

PABSS News Article

There's a new service on the path to employment in Pennsylvania - **PABSS** – Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security. PABSS was established through a federal grant as a result of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 to ensure that protection and advocacy services are available to beneficiaries of Social Security who work or want to work.

Too often, people with disabilities who would like to contribute in the workplace and in the community do not explore their employment options for fear of losing medical and cash benefits. In enacting the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999, Congress recognized that the cost of this barrier to employment for people with disabilities was too high to both the individual and society - a life in poverty for the individual, and, for society, an untapped workforce at a time when workers are needed.

Protection & Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (or PABSS) and the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) are two new federally funded programs established in the Ticket to Work & Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999. Both programs are designed to assist Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities, who are working or who want to work, to take advantage of the work incentives available to make the transition from beneficiary to worker with only gradual or minimal impact on cash and medical benefits.

The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 was signed into law on December 17, 1999. Passage of this law represents the most significant advancement for people with disabilities since the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The express purposes of the Act are to improve training and placement services to individuals with disabilities who want to work, and to encourage States to limit barriers to employment for people with disabilities by expanding access to health care coverage available under Medicaid and Medicare.

In addition, the Act authorizes federal grant funding to States, through the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) (formerly the Health Care Finance Agency (HCFA)) and the Social Security Administration, to (re) structure and shape a service/information delivery system that enables people with disabilities to truly live and work in their communities. There is a strong mandate for people with disabilities to take an active role in the design and implementation of these new systems.

PABSS' role is to identify and correct systemic barriers that impede access of people with disabilities on SSI and/or SSDI to vocational and rehabilitation services, employment and support services necessary to facilitate their (re) entry to the workplace. PABSS will also assist with advocacy or legal assistance with return to work issues.

For more information contact: Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania, 1414 North Cameron Street, Suite C, Harrisburg, PA 17103, 800-692-7443 (V), 877-375-7139 (TTY), 717-236-0192 (FAX),

drnpa@drnpa.org (Email), <http://www.drnpa.org> (Website). DRN uses Language Line as an interpreter services for persons who are non-English speaking. When you call DRN, the person answering the phone may not speak your language. Please state the language that you speak and wait a few minutes until you can be transferred to an interpreter. You will hear music in the background until the interpreter is connected. SSA has reviewed this publication for technical accuracy only; this should not be considered an official SSA document.

2/1/07