

**Questions from July 10, 2019 Stakeholder Call regarding benefits counseling for Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) and Work Incentives Network.**

**Introduction:** Benefits counseling is now included in the Home and Community Based Services waiver as part of Employment Path services. There are two levels of benefits counseling outlines in the waiver and in the rule. Level One can be authorized up to three hours, annually as needed. It is basic information and referral, or a way to help people understand they can still work and maintain benefits. Level Two can be authorized up to 12 hours and results in an official benefits counseling report. This is typically for someone who just started working and has hours and wages and needs information on how their benefits may be impacted.

Work Incentives Network (WIN) is offering to train 16 people to become certified benefits counselors who will then be able to provide benefits counseling through Employment Path Community services for people who are eligible for ODDS services.

The initial week-long training is in-person, classroom-style, and will be Sept. 30-Oct. 4 at the DHS Training Facility, 126 E. Lincoln St., Woodburn. Additional study and training will take place over the next month with Provisional Certification and the ability to begin providing services scheduled for Nov. 18, 2019.

Registration will open July 19, 2019 and close Aug. 16, 2019. Sign up for the training in iLearn.

Participants will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis. However, some flexibility will be given in order to have geographic diversity representing all areas of Oregon, including rural areas.

The training offered by WIN is free, but agencies will be responsible for their own travel costs. This is an intensive training because benefits counseling is a complicated service that impacts a person's finances and must be administered with great care. If providers are not able to attend the WIN training, Oregon also recognizes the benefits counseling certifications offered by [Virginia Commonwealth University](#) and [Cornell University](#).

Tools, including a Worker's Guide, fact sheets, and a PowerPoint, are on the [I/DD Policy web page](#) under the heading Benefits Counseling.

Questions from the July 10, 2019 call:

**Question:** When will final determinations be made on who gets accepted into the training?

**Answer:** Registration closes for this course Aug. 16, 2019. It is very important that everyone who wants to attend is enrolled by that time. ODDS and WIN will review those signed up and notify of final enrollment by September 3, 2019 (or sooner).

**Question:** I am visually impaired and need adaptive software. How do I make sure the training and other resources will be accessible?

**Answer:** When you sign up for the training in iLearn, you can note there any accommodations needed. Please always let us know if you need an accommodation so we can ensure we have it available.

**Question:** How are the tier levels determined for benefits counseling service?

**Answer:** Benefits counseling for ODDS is based on the tier level the person has already been determined by their current functional needs assessment (ANA, SNAP or SIS).

**Question:** Why can't this training be simpler since it is only to provide Level 1 and Level 2, as opposed to full WIN-style benefits counseling?

**Answer:** Currently, full certification is required for both Level 1 and Level 2 Benefits Counseling. There has been a request to lower training requirements for Level 1 Benefits Counseling, and this has been discussed. At this time, there is not a change, but ODDS will continue to have conversations with stakeholders. In the meantime, Level 2 Benefits Counseling results in a full benefits counseling report that fully analyzes benefits.