



Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)

FREE RESOURCE IN UNDERSTANDING SSA DISABILITY BENEFITS & RETURNING TO WORK

Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) projects are funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA) to provide information and benefits planning to enable beneficiaries with disabilities to make informed choices about work. WIPA projects hire and train Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWICs) who work with individuals receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to provide in-depth counseling about benefits and the effect of work on those benefits.

Who Is Eligible to Receive Services?

WIPA services are available to individuals eligible for Social Security disability benefits AND working, looking for work or thinking about returning to work.

Note: Social Security Disability benefits include Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and Social Security Childhood Disability Benefits (SSCDB), also known as Social Security Disabled Adult Child (SSDAC).

What do WIPA Services Cost?

All WIPA services are free of charge. There is never a cost to the beneficiary for services provided under a WIPA project.

How to locate a WIPA Project

Return to work services, including WIPA projects can be found through SSA's Choose Work website search engine. Go to <http://www.choosework.net/resource/jsp/searchByState.jsp> and enter a zip code to connect with local resources and services. To search for a local WIPA provider, enter a zip code and choose the dropdown option Benefits Counseling (WIPA). If there are difficulties with the search engine or WIPA services are not currently available in your area, contact the Ticket to Work Helpline at 1-866-968-7842 (V) /1-866-833-2967 (TTY).

Preparing for Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA)

You may be interested in the services of a WIPA Community Work Incentive Coordinator (CWIC) if you are an SSI or SSDI beneficiary and you:

- Plan to start or return to work;



- Plan to accept or seek a higher-paying job;
- Plan to start your own business;
- Are concerned about stopping work; or,
- Have other questions about how work will affect your disability benefits.

The WIPA Programs provide beneficiaries with the following information and support services.

- **Information and Referral:** Basic information in response to inquiries about all Federal & State benefits programs, and/or referral to government agencies & other community resources.
- **Problem Solving and Advocacy:** Involves solving specific Federal and State benefit & work incentive issues & may include advocating on behalf of recipients with other agencies.
- **Benefits Analysis and Advisement:** An assessment of real or potential effects of employment or similar changes that will impact the recipient's overall financial wellbeing & inform recipients of various options available & the projected outcome of each.
- **Benefits Support Planning:** Direct assistance to the beneficiary to construct a plan to promote effective monitoring & management of their benefits programs and work incentives.
- **Benefits Management:** Benefits monitoring & management assistance that is likely to experience employment, benefits, or other changes that will affect benefits status, health care, or financial well-being.



CHECKLIST: GET STARTED & PREPARE FOR YOUR WIPA MEETING

✓ **Have Proof of your Benefit Status**

- Have your AWARD Letter from SSA stating what benefit you receive OR
- Have a bank statement, with direct deposit information about what benefit you receive OR
- Have a current from SSA, stating what benefit you receive.

NOTE: If you do not have any of these documents, contact your local SSA office for the information. Toll Free Phone Numbers: #1-800-772-1213, 7:00am to 7:00pm Nationally, TTY #1-800-325-0778

✓ **Have a written list of your work history SINCE the receipt of benefits**

- Start with a resume if you have one, and add more details to it including all dates of employment, earnings throughout the duration of employment, and any time that you were not employed.

NOTE: If you do not remember some or any of this information, you can request it from your local SSA office, since they keep a record of the taxes you pay when working.

- ✓ **Have proof of your Medical Insurance, and amount of Food Stamps.**
- ✓ **Gather letters you have received from SSA over the past several months**
- ✓ **Have proof of any rental support you are receiving (i.e., subsidized or public housing, or contributions from other household members)**

For additional information on Work Incentive Planning and Assistance contact Elizabeth Jennings, Director of Training and Technical Assistance at ejennings@ndi-inc.org.

Information for this Effective Strategy Handout was retrieved from <http://choosework.net/index.html>.