

Work Incentive Specialist Advocacy (WISA)

Work Incentive Specialist Advocacy (WISA) services are available to clients who receive Social Security disability benefits through one of the following programs:

- SSI (Supplemental Security Income)
- SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance)
- CDB (Child Disability Benefits), formerly Disabled Adult Child (DAC) Benefits

Work Incentives may help beneficiaries maximize/retain their disability benefit(s) longer while working toward their employment goal and economic self-sufficiency. Work Incentive Specialist Advocates (WISAs) are certified to provide the following services and help implement specific Social Security Work Incentives before or after employment, as appropriate.

How a Work Incentives Specialist Advocate (WISA) assists beneficiaries and facilitates communication with DARS/DBVI Counselors

- Meets individually with individuals, including any family members or advocates the beneficiary requests.
- Uses WorkWORLD decision support software to explain all relevant benefits/work incentives so beneficiaries can make informed choices.
- Serves as primary initial contact for the Ticket to Work program.
- Helps the individual gather and organize information, and as authorized assists beneficiary in applying to the appropriate agency for work incentives, then follows up until incentives are approved.
- Updates the beneficiary and the DARS/DBVI Counselor throughout the process.

Reporting Wages to Social Security (SSA)

You agreed when you applied for disability benefits that you would update your local SSA office by the 10th of the month regarding any changes, including earnings, for the prior month. Please plan accordingly. Failure to do this regularly and completely may result in a serious overpayment of cash benefits, which SSA will want you to repay.

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

SSDI provides benefits to individuals who have vision and other disabilities, who are “insured” by workers’ contributions to the Social Security Trust Fund. These contributions are based on your earnings (or those of your spouse or parents) as required by the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA), which withholds amounts from your pay check each month. Your resources do not affect your eligibility. Title II of the Social Security Act authorizes SSDI benefits. The cash benefit is typically received on the 3rd of the month or later. The insurance associated with SSDI is Medicare.

The WISA explains:

- Calculating earnings
- Reporting earnings
- Extended Medicare coverage
- Expedited reinstatement

SSDI Work Incentives include:

- Trial Work Period
- Grace Period
- Extended Period of Eligibility
- Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE)
- Subsidy
- Continued benefits under Employment Plan post SSA termination (Section 301)

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

SSI is designed to help people who are elderly, have vision or other impairments, and have little to no income and it provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing and shelter. The Federal Government funds SSI from general tax revenues (not Social Security taxes), so it is “needs based” and your resources affect eligibility. Title XVI of the Social Security Act authorizes SSI benefits. The cash benefit is usually received on the first of the month, and the insurance associated with SSI is Medicaid.

The WISA explains:

- Calculating earnings
- Reporting earnings
- Expedited reinstatement

SSI Work Incentives include:

- Student Earned Income Exclusions (SEIE)
- Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE)
- Medicaid Protection for Working Individuals (1619B)
- Medicaid Works
- Blind Work Expense (BWE)
- Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)
- Continued benefits under Employment Plan post SSA termination (Section 301)

Starting place for all WISA services:

Services start with a comprehensive Work-WORLD Report, accompanied by a Benefits Planning Query (BPQY) and a summary letter.

For more information

Please visit The Choice Group web site at: www.thechoicegroup.com/Services/WISA

For a list of all of our current work incentive

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The Choice Group serves clients across most of Virginia. Our Specialists live in, and are familiar with, the areas they serve. We partner with referral sources to assist individuals who have the potential to succeed. We welcome the opportunity to help people achieve their goals and live up to their abilities.

Mission Statement

The mission of The Choice Group is a commitment to excellence in meeting our clients' needs, while foremost respecting their individuality and right to make life choices.



Work Incentives Specialist Advocacy (WISA) Services

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