

# SSA Ticket to Work Briefing



## **National Disability Forum Presentation**

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Employment Support

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# Background: Looking back at the Ticket to Work Act

- Became law in 1999 providing Social Security Beneficiaries with a Ticket they may use to obtain vocational rehabilitation, employment network (EN), and other support services.
- SSA made Regulatory changes to Ticket to Work in 2008 enhancing the EN payments process, reducing the administrative burden on ENs, and allowing the beneficiary to assign a Ticket to an EN after completing VR services (Partnership Plus)
- Additional changes possible (ANPRM released by SSA for comments in 2016): <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/02/10/2016-02657/revising-the-ticket-to-work-program-rules>).
- The Ticket to Work Program includes:
  - Employment Networks (approximately 600 nationwide serving 61,000 beneficiaries)
  - Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies (approximately 75 nationwide serving 300,000)
  - Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) organizations (83 projects nationwide serving 35,000 annually)
  - Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) (57 projects serving approximately 9,000 annually)

# Ticket Program Enhancements

- SSA's Office of Research, Demonstration and Employment Support launched the internet Ticket Operations and Provider Support System (iTOPSS) in June 2015.
  - iTOPSS enables Ticket Program Employment Network (EN) and Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies (VR's) to conduct essential business transactions on behalf of beneficiaries (ticket assignment, request for payment, etc.) in real time.
  - Replaces a vendor proprietary system resulting in a savings of \$2 million annually.
  - We launched the next major phase of iTOPSS in March 2017 facilitating VR cost reimbursement payments. VRs are able to upload, submit, and track their cost reimbursement claims in real-time.
- In April 2015, ORDES began re-sending the "Good News" notices to new beneficiaries aged 18 to 56.
  - In October 2015, we increased our mailings to beneficiaries at the one and three year anniversary dates for receiving benefits.
  - Total mailings for all notices approximately 100,000 monthly

# Ticket Program Enhancements

- In 2015, we launched ePAY – an automated process identifying earnings leads for beneficiaries with assigned Tickets to ENs.
  - ORDES staff investigates these leads ensuring that the EN meets our rules for payment, and if so, generates the payment.
  - Enables ENs to receive payment for services provided when the necessary paystub documentation is lost or not available and without making the payment request.
  - In FY 2016, total payments to ENs increased 73%
- In 2016, we launched the Wage Reporting Proof of Concept. Our contractor staff input beneficiary earnings in SSA systems using a faster, more efficient process.
  - This reduces duplicative actions by Field Office (FO) staff and overpayments to the beneficiary.
  - Through February 2017, 23 ENs submitted wage data for 265 beneficiaries

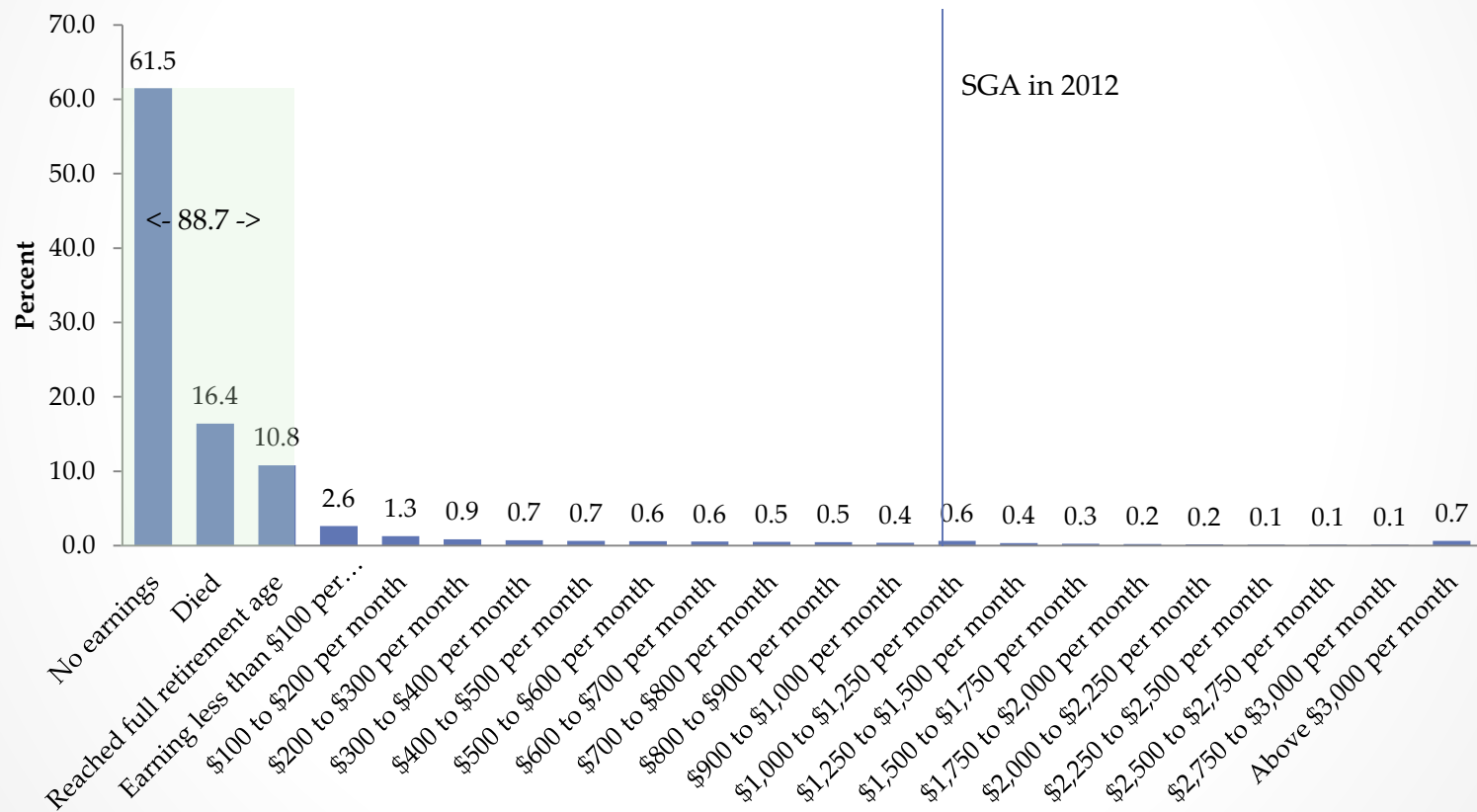
# Ticket Program Enhancements

- 2015 - Benefits Planning Query (BPQY) Proof of Concept providing select service providers a faster process to obtain the BPQY at no charge.
  - The BPQY is an SSA electronically generated report providing critical beneficiary earnings information used by service providers to help beneficiaries understand how earnings impact benefits.
  - As of February 2017, ORDES processed 22,000 BPQY requests
- Marketing Proof of Concept – ORDES developed and executed a business process for the secure transmission of limited beneficiary contact information through encrypted email. This allows ENs to marketing their services directly to the beneficiary. Through February 2017, 22 ENs received marketing files.

# What does the research tell us about return to work and TTW?

- What is the earnings capacity of disability beneficiaries?
- What program effects have we observed?
  - Program outcomes
  - Analysis of effects

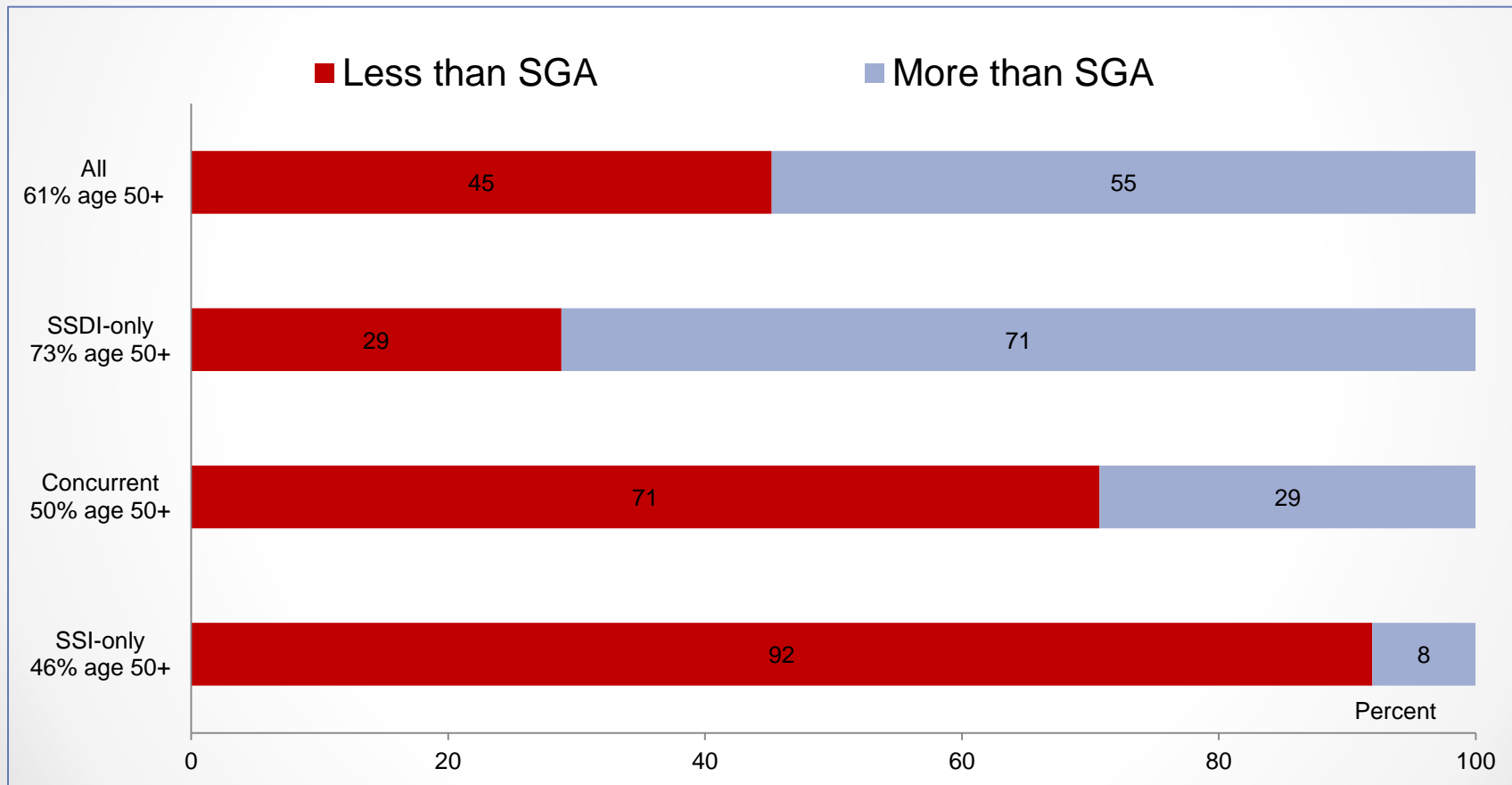
# Employment status and earnings of beneficiaries five years after award, 2004 awards



SOURCES: DAF-MEF 2012 (all values adjusted to 2012 dollars).

# What is the earnings potential for a typical beneficiary or recipient?

Average annual earnings five years before award (in 2002) compared to annualized Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA), 2007 awards



SOURCES: DAF-MEF 2012 (all values adjusted to 2012 dollars).

Notes: Average earnings include those with \$0 earnings (those under age 16 in 2002 excluded from calculation).

SGA in 2012 was \$1,010 monthly, or \$12,120 annually.



# Earnings and benefit status for those with and without SSA employment services

	Number	Suspended or terminated for work through December 2014*		Benefits foregone for work	
		Percent with at least one month in suspense or termination for work	Percent suspended or terminated for work in last month**	Net benefits foregone for work through December 2014 (\$ millions)	Average Net Benefits Foregone for Work through December 2014 (\$)
<b><i>SSDI beneficiaries and SSI recipients in current pay status in any month of 2006</i></b>					
Never assigned a ticket for services†	11,574,604	3.4	0.8	14,027.5	1,212
Began receiving VR services in 2006	62,620	17.8	4.5	293.8	4,691
Assigned a ticket to an EN in 2006	4,186	26.7	7.7	37.9	9,054
<b><i>Among SSDI beneficiaries who completed a TWP‡</i></b>					
Never assigned a ticket for services†	362,781	49.2	17.8	7,897.4	21,769
Began receiving VR services in 2006	11,008	51.8	18.2	180.7	16,417
Assigned a ticket to an EN in 2006	1,254	58.9	20.9	29.5	23,492

Source: 2014 Disability Analysis File (DAF14)

Notes:

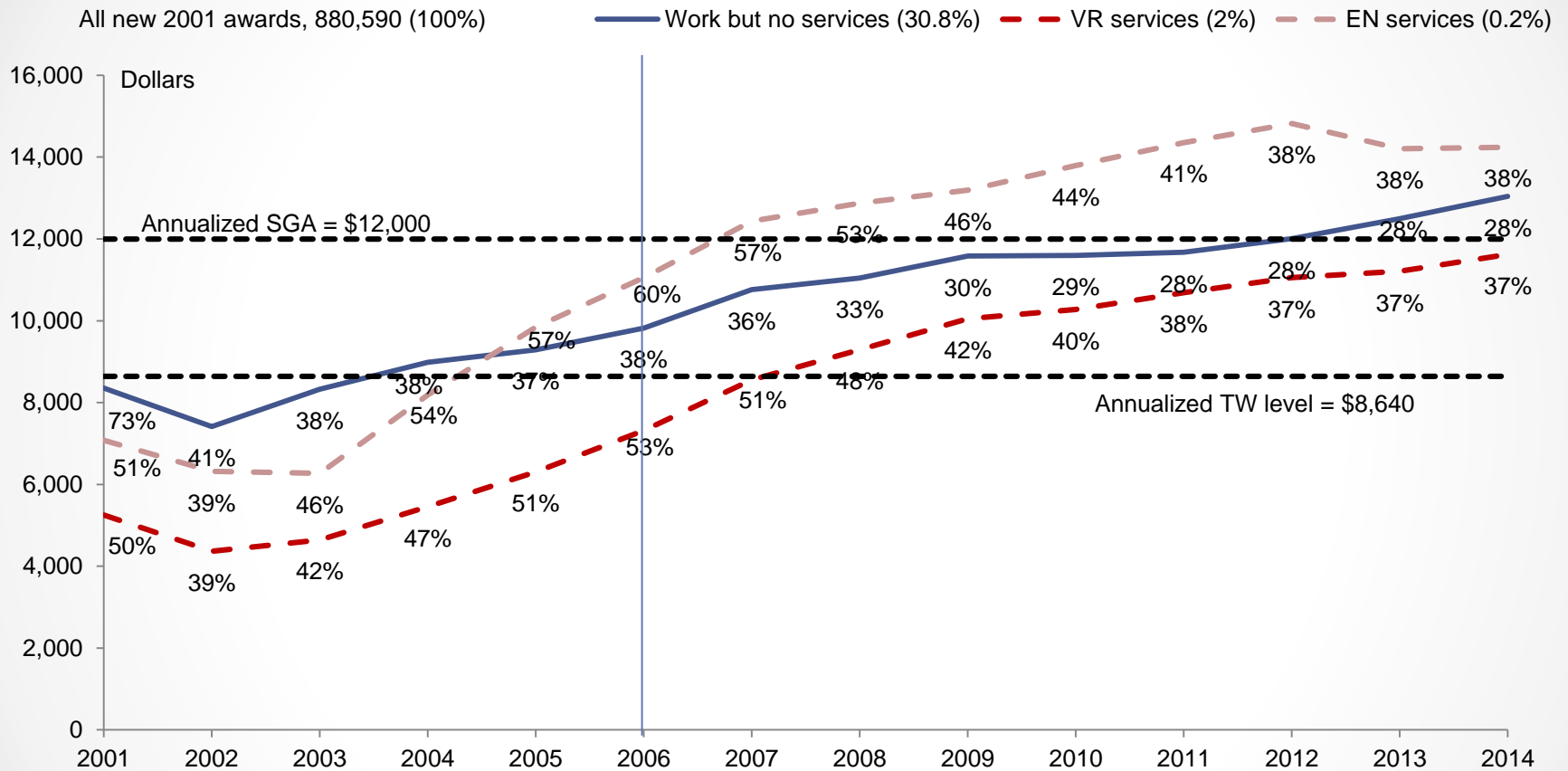
\*The beneficiary must be off of benefits in both programs to be included.

\*\*This number is an undercount of all beneficiaries not receiving a benefit in December 2014 due to lags in processing work CDRs.

†Those who never assigned a ticket could still have received VR services under traditional VR reimbursement without notifying SSA.

‡ Completion of a trial work period is defined as completing a 9<sup>th</sup> trial work month in any year from 2006 to 2014.

# Average earnings after award for all beneficiaries with positive earnings in each year by status five years after award, 2001 awards



SOURCES: 2014 Disability Analysis File (DAF14)

NOTES: All earnings are converted to 2010 dollars using the CPI-W. The 2001 award cohort includes beneficiaries who received their first SSI or SSDI award as an adult in 2001. Beneficiaries are excluded from the chart in years in which they had reached full retirement age or had died. Beneficiaries are also excluded in post award years (2002 through 2014) in which they were not in current pay or suspense or termination due to work in December of that year. Earnings of over \$1 million are excluded. Beneficiaries are excluded in years in which they had \$0 in earnings. The percentage working in each year is shown for all groups except "died" and "FRA." Status is defined five years after award, in 2006. The "work but no services" group contains beneficiaries who had any earnings in the MEF in at least one year from 2001 to 2006, but had not assigned their ticket for the first time by the end of 2006 (although they could have received services after 2006).

# Summary and Conclusions

- Outcomes for those who get EN and VR services are consistently and significantly better than for those who do not get services
  - Outcomes remain comparable or better even when we control for interest in substantial work using TWP completion
- ENs and VRs, in particular, appear to serve those who need services to be successful – those with relatively poor work prospects in the absence of services– and despite this, clients reach similar or higher levels of sustained success than those without services