



TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK: WAYS TO ACCESS JOB COACHING EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Adult Service Agencies

Some students transitioning from school to work may need employment supports in order to work successfully.

The following adult service agencies provide employment supports to eligible consumers:

- Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) – may provide short-term employment supports
- Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) – may provide short-term employment supports
- Department of Developmental Services (DDS) – may provide long-term employment supports
- Department of Autism Spectrum Services (DASS) – may provide long-term employment supports
- Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) – may provide long-term employment supports
- Department of Social Services for Acquired Brain Injury Waiver (ABI) – may provide long-term employment supports
- Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) – Employment Opportunities Program (EOP) – may provide long-term employment supports

Employment Supports

The most common employment support is a job coach. Job coaches provide assistance to help the consumer adjust to the work environment which can include: learning actual job tasks, developing appropriate social interactions, punctuality, learning how to accept supervision, staying on task, etc. It is expected that with assistance the individual will make a successful adjustment to the work environment and will then need minimal follow along job coach assistance to ensure they continue to function well and deal with any issues that may affect job performance. As an example, individuals receiving DDS funding for job coach follow along employment services typically are given a maximum of 4 hours a week of job coaching.

If the student is eligible for the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and BRS determines that a job coach is needed for ongoing employment support, they will need a confirmation showing how that this support will be provided before they can assist with employment services. This confirmation is called a “supported employment sign off” by adult service agencies.

There are times when a student does not meet the eligibility requirements for adult services or there is a waiting list for these services. In these cases, students and their families may want to look at other options for accessing supports so that the transition to work can take place whether or not ongoing job coach supports are available from an adult service agency.

Other Options

Social Security Benefits

If the student receives a Social Security (SSA) benefit as a result of going through SSA's disability eligibility process, it may be possible to utilize some of these funds for job coaching. Some students may receive one of these types of benefits:

- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) – A transitioning student may be eligible to receive this benefit from the Social Security account of a parent who is retired, deceased or disabled.
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) – A transitioning student who has little or no work history and limited assets may be eligible for this benefit once reaching age 18 as parental income and assets are no longer counted.

If the student/young adult receives Social Security benefits due to his or her own disability, there may be ongoing employment supports available from Social Security through one of their Work Incentives.

1. **Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE)** – This refers to out of pocket expenses necessary for employment that a person without a disability wouldn't have, such as job coaching or specialized transportation. There is no time limit for how long IRWEs can be used.
 - If a person who is receiving **SSI benefits** goes to work, the SSI benefit gradually decreases as earnings increase. When part of the earnings is used to pay a job coach, SSI will not decrease as much. For example:
 - There is no adult service agency that will fund job coaching for Arleta. Because she is willing to use her own money to pay for her own on-going job coach employment support, she is able to receive Vocational Rehabilitation Services from BRS to help her get a job.
 - Arleta's income with no work is \$733 per month. Her income with work and SSI together is \$1425; even after paying her job coach expenses of \$300/month, she is left with \$1125 per month. Arleta has more income by working and enjoys her job.
 - If a person who is receiving **SSDI benefits** goes to work, he or she is allowed unlimited earnings for the first 12 months. After that 12 months, if the person is earning more than the income limit allowed (\$1,070/month in 2014) their SSDI benefit generally stops. By using some of the earned income to pay for job coaching services, SSDI often can continue. For example:
 - Samuel pays \$400 a month for his own job coach after his case is closed as successfully employed by BRS. He is earning \$1,300 per month before taxes. Samuel will receive his full SSDI benefit of \$850 for the first 12 months he works. His SSDI will not stop after that because he is using some of his earnings to pay a job coach \$400 a month. So, even though Samuel earns more than the \$1,090 per month earnings limit, when he subtracts the \$400 per month that he pays for the job coach, it brings the value of his earnings below \$1,090 so he can keep his SSDI benefit.
 - Samuel's income with only SSDI and no work is \$850
 - His income with SSDI and work is \$2150
2. **Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS)** – Is a Social Security work incentive that can be used to pay expenses used to get or keep a job with the goal of increasing self-sufficiency. Money is

placed into a special savings account to be used only for PASS expenses, such as funding for job coaching. A PASS can be used:

- If there is expected to be a significant reduction in SSI benefits; or
 - If the person will gradually be able to decrease job coaching.
 - Tanya receives SSI of \$733 per month. A work tryout done by BRS has determined that she will need job coaching which will gradually decrease from 40 hours per month to 4 hours per month of follow-along coaching at the work site. Because Tanya is able to fund the ongoing job coaching she needs through a PASS account for a period of time after her BRS case is closed due to her successful employment, she is able to access the intensive job coach services she will need to start a new job.
 - After Tanya's PASS savings have been used, she can pay for the 4 hours a month of job coaching she still needs through use of an Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE) as described above.
3. **Ticket to Work Private Pay** – All SSDI and SSI recipients between the ages of 18 through 64 are Social Security Ticket Holders who may be able to use their tickets with Employment Networks (ENs) to access ongoing job coach employment support. Employment Networks are community agencies that have signed a contract with SSA to provide services that help consumers to get and/or keep a job. Individuals can assign their tickets to ENs that will provide the ongoing job coaching they need. The EN receives funding from SSA while the individual is working and earning at a high enough level to meet the SSA standards.

Self-Funded Employment Support

Self-Funded Employment Support is another way that BRS services can take place even though there is no adult service agency that will fund ongoing job coach employment support. If self-funded, the individual or their family would be asked to sign an agreement with BRS to pay for the necessary supports.

Edgar is not eligible for services from any of the agencies that provide ongoing job coach employment support. BRS has determined that, after intensive vocational rehabilitation services, he will need about 6 hours per month of follow along coaching on the job. He is not on any benefit programs from Social Security or the State of CT. The 6 hours a month of job coaching he will need will cost \$150 a month. Edgar and his family decide that it's in his best interest to participate in BRS services to find a job and agree to pay \$150 a month for the ongoing job coaching he is expected to need. At some point, he may be doing well enough that the 6 hours per month of job coaching can be reduced or eliminated.

Benefits Counseling – Connect to Work Project

Transitioning from school based ENTITLEMENT services to adult services ELIGIBILITY programs can be challenging. The Connect to Work Project provides benefits counseling to help individuals, their families and involved professional staff to understand the impact that employment has on Social Security benefits so that good financial planning can be done. We can assist those on benefits to see which choice(s) may work best for them to obtain ongoing job coach employment support. The Connect to Work Project can be called toll free at 1-800-772-4636. We can discuss your situation by phone or at an in-person meeting.

The following websites provide useful information on Social Security Benefits and Work Incentives

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- www.connect-ability.com – provides information on a variety of topics including a basic introduction to Social Security Benefits and their Work Incentives (under Distance Learning Modules).
- www.socialsecurity.gov/redbook - provides detailed information on Social Security programs and rules.