

## **Benefits Counseling Services and Information**

### **Benefits Counseling Services**

#### **Benefits Orientation (Group Session)**

The Benefits Counseling Orientation provides an overview of work incentives for both SSI and SSDI beneficiaries. It also reviews how work affects Social Security disability cash benefits as well as medical insurance such as Medicare and Medicaid as well as other state benefits. The orientation also discusses what to expect when receiving an individualized benefits counseling service.

This service is offered at least once a month. It is available to current Vocational Rehabilitation participants as well as the public. To register click here:

<https://www.education.nh.gov/who-we-are/deputy-commissioner/bureau-vocational-rehabilitation>

Scroll down to the bottom of the page to register for session that fits your schedule.

If you require an interpreter or other accommodations, please contact Kristin Venator at [stacy.k.venator@doe.nh.gov](mailto:stacy.k.venator@doe.nh.gov) or (603) 271-1482 at least two weeks prior to the webinar you are registered to attend.

#### **Benefits Counseling (Individual Service)**

Benefits counseling is for the person who has a very specific question or issue that would require a few hours of discussion and would not require much, if any, follow-up. Benefits counseling is helpful for an individual who is not working yet or has already had a benefits analysis which is over a year old.

Benefits Counseling can be helpful for an individual needing information:

- Student Work Incentives
- Blind Work Incentives
- Self-employment
- Overpayment notice
- Medicaid or other state benefits
- Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) Development

This service is only available to current Vocational Rehabilitation participants. Contact your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for more information on this service.

### Benefits Analysis (Individual Service)

The Benefits Analysis service provides a comprehensive, formal analysis of benefits, work incentives, and the impact on employment which is called a Benefits Summary and Analysis (BS&A). This is a critical service every individual with a disability with an employment goal should have. The BS&A includes a formalized report that has a Work Incentives Plan (WIP) of recommended steps for benefits management. With this service, ongoing support will be provided as needed for up to one year to help manage the Work Incentives Plan.

This service is only available to current Vocational Rehabilitation participants. Contact your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for more information on this service.

### Benefits Counseling Information

**Q: There is a lot of information online and posted on Social Security's Ticket-to-Work website, why is it important to receive individualized Benefits Counseling services?**

A: There is a lot of information available online however, depending on the source of the information it may not be accurate. In addition, the information available online is not personalized to your individual situation. When you work with a Benefits Counselor you will receive individual services personalized to your situation. In most situations your Benefits Counselor will verify your benefits with the Social Security Administration and/or DHHS to provide you with accurate information.

The key to returning to working successfully is being educated and prepared for the benefit changes before they happen. A work incentives Benefits Counselor can verify benefits, explain how earnings will impact state and federal benefits, and outline action items when there are changes to your specific situation.

Both knowledge of work rules and work incentives is crucial to understand so that you can make educated decisions about working.

**Q: I will only be seeking part-time employment; do I need Benefits Counseling?**

A: Even part-time employment can impact your Social Security and State benefits as different programs have different income limits, every situation is different. A Benefits Counselor will explain how part-time or full-time work may impact your benefits and review any work incentives you may be eligible to receive.

**Q: Will Social Security be notified that I received Benefits Counseling services?**

A: In most cases your Benefits Counselor will request a Benefit Planning Query (BPQY) from Social Security Administration. A BPQY statement contains detailed information about the status of your disability cash benefits, scheduled medical reviews, health insurance, and work history. The BPQY provides a snapshot of your benefits and work

history as stored in SSA's electronic records. The BPQY is a tool Benefits Counselor use.

Besides requesting the BPQY no other information is sent to Social Security regarding the benefits counseling services you receive. It is your responsibility contact Social Security directly to report a change in employment status or earnings.

**Q: I am currently juggling so many appointments and other commitments and do not think I have time to receive Benefits Counseling services. How much of a commitment is it to receive this service?**

Benefits Counseling services do not take up too much time. The information below provides you with an estimated time commitment for each service.

Benefits Counseling Orientation: 1hr

Benefits Counseling: 1hr (typically). There may be some back-and-forth conversations needed between you and the benefits counselor

Benefits Analysis: 1hr (intake meeting) Then any follow up appointments you request.

**If I am not interested in Benefits Counseling services now, can I receive them later?**

It would be most beneficial for you to receive Benefits Counseling services while you are an active participant with VR New Hampshire.

If your ticket is still assigned to our agency after your case is closed, you may be eligible to receive benefits counseling after your case is closed. Otherwise, you would need to contact the state WIPA for benefits counseling services.

**I am interested in Benefits Counseling services how do I get started?**

Contact your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for more information on how to receive Benefits Counseling Services.