

5-13-16

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Acacia McGuire Anderson, Interim Employment First Coordinator

Re: [Employment First](#): Minimum Wage and Benefits Counseling

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

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In the 2016 session, the Oregon legislature approved an increase to the state minimum wage. The first minimum wage increase goes into effect July 1, 2016. We know some individuals who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families may have concerns about working and keeping their benefits when wages increase.

Attached to this message you will find two Fact Sheets from Oregon's [Work Incentives Network](#) (WIN) on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) benefits and minimum wage. We highly encourage you to print and share these documents. We also will be making copies of these sheets available to brokerages and Community Developmental Disability Programs statewide.

The main point is that the July 2016 increase in minimum wage will likely have very little impact on a person's benefits. If a person is receiving SSDI, often a person's countable wage can be reduced with the implementation of special work rules, known as work incentives. With the proper use of work incentives, individuals can often earn far more than Substantial Gainful Activity amount of \$1,130 per month (for 2016). As an individual approaches the Substantial Gainful Activity level, it is important that the person receives benefits counseling to help create a plan specific to the person's employment and financial goals.

For those on SSI-only, a person can earn up to \$33,221 per year (for 2016) and still stay connected to SSI and Medicaid (Oregon Health Plan).

It really pays to work. It is unlikely that employment will cause a person to lose Medicare or Medicaid. In fact, employment can actually make more Medicaid options available.

There are programs available to encourage people to work and still maintain benefits. In Oregon, the Employed Persons with Disabilities (EPD) program is

designed to help people who have a disability go to work. More on that program is available at: <http://www.dhs.state.or.us/spd/tools/program/osip/wg11.htm>

If you have any questions or concerns about SSI/SSDI benefits and working, please call the WIN Benefits Hotline at 800-661-2571. There also are resources and information on [WIN's website](#). Information on benefits is also available from [Plan for Work](#) through Disability Rights Oregon: 503-243-2081 x227 or 1-800-452-1694 x227.

If you have comments or other questions, please email them to employment.first@state.or.us

~ Acacia