

PASS TIMES

Holiday Edition

December 2000/January 2001

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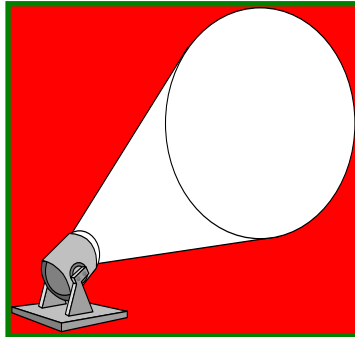
4 **Success!!!**

If you have any questions about Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS), please contact us:

Cheektowaga PASS Cadre
(Northern New York State)
2875 Union Road, Suite 75
Cheektowaga NY 14227-9926
Phone: 1-800-510-5680
Fax: (716) 681-6243

New York City PASS Cadre
(New York City, southern New York State, New Jersey)
PO Box 1826, Church St. Station
New York, NY 10277-0612
Phone: 1-800-551-9583
Fax: 212-264-6069

SPOTLIGHT



In past issues of PASS Times, we “spotlighted” an SSA Field Office employee (Work Incentive Liaison) in each issue. This year, we plan to focus on agencies and organizations throughout New York State that assist individuals with disabilities.

(WORC)

Working Organization for Retarded Children & Adults

The Working Organization for Retarded Children & Adults (WORC) was founded in 1971. WORC’s mission is to assist individuals with disabilities integrate in their community and develop skills that will help them function as independently as possible.

WORC manages group homes in Queens and Long Island for individuals with developmental disabilities and multiple physical challenges as a part of their Residential Services program. Their In-Home Residential Habilitation program teaches skills of daily living to those individuals who opt to live with their families. WORC also provides services for adults who sustained traumatic brain injuries and prefer to live with supports in the community instead of nursing facilities. In addition, they offer Day Habilitation programs that promote skills needed for future employment and Family Support Services such as Weekend Recreation/Respite. WORC offers *Life Planning Options* and provides support services so individuals with disabilities can achieve their dreams and desires.

At the invitation of Pascale Hogu, Director of Medicaid Service Coordination and Traumatic Brain Injury Services, the Social Security Administration’s New York City PASS Cadre provided training on preparing Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) for various program directors, service coordinators and counselors of the Working Organization for Retarded Children & Adults (WORC). With the encouragement and support of their WORC service coordinators and counselors, and the guidance of the New York City PASS Cadre, candidates in various stages of employment will use the PASS to realize their potential for self-sufficiency and a greater quality of life. Participants include individuals entering the work force for the first time and already employed individuals seeking to increase their work hours and opportunities.

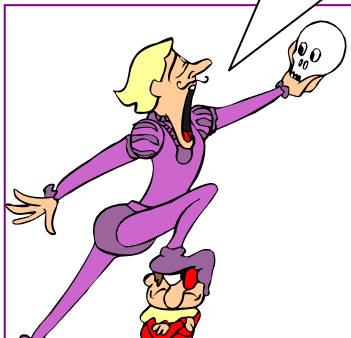
If you would like more information about the Working Organization for Retarded Children and Adults (WORC), please call (718) 327-9560.

If you, or your organization, would like more information on Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS), contact one of the PASS Cadres.

If you would like to recommend an agency or organization for our next “Spotlight”, Please contact one of the PASS Cadres.

To 1619(b),
or not to 1619(b) ...

Medicaid for working disabled...



Many individuals with disabilities are afraid to attempt to work because they fear losing Medicaid coverage. We need to assure our consumers that, in most cases, Medicaid coverage will continue, even if SSI checks stop due to earnings. **Section 1619(b) of the Social Security Act** provides for this very important SSI work incentive.

To qualify for Medicaid continuation under Section 1619(b), an individual must:

- * Have been eligible for an SSI cash payment for at least 1 month;
- * Still be disabled;
- * Still meet all other eligibility rules, including the resources test;
- * Need Medicaid in order to work; and
- * Have gross earned income that is insufficient to replace SSI, Medicaid, and any publicly funded attendant care. (See the "threshold amount" section below.)

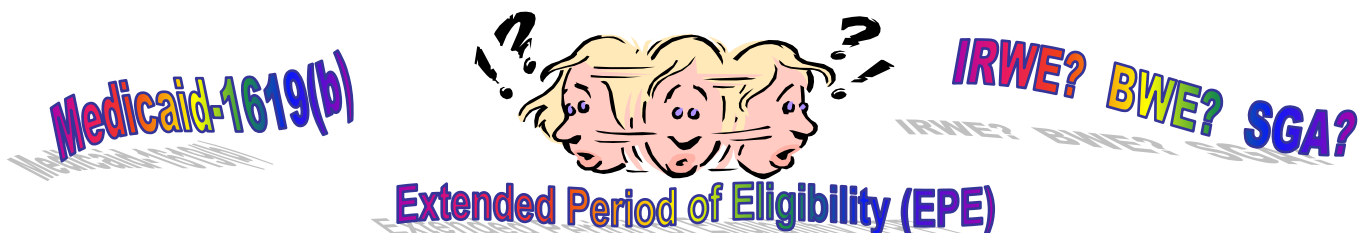
References:

- * Social Security Act- Section 1619(b)
- * POMS-SI 02302.006ff
- * Red Book on Work Incentives-pages 41-42

What is the "threshold amount"???

The "threshold amount" is what we call the measure that we use to decide whether an individual's earnings are high enough to replace the individual's SSI cash payment and Medicaid benefits. The threshold amount varies from State to State because it is based on the amount of earnings that would cause the individual's SSI cash payment to cease and on the annual per capita Medicaid expenditure for the individual's state of residence. The current New York State threshold amount based on 1999 figures is \$31,907.00. The 1999 New Jersey threshold amount is \$24,762.00. Other State threshold amounts can be found in POMS SI 02302.200.

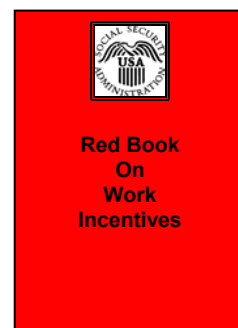
Even if the individual's gross earnings are higher than the State threshold amount, an individual threshold amount can be established if the individual has: impairment related work expenses (IRWE); blind work expenses (BWE); publicly funded attendant or personal care; medical expenses above the state per capita amount; or, a Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS).



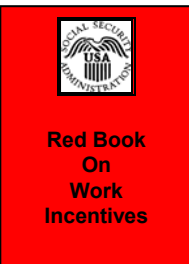
The SSDI and SSI work incentive provisions are designed to protect benefits while recipients develop and test their work capabilities. Every SSA employee with public contact responsibilities must be prepared to offer accurate information to individuals so that they can make sound decisions about work activity. **SI 02302.006ff**

The work incentive provisions are complex, confusing, and different for both programs. Our consumers rely on us to explain how work will impact on their cash benefits and medical coverage. It is so important to provide **accurate** information. We have several sources we can check to make sure we properly inform our consumers (POMS, Policy Net, SSA online, etc.)

One of the best resource materials on work incentives is the "Red Book..." If you haven't checked it out, you should. This publication covers everything from how to contact SSA, basic SSDI/SSI eligibility requirements, how we define disability, when benefits start, how benefits are computed, and much more. The Red Book provides detailed information on work incentives, along with examples. It provides a great way to reinforce explanations of work incentives. You can show consumers the answers to their questions and go over the examples with them and then give



them the book for future reference. Show them that we want to provide the correct answers to their questions! (For copies of the "Red Book..." see page 3)



How Do I Get One?

You should be able to obtain a copy of the "Red Book..." from your local Social Security Office. You can also access the publication at SSA's website:

<http://www.ssa.gov/>

For multiple copies:

Mail: Social Security Administration
Public Information Distribution Center
P O Box 17743
Baltimore MD 21235

Telephone: 410-965-0945 Fax: 410-965-0695

Available in large print, Braille and audio cassette



ESR NEWS

Joseph Dorio, ESR Patchogue NY

As the name of the legislation indicates, the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act contains welcomed improvements to the work incentives already in place in Social Security policy. Another equally important focus of the legislation is to improve outreach to people with disabilities so that they will be aware of both the new work incentives and the tried and true work incentives. I believe that readers of PASS Times would agree that SSA's employment support programs are underutilized. The outreach called for in the Ticket legislation is intended to supplement the outreach being done by PASS specialists to correct this situation.

Fortunately, I was not left to shout the news from the rooftops on my own. The management and field representative staffs in the Patchogue field office have contacts in the rehabilitation community and were generous enough to share this information with me and to provide introductions to key people in local organizations. A "Meet The ESR" meeting was held in the office soon after my arrival from training. I also made telephone calls and wrote letters to other local organizations that serve people with disabilities. The response has generally been quite positive.

A pleasant surprise has been the frequency of what I think of as second and third generation contacts. Representatives from local organizations have been quick to share my name and telephone number with their colleagues from other organizations. I also receive many calls from customers who have received my name and telephone number from these agencies. In September, I made a series of calls to the Disabled Student Services office of a local college. I was disappointed that they were not interested in having me speak to their staff. However, I frequently receive calls from students who have gotten my name and number from the people I spoke with in September. I also receive calls from customers who hear about me from

friends, classmates and co-workers with whom I have spoken. This type of "word of mouth" outreach has been far more effective than I had anticipated.

The results of SSA's new outreach programs have been positive. More PASS applications are being submitted. People are receiving information about SSA's employment support programs so that they can make informed decisions about returning to the workplace. As you can probably tell, I am enjoying my new job.

I would encourage my colleagues who do outreach regarding work incentives to be upbeat. Recent legislative changes make it more advantageous for individuals with disabilities to work. So, let's get the word out there!

PASS FACTS Did You Know???



Many individuals with disabilities consider self-employment as their best opportunity to enter, or re-enter the work force. Self-employment offers them the flexibility to set their own work hours and to work at their own pace. In addition, many small businesses can be operated out of the individual's own home. These are all pluses for individuals with limitations!

The downside is that it can be expensive to get a business started. VESID (a.k.a. Vocational Rehab.) can help with up to \$11,000.00. A PASS can also help with start-up costs. PASS Specialists work very closely with VESID counselors and other agencies such as the Small Business Administration (SBA) to help individuals with disabilities achieve self-employment goals.

SSA and the Small Business Administration signed a partnership agreement in October 1999 to coordinate the efforts of SBA's Welfare-to-Work initiative and our work incentive programs to help adults with disabilities become employed or start businesses. The agreement calls for our agencies to work together on information sharing, outreach, and coordination at the local level.

More information about the SBA's programs is available by calling 1-800-U-ASK-SBA, or visiting their website at <http://www.sba.gov/>

For information about VESID, consult your local telephone directory or visit their website at <http://www.web.nysed.gov/vesid>



Anne Marie is a very talented and remarkable young woman. She is fluent in Danish, and good with French, Swedish and Norwegian. Anne Marie received her teaching certificate in English and Drama from Suhmsgade Projekt Copenhagen, Denmark at age 18. She came to the United States in 1984 and received a BA in Philosophy and Literature from Bennington College in Vermont in 1990. An accident in 1992 interrupted Anne Marie's busy schedule. She incurred injuries that resulted in a left leg above the knee amputation and a bilateral mobility impairment to her upper extremities.

Despite severe limitations, with the help of VESID and the PASS program, Anne Marie received a Masters Degree in Information Science from SUNY at Albany in December 1996. Although highly qualified, she was not able to obtain employment. Her file contains statements from potential employers such as, "...she was by far the best candidate," "...stood head and shoulders above the crowd," "With great regret, I advised Anne Marie that her medical condition meant I could not hire her."

Faced with this dilemma, Anne Marie tried self-employment. However, while trying to get her business started, and still seeking employment, she developed a major setback, cancer. It seemed as if for every two steps forward, she would be pushed back at least one by continued medical problems. Still, Anne Marie continued to pursue her goal to become self-sufficient.

Anne Marie finally succeeded in September 1999! She is employed as a front-line technical support specialist. Her employer had wheelchair ramps built for her at the work site and allows her to do some of her work at home because of impairment related limitations. Anne Marie completed her trial work period and continues to work. She no longer receives Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Anne Marie received \$18,700.00 in assistance from the PASS program in order to pay for a vehicle and post grad school courses. She also received tuition assistance and vehicle modification funding from VESID. Anne Marie was able to succeed, in part, because of financial assistance from the PASS program and VESID. However, it is through her own hard work and diligent pursuit that she is able to begin realizing her dreams of success and independence.



“NEW YORK WORKS”

Who, What, & Where?

What is “New York Works”?



“New York Works” is a demonstration project funded by the Social Security Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor. The project is intended to help develop innovative and integrated programs of services and supports that will increase job opportunities and decrease dependence on benefits, including Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The project is being conducted in two geographic areas: Buffalo/Erie County, and New York City. Since this is a research project, the services a participant receives will vary.

Who can participate in the project?

There are certain criteria that have to be met in order to participate. An individual must:

- Be on SSI or concurrently eligible for SSDI/SSI; and, (They can be 1619a or 1619b eligible)
- Have a primary diagnosis of a mental impairment; and,
- Be over the age of 21; and,
- Reside in Erie County or the New York City area.
(They should not be incarcerated or be a resident of a State psychiatric facility or a nursing home.)

Where do I refer someone who is interested in participating in the project?

Anyone inquiring about returning to work that is interested in participating in the project can be referred to:

New York Works
Bldg. 12 Room 266 Phone: 1-800-732-7697
State Office Campus
Albany, NY 12240

