

- **The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS):** DRS is the vocational rehabilitation agency for the State of Illinois. DRS has counselors who meet with you to talk about your goals, help you find a job or figure out what kind of school you might want to go to get job training. DRS can also provide financial help to go to school.
- **Employment Networks (ENs):** Employment Networks are private agencies that provide employment support services to people with disabilities. ENs might offer a class or a school where you can learn a specific skill.

### **How do I decide which agency is best for me?**

You should do a little research into DRS and ENs to see which might have a program that best meets your needs. Think about your goals. Different agencies offer different services.

#### **Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)**

- DRS can help you figure out what kind of jobs to apply to; help with an interview; help you get reasonable accommodations; help you think about what type of school you want to go to; provide financial help for school or training programs; help pay the assistive technology you need for school or work; understand how working will impact your benefits
- DRS also has programs designed for specific populations, such as people who are blind or visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, and Hispanic/Latinx people with disabilities
- You can learn more about DRS and its services here: <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=29737>
- You can find the DRS office closest to your home here: <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12&officetype=7>

#### **Researching Employment Networks**

- ENs provide a variety of services, but not all provide the same kind of help.
- You can learn about different Employment Networks here, which has different search tools: <https://choosework.ssa.gov/findhelp/>

- Guided Search: This search tool asks you questions and then gives you a list of possible agencies will be provided to you.
- Direct Search: This search tool allows you to choose different categories to find agencies, such as your location, types of services.
- The SSA has helpful tools to help you through this process
  - How to choose the EN for you: [https://choosework.ssa.gov/Assets/cw/docs-materials/TTW\\_Choosing\\_EN.pdf](https://choosework.ssa.gov/Assets/cw/docs-materials/TTW_Choosing_EN.pdf)
  - How to keep track of the options: [https://choosework.ssa.gov/Assets/cw/docs-materials/BeneficiaryWsht-form6-05-2015\\_508.pdf](https://choosework.ssa.gov/Assets/cw/docs-materials/BeneficiaryWsht-form6-05-2015_508.pdf)

### **I've decided which agency to work with. What do I do next?**

Once you decide which agency you'd like to work with, you can then "assign your Ticket" to that agency. You are only allowed to assign your Ticket to one agency.

### **Does the agency have to accept my ticket?**

It depends.

- **Employment Networks** can choose not to accept a Ticket.
- **Division of Rehabilitation Services** must accept all Tickets.

### **What happens after I assign my Ticket?**

You and your Employment Network or DRS will create a plan that outlines your employment goals and the services and supports that the agency will provide to help you reach those goals.

### **What if I decide I want to work with a different Employment Network?**

You have the right to change Employment Networks. You will need to unassign your Ticket to that EN and reassign it to another. You should first tell your current EN or DRS that you would like to unassign your Ticket; you will also have to fill out a form. Then, you will need to reassign your Ticket to a new EN or DRS.

Here is the form to unassign your Ticket: <https://choosework.ssa.gov/library/ticket-un-assignment-form>

If possible, you should reassign your Ticket within 90 days to keep the SSA from conducting a Continuing Disability Review (discussed below).

### **How does the Ticket to Work program impact my eligibility for benefits?**

There are two ways Ticket to Work can impact your benefits:

- **Continuing Disability Review (CDR):** As an SSDI or SSI recipient, SSA will review your medical condition from time to time to see if you are still eligible for benefits. Participating in the Ticket to Work program can stop this type of review. If you assign your Ticket *before* you receive a CDR notice and you make “timely progress” toward your work goal, SSA will not conduct a review of your medical condition.
- **Job opportunities:** If you start working through Ticket to Work, you may have a reduced or eliminated need for social security benefits.

### **Will I lose my benefits if I start working?**

**Not necessarily.** The SSA has a number of work incentives that allow you to reduce your countable income so that you can still get SSI or SSDI benefits, and even your Medicaid and/or Medicare, while working.

The best thing to do is contact a Work Incentives Planning & Assistance agency (WIPA) for a free benefits analysis. WIPAs will review your earned income, benefits, and other resources to tell you how working will impact your benefits and to help you figure out which work incentives may be available to you.

#### **WIPA benefits counselor:**

- Chicago: (312) 746-5743 (voice), (312) 746-5713 (tty), 312) 746-5749 (fax)
  - This is located at the Chicago Mayors’ Office for People with Disabilities
- Outside of Chicago: (217) 836-0061 (voice) or (217) 522-8067 (fax)

### **I have heard about the Trial Work Period. What is that?**

The Trial Work Period is a nine-month period where you can keep your social security even if you are working. The Trial Work Period can help you as you try to enter (or re-enter) the work force without losing your benefits.

You can learn more about the Trial Work Period here:

<https://www.ssa.gov/OACT/COLA/twp.html>

### **If I do start working, do I need to tell the Social Security Administration?**

**Yes.** If you start working, you (or your representative payee) must immediately report your income to SSA. In fact, you should report any changes in your work activity, for example, if:

- You start or stop work
- Your work hours, duties, or pay have changed
- You start paying for expenses for work that you need because of your disability

### **How do I report my income to the Social Security Administration?**

You can report your income by:

- Giving a copy of your paystub to your local SSA office
- Mailing a copy of your paystub to your local SSA office
- Calling SSA's automated reporting telephone system: (800) 772-1213

Make sure to keep a copy of your paystubs and ask SSA for a receipt.

### **I have questions about my rights as a person with a disability on the job. What should I do?**

Contact Equip for Equality's Employment Rights Helpline at (844-RIGHTS-9) or <https://www.equipforequality.org/employment>. We can talk with you about your questions, including whether you should disclose your disability in a job interview, how to request a reasonable accommodation, and more.

### **Where can I learn more about the Ticket to Work program?**

- Social Security Administration: Ticket to Work website: <https://choosework.ssa.gov/>
- Equip for Equality's Employment Rights Helpline Resources: <http://www.equipforequality.org/employment>



## **DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION? CONTACT THE HELPLINE FOR FREE LEGAL ADVICE**

### **Equip for Equality's Employment Rights Helpline**

**1-844-RIGHTS-9** (toll free) or (844) 744-4879

800-610-2779 (tty)

[employment@equipforequality.org](mailto:employment@equipforequality.org)

[www.equipforequality.org/employment](http://www.equipforequality.org/employment)

This resource material is intended as a guide for people with disabilities. Nothing written here shall be understood to be legal advice. For specific legal advice, an attorney should be consulted.

Equip for Equality, an independent nonprofit organization, is the Illinois state Protection & Advocacy System whose mission is to advance the human and civil rights of children and adults with disabilities. The Employment Rights Helpline seeks to empower individuals with disabilities to advocate effectively. This publication is made possible by funding support from The Chicago Community Trust, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation

Services Administration; and the Social Security Administration. The contents of this publication are solely the responsibility of Equip for Equality and do not necessarily represent the official views of any of these agencies.

This publication is made possible by a grant from the Social Security Administration. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not represent the official views of the Social Security Administration. This document was disseminated at U.S. taxpayer expense.

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