

SLIDE 1:

WHY Benefits Counseling + Partnership Plus (TTW) = Successful 26 for ALL

Full Circle Employment Solutions LLC

SLIDE 2:

Workshop objectives:

- What is benefits counseling?
- Why is Partnership Plus recommended at case closure?
- What are the long-term benefits of enrolling in Partnership Plus?
- Why is Partnership Plus recommended at case closure?
- What are the long-term benefits of enrolling in Partnership Plus.?

SLIDE 3:

QUIZ TIME!

- Benefits counselors discuss the Medicaid Buy-In program in Maryland? True or False?
- A benefits counselor should help the beneficiary complete an online job application? True or False?
- A benefits counselor can explain Ticket to Work to a beneficiary? True or False?

SLIDE 4:

What do benefits counselors provide?

Education

Provide DORS beneficiaries with education on work incentives and public benefits.

Understanding

Assist with understanding letters and completing paperwork from Social Security Administration (SSA) and other public agencies.

Recommendations

Make recommendations and on-going support based on work goal for other benefits. Example: food stamps, Medicaid buy-in, apply for Medicare Savings program.

SLIDE 5:

Why is benefits counseling important?

- Empowers beneficiaries to make realistic, financial and employment decisions.
- Reduces recidivism at DORS. VR is a short-term service.
- Assists in understanding Ticket to Work and other long-term services.
- Case closed; DORS can submit for monetary reimbursement for services from SSA.

SLIDE 6:

Participation time!

1. Raise your hand if you have never referred someone from your caseload to a benefits counseling provider.

2. Raise your hand if you sometimes refer folks to benefits counseling on your caseload.
3. Raise your hand if you ALWAYS refer cases in plan to a benefits counselor.

SLIDE 7:

Benefits counseling process:

- Beneficiary discuss with VR counselor and if recommended, add to the IPE.
- Beneficiary chooses a provider.
- VR sends a referral, authorization and IPE to the chosen provider. Recommended to send a signed SSA-3288 (a copy of which is available on DORS internal website: "inDORS", under Resources-->Benefits Planning Resources-->Forms and Documents)
- Benefits counselor (BC) will provide the Phase of service requested by VR.
- During Phase 3 BC will refer beneficiary to long term services either to a list of Employment Networks (provided by DORS) or to the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program- MD WIN.

SLIDE 8:

Phase 3: Most important phase provided, WHY?

- Occurs once the individual achieves stability in employment. This is individualized case by case.
- Review current employment-place, wage, hours.
- Discuss work incentives. Where are you currently?
- Follow up services-Work activity reports, reporting wages.
- Notify other public agencies of employment.
- Discuss long term supports-Ticket to Work, WIPA, DDA

SLIDE 9:

Partnership Plus at case closure

- If you get SSI/SSDI you have a Ticket to Work.
- Beneficiaries may need continued support after case closure-26.
 - Keep their job;
 - Increase wages;
 - Increase hours;
- Understanding SSA benefits and other public benefits.
VR agencies have partnered with Employment Networks (ENs) to assist with this ongoing support. (3-5 years)
- ENs provide individualized service and vary in job supports.

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Partnership Plus con't.....

- ENs provide individualized service and vary in job supports.
- Notify benefits counselor of stability date.
- If beneficiary is not in cash payment status with SSA, then Ticket to Work must be assigned within 90 days of case closure.
- Continued ticket assignment may provide beneficiary protection from a medical Continuing Disability Review (CDR).

SLIDE 11:

Cost Reimbursement for DORS

- Earnings must be at or above the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level.
- 2024 monthly SGA level- \$1550
- SSA pays State VR agencies when the beneficiary is served by the State VR agency and enters the workforce and achieves SGA for 9 out of 12 months of earnings, not necessarily consecutive.
- State VR agency submits the direct costs associated with the specific case.
- DORS gets money that would otherwise not have been recouped.

SLIDE 12:

True Story!

March 2023/Southern MD DORS office

“I wanted to thank you for the assistance in procuring wages for one of our handoff cases that Full Circle is currently working with, who is employed at an employer for which we cannot acquire wages, and through your coordination and providing us with paystubs from the individual, we were finally able to have our cost reimbursement case approved. This is a case where DORS costs were nearly \$200k and for which we received over \$100k in reimbursement. This is a big win for us as we typically lose out on cases where the employer does not report wages on the Work Number or through state UI systems.”

SLIDE 13:

Win-Win-Win for long-term success!

- Beneficiary is successfully employed!
- VR counselor gets the Status 26, Successful Closure!
- Beneficiary gets long-term employment services!
- DORS gets Cost Reimbursement!
- Collaborative partnership between DORS and ENs!

SLIDE 14:

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