



# Vocational Rehabilitation: Answers to Your Questions

Explore the various programs offered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) assisting individuals with returning to the workforce, maintaining employment, and navigating the work environment.

Staying active and involved is an important part of a fulfilling life. Some kidney patients are able to continue to work in their jobs by making only minor changes after they are diagnosed. Other patients may need to look for new types of work.

Enrollment in a vocational rehabilitation agency or employment network may serve as a bridge for kidney patients in returning to the workforce.





## What is vocational rehabilitation?

- It's a process that helps kidney patients to overcome barriers in getting a job or returning to the work force through training, counseling and career planning.

## Am I eligible to receive vocational rehabilitation services?

- The Ticket to Work program is a free and voluntary program for people who receive SSA benefits.
- You are eligible for The Ticket to Work Program if you are
  - Between the ages of 18 and 64,
  - Diagnosed as blind or have a disability,
  - Receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), or
  - Receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

## Why should I consider vocational rehabilitation?

- Research indicates that a person's ability to work has an effect on their sense of self-worth and on their perception of their overall quality of life.



The Social Security Administration (SSA) runs the Path to Work program. This four-phase program assists individuals who are considering working, ready to find a service provider, searching for employment, or they are currently employed and want to stay on the road to financial security.

- **Phase One: Ticket to Work**—discusses what you should know about when considering working while on benefits. It discusses the Ticket to Work program, dispels myths about working on benefits, and provides you the success stories of real people who used the program to inspire you.
- **Phase Two: Ready to Work**—helps you determine your own work goals then find a Ticket to Work service provider that can help you best.
- **Phase Three: Getting a Job**—takes you step by step through the process of getting ready to enter the workforce, finding and applying for jobs, and being prepared for interviews.
- **Phase Four: Managing Your Job**—provides information to keep you on the path to a better future once you are hired including starting your job the right way, managing money and understanding the impact of work on benefits.

## **Ticket to Work: Taking a Closer Look**

Ticket to Work connects you with free employment services to help you decide if working is right for you. Additionally, the program can assist with preparation for employment, finding a job, and maintaining success while you are employed. If you choose to participate, you will receive services such as career counseling, vocational rehabilitation, and job placement and training from authorized Ticket to Work service providers, such as Employment Networks (EN) or your state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency. The service provider you choose will serve as an important part of your “employment team” that will help you on your journey to financial security.

The program features work incentives for eligible patients to work and still receive medical benefits. Work incentives assist individuals to transition back into the workforce and financial security. Some of the incentives are covered in the following questions and answers:

### **What if I’m not sure that I’ll be able to work?**

You can participate in the **Trial Work Period (TWP)**, approved for SSDI recipients. The TWP allows you to test your ability to work for at least nine months. During your TWP, you will receive full SSDI benefits no matter how much you earn, as long as your work activity is reported.

### **If I work for a period of time and my SSDI benefits stop, will I have to wait to get back on disability?**

No, you will qualify for **Expedited Reinstatement (EXR)**, available to SSDI and SSI recipients. If your benefits stopped because of

your earning level, and you are no longer able to work because of your medical condition or one related to it, you can request to have your benefits reinstated without having to complete a new application. While Social Security determines your benefits reinstatement, you are eligible to receive temporary benefits for up to six months.

### **What other benefits can I get through the Ticket to Work program?**

Protection from medical **continuing disability reviews (CDR)** is available to both SSDI and SSI recipients.

If you assign your Ticket to an approved service provider before you receive notice of a medical CDR, you will not have to undergo the medical review while you are participating in the Ticket to Work program and making progress within Social Security's timeframes.

### **Is there a way I can earn money and not lose my SSDI benefits?**

Depending on how much you earn, you may be able to keep your SSDI benefits. This calculation is made based on something called **substantial gainful activity (SGA)**; defined as work that involves significant and productive duties, and that pays more than the current monthly income limit set by the SSA. If you are currently earning Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), the SGA will be used to determine if your benefits will continue after you return to work and complete your Trial Work Period (TWP).

**Note:** Your SSDI amount must be below the SGA amount (\$1,080 for non-blind, \$1,970 for legally blind).



## Where can I find additional information?

Ask your social worker about how you can be referred to your local vocational rehabilitation agency.

For information about the Social Security Administration's Path to Work Program, visit

<https://choosework.ssa.gov/about/your-path-to-work/index.html#4>

For questions or guidance specific to your situation please call the **Ticket to Work Help Line** at **1-866-968-7842 / 866-833-2967 (TTY)** Monday through Friday from 8 a.m.—8 p.m. ET.

For general inquiries, please e-mail [support@choosework.ssa.gov](mailto:support@choosework.ssa.gov).

## State-level Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies

### Connecticut

**DORS Department of Rehabilitation Services**  
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services  
55 Farmington Avenue  
12th Floor  
Hartford, CT 06105  
860-424-4844  
<http://www.ct.gov/brs/site/default.asp>

### Massachusetts

**Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Central Office**  
600 Washington Street  
Boston, MA 02111  
617-204-3600  
Voice/TDD 800-245-6543  
<https://www.mass.gov/vocational-rehabilitation>

### Rhode Island

**Rhode Island Dept. of Human Services Office of Vocational Rehabilitation**  
40 Fountain Street  
Providence, RI 02903  
401-421-7005 (V)  
401-462-7791 (Espanol)  
<http://www.ors.state.ri.us>

### New Hampshire

**New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation**  
21 South Fruit Street  
Suite 20  
Concord, NH 03301  
1-800-299-1647  
603-271-3471(V/TTY)  
Lisa Hinson-Hatz—State Director  
[Lisa.Hatz@doe.nh.gov](mailto:Lisa.Hatz@doe.nh.gov)  
<https://www.education.nh.gov/career/vocational>

### Maine

**State of Maine Department of Labor**  
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) Office  
150 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0150  
(207) 623-6799  
TTY users please use  
Maine Relay 711  
<http://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/vr.shtml>

### Vermont

**Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**  
HC 2 South, 280 State Drive  
Waterbury, VT 05671-2040  
Voice/TTY: 1-866-VRWORKS (1-866-879-6757)  
For Telecommunications Relay Service: Dial 711  
<http://vocrehab.vermont.gov>



To file a grievance, please contact us:

IPRO End-Stage Renal Disease Network of New England  
1952 Whitney Avenue, 2nd Floor, Hamden, CT 06517

Main: 203-387-9332 • Patient Toll-Free: 866-286-3773

Fax: 203-389-9902 • E-mail: [info@nw1.esrd.net](mailto:info@nw1.esrd.net) • Web: <http://network1.esrd.ipro.org>