

## Western NY Work Incentives Planning And Assistance Project (WIPA)

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### What is the WIPA Project?

Our WIPA Project is funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and provides benefits advisement services to beneficiaries who are either working (full-time or part-time) or interested in going to work. Our benefits advisers, sometimes referred to as Certified Work Incentives Coordinators, are not employed by SSA. Their role is to assist beneficiaries in understanding SSA rules and navigating through the intricate SSA system. WIPA serves a 20-county area of Western and Central New York, providing free services through a number of partner agencies. Neighborhood Legal Services is the lead agency for the 20-county region.

### Who is Eligible for WIPA Benefits Advisement Services?

A person must be working or interested in working and eligible for or receiving at least one of the following:

- ◆ Supplemental Security income (SSI) benefits
- ◆ Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits
- ◆ 1619(b) Medicaid (for individuals who lose SSI due work and wages)
- ◆ Extended Medicare (for individuals who lose SSDI due to work and wages)

### What Can A Benefits Adviser Provide to a Beneficiary?

- ◆ Detailed information and advice regarding SSI, SSDI, Medicaid and Medicare
- ◆ Information about how work affects SSI, SSDI, Medicaid and Medicare
- ◆ Referrals to other supports available to persons with disabilities
- ◆ Written confirmation of information provided

### Our Benefits Advisers Can Help Beneficiaries:

- ◆ Obtain and/or retain Medicaid and Medicare health insurance while working
- ◆ Use work incentives, in some cases, to keep SSI or SSDI benefits as work activity increases
- ◆ Obtain funding for vocationally-related items such as tuition, a vehicle, or a computer
- ◆ Determine eligibility for other government benefits, such as special food stamp eligibility
- ◆ Avoid and/or reduce rental subsidy decreases while first working
- ◆ Avoid overpayment(s) of disability benefits

### Contact Social Security's Ticket to Work Help Line, if Not Yet Working or Looking for Work, and Seeking Basic Information about Work and Benefits

- ◆ Call toll-free 866-968-7842 or 866-833-2967 (TTY), M-F – 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- ◆ Help Line staff can answer all basic questions and help you determine if a referral to WIPA is appropriate.

## **Contact the WIPA Partner that Serves Your County:**

### **Erie, Onondaga, and Wyoming counties:**

Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc., 237 Main Str., Suite 400, Buffalo, NY 14203. Telephone: 716-847-0650 or 888-224-3272 (toll free); TTD: 716-847-1322; fax: 716-847-0227. Contact persons – Krista McDonald, [kmcdonald@nls.org](mailto:kmcdonald@nls.org).

### **Genesee, Niagara, Northern Erie, and Orleans counties:**

Western New York Independent Living, Inc., 3108 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14214. Telephone: 716-836-0822 ext. 206; fax: 716-835-3967. Contact person – Ashley Gallagher, [agallagher@wnyl.org](mailto:agallagher@wnyl.org).

### **Alleghany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Steuben, and Tompkins counties:**

Southwestern Independent Living Center, 843 North Main St., Jamestown, NY 14701. Telephone: 716-661-3010; TTD: 661-3012; fax: 716-661-3011. Contact person – Linda Rumbaugh, [linda@ilc-jamestown-ny.org](mailto:linda@ilc-jamestown-ny.org).

### **Cayuga, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca, Schuyler, Wayne, and Yates counties:**

Starbridge, Inc., 1650 South Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620. Telephone & TDD: 585-546-1700 or 800-650-4967; fax: 585-546-7069. Contact persons – Julie Marks, [jmarks@starbridgeinc.org](mailto:jmarks@starbridgeinc.org).

**Note:** WIPA staff will often meet with beneficiaries by phone or by other electronic methods when it is not practical for WIPA staff or the beneficiary to meet face-to-face.

### **Do you need contact information for a WIPA project outside of Western New York?**

- ◆ Call us at 1-888-224-3272 for that information.
- ◆ You can obtain contact information for WIPA projects, nationwide, at either [www.ssa.gov/work](http://www.ssa.gov/work) or <https://yourtickettowork.com>.

## **The Western NY WIPA Project is Part of a Larger Western NY Work Incentives and Benefits Advisement (WIBA) Project:**

Some of our partners are also involved in other benefits advisement projects including:

- ◆ Benefit Offset National Demonstration (BOND) – only invited SSDI beneficiaries may participate
- ◆ ACCES-VR fee-for-service – ACCES-VR counselor must make a referral with a payment voucher.
- ◆ Commission for the Blind fee-for-service – Commission’s counselor must make a referral with a payment voucher.
- ◆ PROMISE - will provide fee-for-service benefits advisement services to participating “transition-aged” youth in participating Western NY school districts.

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