

WIPA and Benefits Counseling

What is WIPA?

WIPA stands for **W**ork **I**ncentives **P**lanning and **A**ssistance. It is part of Social Security's Ticket to Work program. Many people who receive disability benefits from Social Security have questions about what will happen to their benefits if they go back to work or work more. The WIPA program was created to help people with disabilities understand how earned employment can affect their Social Security benefits.

What help can I get through WIPA?

Services provided through WIPA can include:

- Customized benefits counseling
- Assistance with identifying, developing, using, and managing work incentives
- Assistance with resolving some problems related to benefits
- Assistance with identifying and resolving barriers to obtaining or maintaining employment including referral to other services that may help
- Coordination with members of the beneficiary's employment support team
- Training and support on how you can best manage your own work, including how to report your income to Social Security

What is Benefits Counseling?

If you qualify for WIPA services you can get personalized advice about how paid employment can affect your Social Security benefits, Medicaid, SNAP, subsidized housing and other benefits you may receive. This is called benefits counseling. It is done by people who have been specially trained. Their goal is to help you understand how your benefits and employment interact so you can make informed decisions about restarting work or changing employment goals.

Benefits counselors can give you general information about how work can change benefits. They may also be able to give you more individualized services by developing a Benefits Summary and Analysis (BS&A) for you.

What is Benefits Counseling? (cont'd.)

The customized BS&A report gives you information about how paid employment will affect your benefits. The report will tell you how much you can earn in employment, the effect that earned income will have on your benefits, and how to report work and income to the agencies that provide benefits to you. The BS&A report will also tell you about work incentives that you can use to maximize your employment.

How do I find out if I am eligible for Benefits Counseling?

You can begin the process by calling the Ticket to Work help line at 1-866-968-7842. The help line attendant will collect basic information from you. If you are eligible for WIPA services, they will then refer you to a WIPA project in your area.

Your WIPA project may contact you by phone or send you a letter asking you to call them. Based on your goals, your WIPA project will discuss with you what WIPA services are the most appropriate for your situation.

**If you have questions or need legal assistance,
please call the Legal Aid line at (513) 241-9400.**