

**Maine Department of Labor
TICKET TO WORK PARTNERSHIP PLUS AGREEMENT
Between**

**Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
And
Bureau of Employment Services**

I. Introduction

The Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program (TTW) is a program administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) for people with disabilities who receive benefits under Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs based upon disability. TTW is a voluntary program for people who are between age 18 and age 64 and are interested in going to work. This agreement establishes a "Partnership Plus" program (20 CFR Section 411.585) between the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) through its Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DVBI) and the Bureau of Employment Services (BES), an approved Employment Network (EN) under the TTW program.

Nothing in this agreement will have an impact on a client's rights and responsibilities under the Ticket to Work Program.

References:

- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended
- Title 34 CFR Part 361
- Title 26 MRSA
- Workforce Investment Act of 1998

II. Purpose of Agreement

The purpose of this Partnership Plus agreement is to establish the basis for coordination of vocational rehabilitation and employment and training services under the Ticket to Work Program between BRS and BES. This partnership agreement would not preclude either party from entering into other individual agreements for services for specific clients.

The Partnership Plus agreement:

- Builds upon and strengthens existing partnerships within the CareerCenters in the provision of vocational rehabilitation and employment and training services to individuals with disabilities seeking employment in Maine;

- Ensures best practices and ethical standards are maintained and that individual rights and informed choices are respected;
- Expands service options and the overall capacity of Maine's workforce investment activities to offer individuals with disabilities the opportunity to achieve employment outcomes, decrease reliance on public benefits and increase personal economic assets and resources;
- Maximizes the capacity of SSA TTW resources to deliver employment services to individuals with disabilities in Maine.

III. Roles and Responsibilities

A. Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

Through DVR and DBVI, BRS will:

1. Open cases and provide services as applicable and allowable under federal and state rules, including providing information about the Ticket to Work Program to SSI/DI beneficiaries.
2. Identify potential clients for this Partnership agreement. This is most appropriate for individuals with a high likelihood of reaching Substantial Gainful Activity, as defined by the Social Security Administration.
3. Inform potential clients that they may obtain additional employment and training services from BES and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) service providers located in the CareerCenter and provide details about the BES Employment Network services.
4. DVR/DBVI will establish "Tickets in Use" with SSA's TTW Program Manager, Maximus, for all SSI/DI beneficiaries who are determined eligible for services and have an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).
5. Once DVR/DBVI clients are placed into employment, DVR/DBVI counselors will assist Ticket holders to explore and select an Employment Network (EN) for post-employment services through the assignment of his/her Ticket once the DVR/DBVI case is closed. The DVR/DVBI counselors will advise clients that they may obtain EN services through the CareerCenter/BES's Employment Network. If the DVR/DVBI client selects the BES EN to assign their ticket, DVR/DVBI will schedule a meeting, when possible, with the client and BES for introduction prior to the date of successful DVR/DVBI case closure.
6. DVR/DBVI will provide to BES, with client consent, a copy of the client's closure letter to BES to facilitate the transfer of services to BES as an EN. The closure letter will contain the closure date, closure

status as successfully employed, and note the potential for post-employment services.

7. If an individual chooses to assign their ticket to BES after successful DVR/DBVI case closure, BRS and BES will coordinate efforts, including required information, to facilitate the reporting for the Partnership Plus agreement to the SSA TTW Program Manager.

If the individual doesn't select an EN at VR case closure, the DVR/DBVI counselor will request permission to release their name and contact information to BES for the purposes of offering post-VR case closure Ticket to Work assignment/Employment Network services.

8. DVR/DBVI will bill SSA for all allowable Cost Reimbursement expenditures and will not operate as an Employment Network for individuals served jointly under this agreement. Costs are generally reimbursed after nine out of twelve months of earnings at SSA's Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) levels.

B. Bureau of Employment Services

Through the Maine CareerCenters, BES will:

1. Identify a TTW staff person to be the liaison for each office associated with this agreement. The liaison may not be the only person who can help customers with TTW, but s/he will function as the contact person for TTW matters.
2. Screen all potential TTW participants to determine previous, current or potential need for future engagement of DVR/DBVI services, considering the individual's current employment goal and service needs and in accordance with DVR/DBVI and all other applicable laws, rules, and regulations. Note: If a Ticket is assigned to BES prior to the development of an IPE with DVR/DBVI, BES will assist the Ticket holder to unassign the ticket from BES, so that it may be considered "in use" with DVR/DBVI.
3. If the DVR/DBVI client selects the BES EN to assign their ticket, BES, represented by its Ticket to Work Lead or a Ticket to Work Liaison, will, when possible, attend a meeting with the client and DVR/DBVI counselor prior to successful DVR/DBVI case closure. BES will then schedule a meeting to complete Ticket to Work intake paperwork (including the ticket assignment) and develop an Individual Work Plan between the client and BES with an onset date immediately following the successful DVR/DBVI case closure date.
4. If the DVR/DBVI client has not selected an EN at the time the VR case was closed, and if the client has provided an authorization for BRS to release contact information to BES, BES will contact the individual to offer post-VR case closure Ticket to Work/Employment Network services. (see section III. A.

6. above)
5. Provide follow up with the Ticket holder, depending on need, including short-term support and services when necessary to assure continued employment success.
6. Support the individual in successfully meeting SSA timely progress benchmarks.
7. Once the DVR/DBVI case is closed and DVR/DBVI has assisted the client to assign their Ticket to BES, BES will be able to request any remaining Ticket to Work Phase 2 and Outcome Payments from SSA.
8. BES will coordinate efforts, including required information, with DVR/DBVI to facilitate required reporting for the Partnership Plus agreement to the SSA TTW Program Manager.
9. BES will offer the following post-employment EN services to DVR/DBVI referred Ticket holders:
 - Assistance maintaining successful employment regarding personal financial management skills;
 - Information about and referrals to:
 - transportation;
 - child and adult day care services;
 - housing assistance;
 - health care and health insurance;
 - domestic violence and sexual assault support services;
 - additional occupational training, education, and credential attainment;
 - adult education programs;
 - registered apprenticeship;
 - Competitive Skills Scholarship Program;
 - public assistance programs;
 - employment services for veterans, if needed;
 - help requesting or obtaining job accommodations related to a disability;
 - regaining employment should the individual need a new or different job;
 - new or “refresher” workshops or other programs/services to provide job skills related to seeking/obtaining/maintaining employment and career advancement;
 - financial literacy and asset development skills;
 - help understand and respond to SSA Timely Progress Reviews;
 - ongoing benefits counseling related to SSA benefits either through direct provision or referral;
 - assistance applying for unemployment compensation, if needed;
 - referrals to other services, programs and agencies the individual may need or request;
 - referrals back to BRS, if needed or requested;

- information regarding special programs offered at the CareerCenter;
- Maine Job Bank; and
- all other services routinely available to CareerCenter customers and clients.

C. Joint Responsibilities of BRS and BES

1. DVR/DBVI and BES will inform clients of their option to voluntarily participate in the TTW program and receive services from DVR/DBVI and BES.
2. DVR/DBVI and BES will, upon successful VR case closure, work together to advise clients that:
 - their Ticket to Work will no longer be “in use” with BRS;
 - there are advantages to reassigning the ticket to a new Employment Network, including employment services and possibly continued suspension of the Continuous Disability Review; and
 - BES, through the CareerCenters, is an Employment Network.
3. DVR/DBVI and BES will work together and coordinate services with community work incentives coordinators (CWIC) to ensure on-going work incentives planning and assistance services are provided for individuals served jointly, including information on how to maximize earnings potential, utilize Social Security work incentives, and fully understand the impact of employment on their federal and state benefits and healthcare coverage.

IV. Confidentiality and Ticket Holder Rights

To the extent that the activities in this agreement provide access to protected personally identifiable information of Ticket holders and BRS clients, confidentiality will be safeguarded, and such information will not be used or disclosed for any purpose not in conformity with federal and state law and regulations without the informed written consent of the individual.

Services provided by DVR/DBVI to VR eligible Ticket holders entitle those individuals to all the protections available through the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, including Client Assistance Program Services. Ticket holder disputes with BES provided services shall follow BES administrative processes.

After successful VR case closure, if clients choose to delay activation of their Tickets, information will be provided to them by the partners of this agreement and/or a CWIC as to the impact of such a decision on available Continuous Disability Review protections.

V. Evaluation

BES and DVR/DBVI will evaluate the effectiveness of the Partnership Plus service model created by this agreement six months after its execution and annually thereafter to determine what adjustments are necessary.

Specifically, the parties will evaluate the following:

- The administrative process associated with this agreement and the Maine Department of Labor's Ticket to Work services;
- Patterns or trends of Ticket Assignment associated with this agreement;
- Patterns or trends of BRS-BES referrals associated with this agreement;
- The earnings and hours worked of clients who choose to assign their Ticket;
- Client rights and choices.

VI. Terms of Agreement

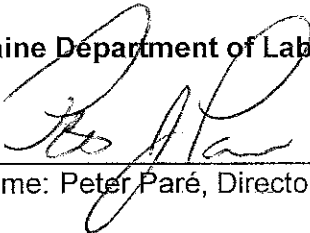
This agreement shall become effective on the date it has been signed by all parties.

This agreement will in no way impede any of the parties from entering into other agreements regarding the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999, nor shall it take precedent over the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Any party may propose and agree to amend this agreement at any time; however, such amendment shall not take effect until the changes are in writing and signed by all parties.

Any party can terminate the agreement by providing at least thirty (30) days written notice of termination of the agreement.

Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services


Name: Peter Paré, Director Date: 7-1-14

Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services


Name: Carolyn Lockwood, Director Date: 7/1/14

**Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

Brenda Drummond
Name: Brenda Drummond, Acting Director

Date: 7/1/14

**Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Elizabeth Hopkins
Name: Elizabeth Hopkins, Director

Date: 7/1/14