

6-9-17

**To: Employment First stakeholders**

**From: Acacia McGuire Anderson, Statewide Employment First Coordinator**

**Re: [Employment First](#): Minimum Wage Increase and Benefits Planning**

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

[Like Us](#) on Facebook!

**Note:** A Frequently Asked Questions document from the June 6, 2017 VR/ODDS Employment Stakeholder call is now available [online](#).

In May 2016, I did a [message](#) on the importance of making sure individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities seek benefits counseling. In light of the upcoming increase to Oregon's minimum wage on July 1, 2017, I thought it would be good to remind everyone, as we know some individuals 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. The [SSI Fact Sheet](#) and the [SSDI Fact Sheet](#) are also online. **We highly encourage you to print and share these documents.** We also have color copies of these fact sheets available.

On July 1, Oregon's minimum wage will raise to \$11.25 per hour in the Portland metro area, \$10 in nonurban counties and \$10.25 throughout a majority of the state. The full map and information is available [online](#).

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 \$1,170 per month (for 2017). 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 \$34,591 per year (for 2017) and still stay connected to SSI and Medicaid (Oregon Health Plan).

It 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. If participants have previously received benefits counseling services, they are encouraged to reach out to the counselor who provided the service to review their benefits counseling plan.

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](mailto:employment.first@state.or.us)

~ Acacia