



Explore Work With Confidence

(NAPS)—With unemployment at a 50-year low, companies are eager to draw talent from a diverse pool of job seekers, and organizations have recognized the inherent value in a diverse workforce that includes qualified employees with disabilities.

Yet, for many who rely on Social Security disability benefits for income and Medicare or Medicaid, work seems like a gamble. What most people don't know is that there are free services and supports available for those who qualify.

Social Security's Ticket to Work (Ticket) program and other Work Incentives can help take the guesswork out of finding or returning to work. More than 20 Work Incentives are designed to help individuals who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) due to a disability, transition to the workplace without immediately losing those benefits. Because each person's circumstances are different, job seekers are encouraged to consult a certified Benefits Counselor, who can help them make informed decisions about employment and benefits.

Through the Ticket program, people ages 18 through 64 who receive SSDI or SSI can receive free job-related services and supports. Whether they work with their state's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency or with authorized service providers called Employment Networks (EN), people can find the resources they need to prepare for, find and maintain employment.

For individuals such as Shirley, this can mean exploring work with confidence. When Shirley was diagnosed with narcolepsy, her doctors advised her stop working.



Good news for people with disabilities: You can join the workforce without losing your benefits.

"It was distressing to lose that sense of control over my life," she recalls. "... [and] stressful making ends meet on an SSDI check."

It took several years to find effective treatment, but Shirley was determined to regain her well-being and that feeling of self-determination she had lost. "Narcolepsy is not something that just goes away," she says. "But I've learned to make adjustments...[and] work around the disability."

Once she felt ready, Shirley attended a job fair where she learned about the Ticket program and connected with an EN. With their help and encouragement, Shirley found work in her State's General Services Administration, where she helps ensure small businesses are represented on state contracts.

"I'm grateful for the help I received through Ticket to Work," she reflects. "It feels wonderful to have my independence back! I feel like I can rely on myself again."

To learn more, call the Ticket to Work Help Line at 1-866-968-7842 or 1-866-833-2967 (TTY). Or visit www.choosework.ssa.gov.