

WIN News

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Memorandum of Understanding

Plan for Work (PFW) is a benefits counseling program administered by Disability Rights of Oregon. The Work Incentive Network (WIN) and PFW programs work closely together in order to provide consistent benefits and work incentive counseling services. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has existed between the two programs for many years. The current MOU was signed in August 2013.

WIN is funded by federal dollars through Oregon State Vocational Rehabilitation. PFW at Disability Rights Oregon is funded by a Social Security Administration (SSA) WIPA grant. Each program has eligibility criteria driven by their federal funding sources. The MOU allows the two programs to maximize their limited resources and eligibility requirements.

The MOU agreement asks each program to:

- Work together to establish and maintain basic services standards in a manner consistent with national best practices standards
- Develop a system for referring clients between programs as allowed by program eligibility requirements

Coordination of the MOU is done by monthly meetings between the two programs.

The goal for WIN and Plan for Work is that all people with disabilities receiving public benefits who require benefits and work incentives counseling services receive the information they need in order to move forward in their employment path.

The MOU is helping to reach that goal.

Contact information for both programs can be found at this website:

<http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/employment/VR/WIN/Pages/Services.aspx>

Question and Answer Corner

Gene Rada and Paula Fitch, WIN Project Managers

Welcome to the WIN Question and Answer Corner of the WIN Newsletter. Please send your questions or concerns about benefits and employment to Eugene.e.rada@state.or.us or Paula.fitch@state.or.us and title them QUESTION.

Question: How do food stamp (SNAP) and housing benefits factor into the SSI unearned income? Does it?

Answer: SNAP (formerly food stamps) and housing assistance generally do not factor into SSI's benefit calculation. Examples of unearned income are Social Security Disability Benefits, lottery winnings, alimony, gifts, dividends, rents, etc. SNAP and HUD or other housing assistance programs are generally not considered unearned income.

Question: Can you tell us how wages, SSA benefits, etc., impact housing and food benefits?

Answer: Generally, any increase in wages and SSA benefits will impact the amount of housing and food assistance one receives. The Benefits Summary & Analysis reports prepared by benefits counselors includes information on how earnings will impact housing and SNAP benefits. There is a work incentive to help with increases in housing costs called the Earned Income Disregard, but it isn't available to everyone nor through

every housing program. A benefits counselor at WIN or PFW can help determine if the participant has access to this work incentive or you can ask the particular housing authority. SNAP benefits will be reduced, but income is increased, so even though food benefits are reduced, the income often more than replaces the reduction. Whether or not the increased income is enough to replace reduced benefits is a decision for the consumer to make once they have been provided information on the possible changes.

Success Story

Emma Levert, a Work Incentive Coordinator (WIC) with LILA, began working with a participant in 2014 who was hoping to return to work. The participant recently contacted Emma to tell her she is working at 35 hours per week at minimum wage doing something she loves. She told Emma that she wouldn't have considered working that many hours if it wasn't for the benefits counseling she received.

The participant had been receiving both SSDI and SSI benefits. She will be utilizing 1619b to stay connected to OHP Plus, will utilize all of her Trial Work Periods, lose her SNAP, and possibly her Medicare Savings program which paid for her Medicare premium and co-pays, but she is earning three times what she was receiving in benefits.

So, while she will no longer be receiving her SSA benefits, she will stay connected to her health benefits and any other services those connections provide.

The work incentive 1619b is a very effective work incentive which allows recipients to stay connected to Medicaid and waived services if they have them, but also to the SSI program, so should they lose their job, they can reinstate their SSI benefits without having to go through a new application process.

Training Schedule

Understanding SSA Benefits and Employment

The training is from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Dates and locations are below. Lunch is not provided

Salem

Was held March 12

La Grande

June 9, Center for Human Development, 2301 Cove Ave., Conference Room

Medford

Sept. 17, Self-Sufficiency Office, 800 Cardley St., Large Conference Room

Portland

Nov. 5, Portland State Office Building, 800 NE Oregon St., Room 1B

Pre-registration is required through the DHS Learning Center at <https://dhslearn.hr.state.or.us>. The course is C04631. For accommodation needs, please contact Paula Fitch at paula.fitch@state.or.us or 503-947-5469

OELN Social Security Benefits and Work Incentives

Click [here](#) for additional information and registration or go to <http://www.employment-first.org/>.

WIN Tip of the Month

The Employed Persons with Disabilities Program (EPD) is Oregon's Medicaid Buy-In program for people with disabilities who are working. This program allows people with disabilities who are working to have more resources (up to \$5,000) and earn more money (almost \$5,000 per month) and maintain access to Medicaid and the services they need to continue working. EPD also doesn't count qualified savings accounts such as most retirement accounts toward resource limits. Additional information about EPD can be found at your local APD office or at <http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/spwpd/Pages/employ/empserv.aspx>

This document can be provided upon request in alternate formats for individuals with disabilities or in a language other than English for people with limited English skills. To request this brochure in another format or language, email paula.fitch@state.or.us