Public Benefits and Financial Literacy

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Introduction

- This NYESS training is designed to provide basic information on both SSA benefits and Financial Literacy
- Staff are encouraged to share information with SSA beneficiaries and dispel common myths about working while receiving public benefits
- Every SSA Beneficiary should have access to Benefits Advisement to address their specific situation

Topics we will cover today

- NYESS
- Why is working a good idea?
- Benefit Basics
  - SSI/SSDI benefits
  - Work Incentives
  - Healthcare Benefits (Medicaid and Medicare)
- Housing Models
- Ticket-to-Work (TTW)
- Financial Literacy - Budgeting

*We are covering a basic overview of the work incentives available and not every potential scenario for each benefit. Please contact us for more information!
Section One - New York Employment Services System (NYESS)

What is it?

- Statewide partnership and resource for all things related to employment
- Collaborative employment services case management system
- Ticket-to-Work Administrative Employment Network
- Primary employment services data source
Customer Resources

Section 301 of the Social Security Act is a law that allows you to continue receiving SSI/SSDI even if you are no longer considered disabled by SSA. To be eligible for services under NYESS, you must be a part of the Regular Program.

- A vocational rehabilitation program
- A Social Security Disability program
- An aftercare program
- A drug treatment program
- An individualized Education Plan

The Learning Center tab is updated frequently, please check back for additional information, regularly.

Find a NYESS Provider Near You

The Learning Center tab is updated frequently, please check back for additional information, regularly.

Find a NYESS Provider Near You
Questions

Do you have any questions about NYESS or how NYESS can help you?

Section Two – Why Working is a Good Idea
Word Cloud Question

Why do you think working is a good idea?

What do you need to know?

Employment is a good idea!

• Going to work has been shown to not only increase your overall income, but also helps to improve your:
  • Physical Health
  • Mental Health
  • Socialization
  • Meaningful Activity
  • Self Worth
  • Work Ethic
  • And an overall better Quality of Life…

Section Three – Benefit Basics
Poll Question

Are you comfortable talking about Social Security benefits with the individuals you serve? (SSI and SSDI)

What do you need to know?

Working while receiving public benefits is a good idea!!

- Not everyone needs to be a benefits expert, but we do need to understand a couple of basics
  - An individual will have more $$$ in their pocket and will not be penalized for working while receiving SSA benefits but the individual must report their income
  - An individual will be eligible for free Medicaid in almost all scenarios
  - There are common frustrations and anxieties associated with public benefits and need to be part of the conversation
  - There are many common myths about what happens when someone on public benefits earns wages, and we’re part of the problem if we don’t talk about them

What do you need to know?

Benefits advisement resources and information must be within everyone’s reach

- Anyone receiving public benefits should be connected to benefits advisement
  - Each situation and benefit/financial picture is different and needs to be considered

- Do you have a contact with a certified benefits advisor?
  - If your answer is “no” contact NYESS to let us help you figure it out!

- Do you have a go-to site for info about benefits?
  - If your answer is “no” contact NYESS to let us help you figure it out!
Benefit Basics

Here are the basics about benefits that you should know!

• SSI and SSDI are separate SSA benefit types and calculate wages in different ways but in either case working is a good idea
  • Always consult a benefits advisor

• Wages must be reported in all scenarios to prevent over-payments or related penalties

• If an individual earns enough for cash benefits to stop there are ways to continue receiving Free Medicaid
  • 1619(b) of the Social Security Act
  • Medicaid Buy-In for Working People with Disabilities (MBI-WPD)

• If an individual would like to save more than allowable resource limits, they can
  • Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (ABLE)
  • Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)

Section Four – SSA Cash Benefits (SSI)

Supplemental Security Income Program (SSI)

SSI

• The SSI program provides a cash benefit payment to people who have limited income and resources and not enough work history credits to receive SSDI

• Resource limits
  • Single individual $2,000
  • Individual with a spouse $3,000

• Federal Benefit Rate (FBR) - $914

• SSI Work Incentives
  • Student Earned Income Exclusion
  • Impairment-Related Work Expense
  • Blind-Work Expense
SSS Work Incentives

Student Earned Income Exclusion

- Allows a person who is under age 22 and regularly attending school to not count earnings from income

- In 2023 the amount that can be excluded is $2,220 monthly, up to a yearly maximum of $8,950

Impairment-Related Work Expense (IRWE)

- IRWEs are costs for items or services that an individual needs in order to work because of their disability

- Social Security will deduct the costs of an IRWE from the countable income when determining eligibility for Social Security disability benefits

### Federal Benefit Rate in 2023

\[ = \$914 \]

**Step 1 – Unearned Income**

- Gross Unearned Income
- Subtract SSI as a General Income Exclusion
- Total Unearned Income

**Step 2 – Earned Income**

- Gross Earned Income
- Subtract SSI as an Earned Income Exclusion
- Subtract and Work Incentives (IRWE – $100)
- Divide by 2
- Total Countable Earned Income

**Step 3 – Total Countable Income**

- Add Total Countable Unearned Income
- Add Total Countable Earned Income
- Total Countable Income

**Step 4 – Adjusted SSI Payment**

- Federal Benefit Rate $914
- Subtract Total Countable Income $897.50
- Total Adjusted SSI Payment

**Step 5 – Total Financial Outcome**

- Adjusted SSI Payment $16.50
- Gross Earned Income $1,000
- Unearned Income $500
- Total Financial Outcome $1,516.50
SSI Calculation

- It is important to complete all 5 steps with the individual and emphasize the positive financial outcomes in step 5.
- In our example, the individual will receive more money per month (+ $602.50), even though her SSI check will be lower, now that she is working.
- Visit our website at https://NYESS.NY.GOV and navigate to the Customer Resources tab to find the link to an online SSI Calculator.

Questions?

Do you have any questions about SSI and how to explain basic information to the individuals you serve?

Section Five – SSA Cash Benefits (SSDI)
Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

- SSA provides cash benefits to individuals who have worked and paid into the
  SSA Insurance Program
- The amount an individual receives is based on the work earnings, over their
  working years
- There are several work incentives available for individuals who receive SSDI
  and want to work:
  - Trial Work Period (TWP)
  - Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE)
  - Expedited Reinstatement (EXR)

SSDI Work Incentives

Trial Work Period (TWP)
- Allows an individual to test their ability to work for at least nine months without losing
  their SSDI benefits
- An individual will receive their full SSDI cash benefit regardless of how high the
  earnings might be, as long as the individual reports their work activity and continues
  to have a disabling impairment
- The TWP begins when you earn over $1,050 per month the Trial Work Level (TWL)
- The TWP months do not have to be consecutive

Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE)
- It automatically begins the month after the TWP ends
- It is a 36-month period (safety net) where SSA benefits can be stopped and re-
  started without having to reapply for SSDI benefits
- It is during this timeframe that if an individual earns over Substantial Gainful
  Activity (SGA) there is a benefit cessation month, and a two-month grace
  period, but benefits can be restarted easily if the individual earns under the
  SGA level again
- SGA may change every calendar year
  - $1,470 for Non-Blind individuals
  - $2,460 for Blind individuals
SSDI Work Incentives

Expedited Reinstatement (EXR)

• It is a safety net for people who successfully return to work and their SSDI cash benefits are terminated.

• If the cash benefit payments end because of increased earnings, and within five years the earnings fall below SGA level, the individual may be able to have the benefits started again, within 6 months, through a request for EXR.

• While SSA is reviewing the request to have benefits re-instated, the individual will receive their benefit check and if SSA determines that the SSA Cash benefit will not be approved, the individual will not have to pay back those funds.

Poll Question

Do you have any questions about SSDI benefits, and how to explain basic information to the individuals you serve?
Poll Question

Are you comfortable talking with your customers about Medicaid and Medicare coverage?

Medicaid Benefits

- If an individual lives in New York State and they are eligible for SSI cash benefits, they will automatically be eligible for Medicaid benefits.

- There are two major rules for Medicaid that may allow an individual to maintain their Medicaid benefits even if they earn enough to lose their SSI benefits.

Medicaid 1619(b)

- 1619(b) is a special Medicaid rule that allows an individual to maintain Medicaid coverage even if earnings become too high for an SSI cash benefit.

- If an individual is eligible for 1619(b) it will be an automatic process, however, there is a template letter available on the NYESS website to alert SSA of this change: https://nyess.ny.gov/docs/cust/info/1619b-template-letter.pdf

- Eligibility requirements:
  - Eligible for SSI cash benefits for at least one month
  - Would be eligible for an SSI cash benefit except for the earnings
  - Still disabled
  - Still meet all of the other eligibility rules, including the resources test
  - Need Medicaid in order to work
  - Have gross earned income that is insufficient to replace SSI or Medicaid
Medicaid Buy-In for Working People with Disabilities (MBI-WPD)

- The Medicaid Buy-In program offers Medicaid coverage to people with disabilities who are working and earning more than the allowable limits for regular Medicaid. It’s FREE!
- Individuals may have a gross income as high as $68,988 and up to $92,950 for a couple.
- An individual may have non-exempt resources that do not exceed the MBI-WPD resource level of $20,000 for a one-person household and $30,000 for a two-person household.
- To learn more information here is the link for the MBI Toolkit: https://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/program/buy_in/working_people_with_disabilities.pdf

Medicare

- Most individuals who receive a Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) cash benefit are also eligible for Medicare coverage.
- Following the Trial Work Period (TWP) individuals can continue to receive at least 93 months (seven years and nine months) of Medicare coverage including:
  - Hospital Insurance (Part A) – Premium Free
  - Supplemental Medical Insurance (Part B), if enrolled
  - Prescription Drug Coverage (Part D), if enrolled
- After premium-free Medicare coverage ends due to work, an individual can buy continued Medicare coverage if you remain disabled.

Question?

Do you have any questions about how to discuss the Healthcare options: Medicaid and Medicare?
Section Seven – ABLE Accounts and PASS Plans

ABLE Accounts

Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE)
- An ABLE account is a savings program for eligible people with disabilities who have resources that would make them ineligible for other benefits
  - (example: If someone receives $10,000 in an inheritance, they would have too much in resources and no longer be eligible for SSI benefits)
- Use an ABLE account to pay for medical and living expenses in order to maintain health, independence, and quality of life

PASS Plans

Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)
- A PASS Plan allows an individual to set aside money (other than SSI cash benefits), for a specific time period, so that the individual can go to work and achieve their work goals, without losing their SSI cash benefit
  - (example: setting aside money to buy a car, so that an individual can get to work)
- The PASS Plan is developed and approved through the Claim Representative at the local SSA office
Questions?

Do you have any questions about ABLE Accounts or PASS Plans?

Section Eight – Housing & Employment

What does Employment have to do with Housing?

- Both employment status and housing status are essential social determinants of health and mental health
- In some cases, housing providers act as the individual's Representative Payee, so they play an important role in supporting any employment-related goals and interventions
- Income earned through employment can lead to increased financial independence and improved housing outcomes
The role of Housing Providers in supporting employment goals

- Housing Providers:
  - Refer any individual who’s interested in employment to a local employment provider
  - Reinforce skill building related to daily living skills like hygiene, time management, and budgeting
  - If acting as Representative Payee, they must keep on top of Social Security paperwork and reporting requirements and should establish a go-to benefits expert
  - The Housing Providers should never discourage housing participants from working to their full potential; if their income impacts the housing model, a benefits advisor can support the individual to help them figure it out!

Section Nine – Ticket-to-Work (TTW)

What do you know about the Ticket-to-Work program?
Ticket-to-Work (TTW)

- TTW is an employment program through SSA that can work in coordination with an individual’s existing supports!
- The TTW program is voluntary and can help an individual obtain and maintain employment without any cost to the individual
- Eligibility:
  - Receive SSI and/or SSDI benefits
  - Between the ages of 18 and 64
  - Want to go to work

If an individual is eligible for TTW, SSA will automatically send them a letter, which will include:
- An explanation of the TTW program
- A list of potential employment providers
- A “Ticket”

It is not a literal “ticket”

Benefits of participating in TTW
- If an individual assigns their “Ticket” to an Employment Provider, SSA will suspend the Continuing Disability Review (CDR), if the individual continues to make timely progress
- Continuing Disability Review – a review to determine that an individual still meets the SSA definition of being disabled
- Timely Progress – a demonstration that the individual is making timely progress within the TTW program
  - By working
  - By going to school
Ticket-to-Work (TTW)

- An Employment Provider can assist an individual to prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment

- An Employment Provider can offer Benefits Advisement so the individual can better understand how working will impact their benefits

Ticket-to-Work (TTW)

- Through the TTW program here are examples of some of types of services an individual might receive, at no cost:
  - Creating or Updating a Resume
  - Practice Interview Skills
  - Career Exploration
  - Job Search
  - Coordination of Interviews with Employers
  - Benefits Advisement
  - Support during New Employee Orientation
  - Job Coaching

Questions?

Do you have any questions about the Ticket-to-Work Program?
Section Ten – Financial Literacy - Budgeting

Poll Question

Do you feel comfortable talking with the individuals you serve about finances?

(Budgeting, Credit Cards, Savings)

Budgeting

• Creating and keeping to a budget is the first step in financial self-sufficiency

• A budget is a list of:
  • The total NET income an individual expects to receive monthly (from all sources)
  • The money we plan to spend monthly (including bills, needs and wants)
Gross Income Versus Net Income

- **Gross** Income – the sum of all wages, before taxes are taken out of your check
- **Net** Income – the sum of all wages, after taxes have been taken out of your check
  - This is the amount on your payroll check and it is the actual amount of money that you can spend

Budgeting

- Getting started may seem overwhelming, but if you take it one step at a time, it will be easier
- **Income**
  - Identify your income sources
  - Look at the number of weeks in the month
  - Divide your NET income by the number of weeks in the month to determine how much income you have available each week
- **Expenses**
  - Identify your expenses
    - Both NEEDS and WANTS
  - Create a list of monthly expenses
  - Divide each expense by the number of weeks in the month to determine how much money you need to cover your bills each week

Use the Income and Benefits Tracker to track your net income for the month, include **all income from all sources**:

- Wages from employment
- Child Support
- SSA Benefits
- Public Benefits (SNAP, TANF)
- Other Government Programs
- Other
Week #1

Job #1 - $15.00/hr. x 20 hours = $300.00 (GROSS)
– taxes = $60, which leaves
$240.00 (NET)

Job #2 – N/A

Child Support – $200/mo. divided by 4 (weeks) = $50.00/week
Disability Benefits – $914/mo. – divided by 4 (weeks) = $228.50/week
SNAP – N/A
TANF – N/A
Other Government Programs – N/A
Other - $0

Total: $568.50

Week #2

Job #1 - $15.00/hr. x 20 hours = $300.00 (GROSS)
– taxes = which leaves
$240.00 (NET)

Job #2 – N/A

Child Support – $200/mo. divided by 4 (weeks) = $50.00/week
Disability Benefits – $914/mo. – divided by 4 (weeks) = $228.50/week
SNAP – N/A
TANF – N/A
Other Government Programs – N/A
Other - $50.00 from parent

Total: $518.50

Week #3

Job #1 - $15.00/hr. x 20 hours = $300.00 (GROSS)
– taxes = which leaves
$240.00 (NET)

Job #2 – N/A

Child Support – $200/mo. divided by 4 (weeks) = $50.00/week
Disability Benefits – $914/mo. – divided by 4 (weeks) = $228.50/week
SNAP – N/A
TANF – N/A
Other Government Programs – N/A
Other - $50.00 from parent

Total: $568.50
Day 4

Job 1 - $15.00/hr. x 20 hours = $300.00 (GROSS) – which
means $60.00/week.
Job 2 - N/A
Child Support - $200/mo. divided by 4 (weeks) = $50.00/week
Disability Benefits - $914/mo. divided by 4 (weeks) = $228.50/week
SNAP – N/A
TANF – N/A
Other Government Programs – N/A
Other – N/A
Total: $518.50

Monthly Income

Week 1 - $568.50
Week 2 - $518.50
Week 3 - $568.50
Week 4 - $518.50
Total NET Income: $2,174.00

Do you have any questions on how to talk with your customers about figuring out their monthly income?
Budgeting

- Use the Spending Tracker to keep track of your spending for a month
  - Cell Phone (Cell Phone costs, including accessories, etc.)
  - Debt Payment (Credit Cards, Student Loans, etc.)
  - Eating Out (Fast Food, etc.)
  - Education & Childcare (School Lunches, School Supplies, Childcare Costs, etc.)
  - Entertainment & Personal Care (Going to the Movies, Getting Your Hair Cut, etc.)
  - Groceries & Other Supplies (Groceries, etc.)
  - Health Expenses (Co-pays, Over the counter medications, Gym costs, etc.)
  - Helping Others (Contributions to Charity, etc.)
  - Housing & Utilities (Rent, Gas/Electric, Internet, etc.)
  - Pets (Food, Veterinarian, Shots, Medicine, Boarding, etc.)
  - Transportation (Gasoline, Tolls, Auto Repair, Car Payment, etc.)
  - Other (Includes both NEEDS and WANTS)

Keeping track of monthly expenses can seem overwhelming

Individuals generally don’t want to account for every penny they spend

However, it’s a great way to
- Learn where an individual is spending their money
- See how much money an individual will need each month to make ends meet
- See how much money an individual may have left over each month

Monthly Expenses

In order to see how much is being spent each month – keep track of how much money you need each week.

If a bill is $200.00 for the month, divide it by 4 (or the number of weeks in the month) and use that total for each week.
Cell Phone – if your cell phone bill is $100.00 per month – divide by 4 (weeks in the month) = $25.00/week

Debt (Credit Cards) – if you pay $200.00/mo. on your credit cards – divide by 4 (weeks in the month) = $50.00/week

Eating Out – keep track of how much you spend when you eat out (keep your receipts to calculate how much you’re spending)

Education/Children – keep track of how much you spend on education costs for yourself or your children each week, and keep track of how much childcare costs you’ve spent for one week ($960.00/mo. divided by 4 = $240.00/week)

Entertainment/Personal Care – keep track of how much you spend on entertainment and/or personal care (examples: going to the movies, getting your hair cut)

Groceries and Other Supplies – keep track of how much you spend each week on groceries and other supplies you use (examples: Cleaning products, Vegetables)

Health Expenses – keep track of how much you spend for your health (examples, co-pays, over-the-counter medications)

Helping Others – keep track of how much you spend in helping others (examples, give money to your parents, contributions to charity, allowance to your children)

Housing & Utilities (Rent, Gas, Electric) – keep track of how much you spend per week on these expenses ($500 Rent/month divided by 4 = $125.00 per week)

Pets (Food, Veterinarian, Shots, Medicine, boarding) – keep track of how much you spend per week for the care of your pets

Transportation – keep track of how much you spend on gasoline, tolls, and auto repairs and/or Car Payments

Other – keep track of other expenses (WANTS & NEEDS) that you have that don’t fall in the other categories

Look at each of your monthly bills - including the things you spend money on that don’t come in a monthly bill (shopping for school clothes, etc.) - then divide them by the number of weeks in a month

Put that total in the row for the specific category for each week

Then, add the grand total at the bottom of the page – this is how much money you need to make ends meet
Budgeting

- Keep track of where you spend your money, and how much each item costs
  - Look at the total income and benefits and the total expenses for each week
- Do you have enough to cover all expenses each week?
- Are there things you can adjust or postpone so you have enough to cover your needs each week?

Re-Adjust Spending

- Total Income: $2,174.00
- Total Expenses: $2,740.00
- Total Spending $566.00 more than is available

Savings

- Total Income - $2,174.00
- Total Expenses - $2,000.00
- Total Savings: $174.00
Budgeting & Financial Literacy

Do you have questions about discussing budgeting & financial literacy with the individuals you serve?

Budgeting Forms

- Income and benefits tracker
  - Income-and-Benefits-Tracker.pdf (employment1st.com)

- Spending Tracker
  - Spending-Tracker.pdf (employment1st.com)

Resources

- Impairment-Related Work Expense (IRWE) Request
  - Impairment Related Work Expense Request Form (unt.edu)

- Work Incentive Seminar Events (WISE) Seminars through SSA. These webinars are held monthly – register online at: https://choosework.ssa.gov/wise/

- Ticket-to-Work website:
  - https://choosework.ssa.gov/
Questions?

NYESS is your resource for all things related to employment!
Please contact us with any questions.

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