# PART A, CHAPTER 3.3.d: TICKET TO WORK PROGRAM

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Policy Number** | **Authority** | **Scope** | **Effective Date** |
| Part A, Chapter 3.3.d | 20 CFR [§411](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-20/part-411) | All TWC-VR staff | 9/3/2024 |

## PURPOSE

In accordance with the authority (Federal and State) listed above, this policy is issued by the Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation Division (TWC-VR). Adherence to these rules and regulations issued under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), supports Texans with disabilities in gaining, maintaining, and advancing in competitive integrated employment (CIE).

Specifically, the purpose of this policy and these procedures is to ensure adherence to the Ticket to Work (TTW) Program under the Social Security Act, primarily with how it interacts with TWC-VR.

## DEFINITIONS

Cognosante: The Ticket Program Manager (TPM) that carries out the daily administration of the Social Security Administration (SSA) TTW Program; responsible for marketing the Ticket Program, administering payments to service providers, and monitoring and ensuring that all Ticket Program participants adhere to the rules of the law and the Ticket to Work legislation.

Diary Date: Date set by SSA for a medical review evaluating a recipient’s disability or blindness status.

Employment Networks (EN): Public or private groups that contract with Social Security to provide free job support services to people who receive Title II and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits aged 18 to 65 who are interested in working towards the goal of replacing their benefits with income from a job. ENs may offer career planning help, job leads and job placement, ongoing employment support, and benefits counseling.

Individual Work Plan (IWP): A written and signed agreement between the beneficiary and the EN. The IWP describes the beneficiary’s specific employment goal(s) and the TWC-VR services and other employment-related supports and services that the EN will provide to help the beneficiary enter, maintain, advance to, and sustain self-supporting employment.

Informed Choice: The means by which a customer chooses their rehabilitation path, from options based on their needs and circumstances and the TWC-VR rules. This includes the decision regarding to whom their Ticket is assigned.

Medical Continuing Disability Reviews (MCDR): A periodic review ("diary date") by SSA that determines if the customer continues to have a disabling condition under SSA rules. SSA disability benefits will stop if SSA determines the customer is no longer disabled or blind.

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI): Financial assistance to individuals who are unable to work due to a significant disability. Designed as a safety net for workers who have paid into the Social Security system through payroll taxes, SSDI benefits are based on an individual's work history and earnings record.

Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA): A benchmark number SSA uses to describe a level of work activity and earnings.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI): Needs-based disability benefits paid to disabled individuals who have limited income and resources. Disability benefits under SSI include 1) Childhood SSI (for those under age 18) and 2) SSI Adult Disabled/Blind (for those age 18 to 65).

Timely Progress: Regular timely progress reviews conducted by SSA to determine Ticketholders' progress towards specific work goals.

Title II: Disability benefits under Title II include 1) Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), 2) Childhood Disability Benefits aka Disabled Adult Child (CDB/DAC), and 3) Disabled Widow/Widower Benefits (DWB).

## POLICY

### General Overview

TTW is a free and voluntary program developed and administered by SSA for beneficiaries aged 18 up to age 65 receiving SSI or a Title II benefit (e.g., SSDI) due to their disability. It offers customers a choice of receiving employment services through TWC-VR or a private EN.

### The Ticket to Work Program

* Assignment may protect them from SSA MCDRs;
* Is not assignable to an EN while their TWC-VR case is open;
* Can be assigned to an EN within 90 days of TWC-VR case closure for long-term support services, job retention services, or other types of support services that help the customer maintain long-term employment; and
* May be assigned to an EN within 90 days of TWC-VR case closure to ensure that the customer has continued protection from SSA MCDRs.

TWC-VR is eligible for cost reimbursement from SSA if the Ticket is assigned to TWC-VR and the customer has earned [SGA](https://www.ssa.gov/oact/cola/sga.html) for nine consecutive months out of 12.

## PROCEDURES

### Ticket Status at Application

It is important to check a customer's Ticket status at application. The TWC-VR staff must use the following process to check customer Ticket status:

1. At the time of the customer's application, determine whether the customer has assigned their Ticket to an EN by asking the following questions:
   * Have you talked with an EN about your TTW?
   * If you have, do you know if you assigned your Ticket to that EN?
2. If the customer says that they are not sure if they have a Ticket or if it is assigned, contact the State Office Program Specialist for Ticket to Work for verification.
3. If the customer has assigned their Ticket to an EN and is determined eligible for TWC-VR services, the TWC-VR staff member requests that the customer submit the [Ticket Un-assignment form](https://choosework.ssa.gov/library/ticket-un-assignment-form.html) to the TTW Program Manager to request that the Ticket be unassigned.
4. If a customer chooses not to unassign the Ticket from an EN, the TWC-VR staff member—
   * Requests a copy of the IWP entered by the customer and the EN;
   * Considers any services listed on the IWP as comparable benefits; and
   * Advises the customer that TWC-VR will not provide any of the services listed on the IWP if the Ticket is still assigned to the other EN.
5. The State Office Program Specialist for TTW identifies customers with Tickets assigned to an EN and attempts to have Ticket unassigned. In some cases, the State Office Program Specialist for TTW will need assistance from the assigned VR Counselor. In these cases, the State Office Program Specialist for TTW will contact the assigned VR Counselors and request they notify the customer that their Ticket is assigned and ask the customer to complete and submit the [Ticket Un-assignment form](https://choosework.ssa.gov/library/ticket-un-assignment-form.html).

### When Ticket is Assigned to TWC-VR

After the Ticket is assigned to TWC-VR, the customer will receive a letter by U.S. Postal Service from SSA that their Ticket has been assigned.

### Ticket Status at Closure

It is important to notify customers who have a Ticket and are earning above current [SGA](https://www.ssa.gov/oact/cola/sga.html) that they can reassign their Ticket to an EN following TWC-VR case closure if they need additional supports.

### Social Security Medical Continuing Disability Review

Once the IPE is signed, and the Ticket is "In-Use" with TWC-VR, SSA may suspend a MCDR until TWC-VR case closure.

In order for the MCDR to be suspended—

* The customer must have a signed IPE;
* The customer must be making “timely progress" as defined by SSA; and
* The customer must contact their local SSA office upon receiving notification of an upcoming MCDR. An MCDR cannot be suspended once a medical review has been initiated.

The customer needs to notify the local Social Security Office that they are participating in TWC-VR services.

Social Security will send *SSA-4290* to the assigned VR Counselor, who must complete Section B.

### SSA Section 301

Section 301 may allow SSA disability cash benefits and healthcare (Medicaid and/or Medicare) to continue until TWC-VR case closure after MCDR is conducted and an unfavorable decision has been issued.

Section 301 payments are not guaranteed; the customer must have an IPE and be making timely progress towards an employment goal that will significantly reduce or eliminate the need for SSA cash benefits.

The customer must contact their local SSA and request Section 301. SSA will send *SSA-4290* to the assigned VR Counselor, who must complete Section B.

## APPROVALS & CONSULTATIONS

There are no approvals or consultations for this policy and these procedures; however, consultations with the State Office Program Specialist for TTW are always available.

**REVIEW**

The Policy Planning and Statewide Initiatives Team, or designee, is responsible for reviewing this policy and these procedures and will update the Document History log if necessary.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Type** | **Change Description** |
| 9/3/2024 | New | VRSM Policy and Procedure Rewrite |