

Information Memorandum Transmittal Vocational Rehabilitation



Keith Ozols

Authorized signature

Number: VR-IM 18-15

Issue date: 10/31/18

Topic: Other

Due date: 10/12/2018

Subject: I/DD Community Benefits Counselors

Applies to (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All DHS employees | <input type="checkbox"/> County Mental Health Directors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Area Agencies on Aging: {Select type} | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aging and People with Disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self Sufficiency Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> ODDS Children's Intensive In Home Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County DD program managers | <input type="checkbox"/> Stabilization and Crisis Unit (SACU) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ODDS Children's Residential Services | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>please specify</i>): Vocational Rehabilitation staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Welfare Programs | |

Message:

Beginning July 1, 2018, the Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) received approval from Centers for Medicare/Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide Benefits Counseling as an Employment Path Community Service, for individuals eligible with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD).

Prior to implementation of this service, together with the Work Incentives Network (WIN) and other stakeholders, ODDS outlined training requirements for a Medicaid Provider Agency (certified and endorsed through ODDS) to provide benefits counseling. One certification option is training and certification through WIN.

Beginning October 1, 2018, I/DD participants who are eligible for Employment Path Community Services can seek benefits counseling services from 13 newly WIN certified benefits counselors.

WIN recently trained and certified 13 benefits counselors and they are already providing benefits counseling services to those who are receiving I/DD-HCBS waived services. WIN is providing them on-going technical assistance and training

as well as requiring an annual recertification in order to maintain the WIN Community Benefits Counselor certification.

The list of certified benefits counselors and the providers who employ them can be found on the Employment Policy for Individuals with I/DD website here:

<https://www.oregon.gov/DHS/EMPLOYMENT/EMPLOYMENT-FIRST/Pages/policy.aspx>.

In order to access benefits counseling through Employment Path Community Services, an individual who is eligible for DD Services must be authorized for Employment Path Community Services Benefits Counseling by a Services Coordinator or Personal Agent.

Only counselors who are employed by a Medicaid Agency with an employment endorsement (on the certified benefits counselor list) can be paid for benefits counseling services through the Employment Path Services and eXPRS system.

The benefits counseling service they provide is part of Employment Path Community Services and is funded or paid for with Medicaid dollars and billed through the DHS Express Payment and Reporting System (eXPRS).

These benefits counselors are trained to provide Level I and Level II services. The Level I services is designed to help folks who aren't employed move forward with basic information. Level II is comprehensive services which leads to a Benefits Summary and Analysis or a Work Incentives Summary. Either service can be provided to clients **who aren't working** as well as those who are working if they are eligible for Employment Path Community Services. They can be working as well.

Again, these new Community Benefits Counselors can provide benefits counseling before the participant has a job. VRCs can work with their client's I/DD case manager who can authorize this service. If it isn't in the ISP already, *"an ISP change of service form may also be completed if circumstances arise during the ISP year that mean Benefits Counseling is needed"*. (A quote from the Worker Guide – Benefits Counseling for Employment Path Services.)

Additional information about this new benefits counseling service can be found on the Employment First website, Employment Policy for Individuals with I/DD. Posted on this site is the Worker Guide, the list of ODDS Approved Benefits Counselors who can provide benefits counseling through Employment Path Services, FAQ Benefits Counseling 2018 and other related information.

The direct link to the Worker Guide – Benefits Counseling for Employment Path Services is here: <http://www.dhs.state.or.us/spd/tools/dd/cm/Workers-Guide-ODDS->

[Benefits-Counseling.pdf](#)

Of course, VRCs can continue to refer their I/DD clients to WIN for benefits counseling services.

If you have any questions about this information, contact:

Contact(s): WIN Administration	
Phone: 503-947-5469; 503-945-6264	Fax: 503-947-5025
Email: win.refer@state.or.us	