

Working Towards Financial Wellness

Presenters:

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October 27, 2011 1pm – 3pm EST

Today's Agenda

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- Welcome
 - ▣ Elizabeth Jennings, NDI and Margaret Weisser, MSA
- Working and Individuals with MS – Survey Results
 - ▣ Elizabeth Jennings, NDI
- Doorways to Employment Services
 - ▣ Elizabeth Jennings, NDI
- Impact of Work on Disability Benefits
 - ▣ Elizabeth Jennings, NDI
- Peer Perspective
 - ▣ Elizabeth Jennings, NDI and Special Guest

Welcome

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- Housekeeping – How to ask questions

- Thank you
 - Sponsor - Acorda Therapeutics
 - Partner – MSAA

Contact MSAA

- If you have questions or would like to become a registered member with MSAA please:
 - Visit our comprehensive website for the latest news and updates: www.msassociation.org
 - Call our Helpline 1-800-532-7667 x 154
 - Email us at: MSquestions@msassociation.org

Providing Information . . .

- Toll-free bilingual Helpline (800) 532-7667
- Online response forum MSquestions@msassociation.org
- New mobile phone application *MY MS Manager™*

Finding Answers . . .

- Website: www.msassociation.org
- Publications, videos, webcasts
- S.E.A.R.C.H.™ initiative
- MRI Diagnostic and MRI Institute

MSAA
MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS
ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Programs and Services

Easing Daily Life . . .

- Equipment distribution
- Cooling program
- Barrier-free housing

Staying Connected . . .

- Public education & awareness events
- Social media presence with sites on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube
- Networking Program

Working Towards Financial Wellness

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We will discuss:

- Overview of Financial Wellness and relative strategies
- Doorways to employment supports
- Social Security Disability benefit basics
- Suggested Next Steps
- Q&A

What is Financial Wellness?

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- We define financial wellness as the state of a person's finances with the intent of working towards financial behaviors that limit stress and the impact of stress on one's daily life.

Financial Wellness

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National Poverty Estimates

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Individuals ages 18-64

- For individuals without disabilities, 12.8% had income below the poverty level over the past 12 months
- For individuals with disabilities, more than 2x that rate - **27.3%** had income below the poverty level.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community

Survey

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- No group in America is more in need and more deserving of economic recovery

- For millions of working age adults with disabilities a dependence on public benefits for income, health care, food, and housing becomes a trap that requires limiting income to remain eligible.

Why is Financial Wellness Important?

- Impacts mental and physical health.
- Impact positively self-concept.
- Changes status with other community stakeholders.
- Directly impacts quality of life.

Financial Wellness and MS

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- A recent survey conducted by MSAA and NDI involving individuals with MS indicated:
 - ▣ 55.1% of households earn less than \$35k annually, 16.4% earn less than \$50k but more than \$35k annually.
 - ▣ When asked about the ability to pay all of their bills in a typical month, 32% have a “very difficult” time paying their bills in a typical month, 46.9% reported a “somewhat difficult time”.
 - ▣ 43% of respondents reported that their financial status has affected their ability to access medical care at some point.

Financial Wellness and MS

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- A recent survey conducted by MSAA and NDI involving individuals with MS indicated:
 - ▣ 71.7% of respondents do not have enough savings to cover 3 months expenses.
 - ▣ 67.1% of respondents reported that their finances were worse since their MS diagnosis.
 - ▣ 73.7% of Respondents reported that they were not aware of/have not used financial stability programs (EITC, IDA, FSS, PASS – you will learn about these in subsequent webinars)

Financial Wellness Strategies Exist

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Financial Literacy

Budgeting
Credit Repair
Getting Banked

Use of work incentives
Use of tax incentives
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance
Earned Income Tax Credit

State Medicaid
Buy-In
Programs

Family Self-Sufficiency Programs
Individual Development Accounts
Assistive Technology Loan Funds
Student Loans
Retirement Accounts

Post-secondary Education
Employment
Self-employment
Micro-Enterprise
Home Ownership

Protection and Advocacy, Taxpayer Advocates, Credit Counseling
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, Work Incentive Planning &
Assistance

Doorways to Employment Supports

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- State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency
- Department of Labor – One Stop Centers
- Independent Living Resource Centers
- SSA Ticket to Work Program
- Federal Hiring of People with Disabilities

State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

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- The VR program is a state-federal partnership that promotes the employment of people with disabilities.
- VR counselors have extensive specialized training, to work with you to:
 - ▣ Identify your employment goals
 - ▣ Provide assessments to measure your skills and aptitude
 - ▣ Provide access to assistive technology and other employment supports
- State Agencies and contacts - <http://rsa.ed.gov/people.cfm>

Department of Labor – One Stop Centers

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- The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), which became effective July 1, 2000, established the One-Stop Career Center system.
- One-Stops are community centers that provide employment, education and training services all in one place.
- To learn more and/or locate a One Stop near you use: <http://www.servicelocator.org/>

Disability Employment Initiative

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- DEI is funded through a contract with the Department of Labor, to nine states, to improve education, training, and employment opportunities and outcomes of youth and adults who are unemployed, underemployed, and/or receiving Social Security disability benefits.
- DEI Projects hire staff with expertise in disability and workforce development to serve as Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs).
- To locate a DEI site near you: <http://www.dei-ideas.org/>

Independent Living Resource Centers

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- Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are grassroots, advocacy-driven organizations run by and for people with disabilities.
- Independent Living Centers have four core services,
 1. Individual and Systems Advocacy
 2. Information and Referral
 3. Peer Support
 4. Independent Living Skills Training

To locate an Independent Living Center near you:
<http://www.ncil.org/directory.html>

SSA Ticket to Work Program

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- SSA's Ticket to Work program provides you an opportunity to shop around for the return to work service you may need.
- When you use a participating organization Employment Network (EN), you receive services, support and CDR protections from SSA. The EN you choose will receive payments as you work and earn at certain levels.
- To better understand or to locate an EN:
<http://choosework.net/>

Federal Hiring of People with Disabilities

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- The Federal government provides employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities through Schedule A hiring.
- Schedule A is a hiring authority available to federal agencies to hire individuals with disabilities without competing for the job.

To learn more:

- <http://www.opm.gov/disability/PeopleWithDisabilities.asp>
- http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/scheduleA/abc_Job_Applicants_ODEP_508%20compliant.pdf

SSA Disability Benefits

- The Social Security Administration has two programs to support individuals with disabilities with an inability to work at a substantial level.
 - ▣ Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
 - ▣ Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

- Many people with disabilities who receive SSDI and/or SSI, want to work or return to work but are unsure what will happen to their benefits when they do.

- The SSA has special work incentives available that make it possible for individuals to test their ability to work and continue to receive some or all of their cash and health benefits.

SSA Eligibility

Individuals must prove the following to be eligible for SSDI or SSI:

1. Prove that they have a documented medical disability that will last 12 months or longer or result in death.

2. Meet SSA's definition of disability:
The inability to engage in Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA, which is paid work) by reason of any documented medical impairment (physical or mental) that will last 12 months or longer and/or result in death.

Individuals who are blind do not have to prove that they are unable to work. They only have to prove that they meet SSA's level of blindness.

Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)

SGA is a basic test used by SSA to establish disability status

- SGA is the performance of significant mental and/or physical duties for profit.
- It is usually determined to be gross earnings (before taxes) of an amount of money that is set January 1 of each calendar year based on the National Average Wage Index.
- To meet this test a person must not be working, or if working, earning less than the annual SGA level amount.

2011 SGA for non-blind individuals = \$1000/month

2011 SGA for blind individuals = \$1640/month

Eligibility of Benefits - Social Security Disability Insurance-SSDI

- ✓ Required Work Credits in FICA
- ✓ DAC –Disabled Adult Children
 - Disability Prior to Age 22
 - Never Legally Married to non Title II
 - Insufficient FICA or higher parent amount
 - Parent FICA Opens (Dies; Retires; Disabled)
 - Possible continuation of Medicaid
- ✓ Medical Insurance - MEDICARE
 - 24 month wait upon eligibility
 - Part A-Free, Part B/D-Premium
- ✓ 5 Month Waiting Period
- ✓ SGA
 - 12 months consecutive-initial eligibility
 - Factor During EPE and Beyond
- ✓ No asset limit

Points of Interest

Social Security Disability Insurance

SSDI

- ✓ Obsessed with SGA
 - \$1000/month (non-blind individuals)
 - \$1640/month (blind individuals)
- ✓ As you work and earn SGA, SSA reviews your work effort and will take a person off the roles if they show a pattern of being able to work and earn Substantial Gainful Activity.
- ✓ No asset limit

Work Incentives Comparison Chart

Social Security Disability Insurance

- ✓ Trial Work Period
- ✓ Extended Period of Eligibility
- ✓ Impairment Related Work Expense
- ✓ Subsidies
- ✓ Unsuccessful work attempt
- ✓ Unincurred Business Expenses (self-employed only)
- ✓ Continuation of Medicare
- ✓ Section 301
- ✓ Expedited Reinstatement
- ✓ Ticket to Work
- ✓ Medicaid Buy-In

Supplemental Security Income

- ✓ Student Earned Income Exclusion
- ✓ Impairment Related Work Expense
- ✓ Blind Work Expense
- ✓ 1619 (a)
- ✓ 1619 (b)
- ✓ Property Essential For Self Support
- ✓ Plan for Achieving Self-Support
- ✓ Subsidies (only at time of application)
- ✓ Section 301
- ✓ Reinstatement without new application
- ✓ Expedited Reinstatement
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Subsidy & Special Conditions

Subsidies and special conditions allows you to deduct the value of:

- **Services provided by an employee**
For example: extra supervision, lower productivity, etc.
- **Services provided by an organization**
For example: Job Coach, Supported Living Coach, etc.

- **Subsidies** apply to **SSDI** during the initial eligibility process as well as keeping a beneficiary below SGA to maintain SSDI eligibility while earning income when support is required to earn income.

- **Financial Value:** The dollar amount of the subsidy is subtracted from gross monthly earnings, potentially reducing gross wages below the SGA level

- **Qualifications:**
 - ❑ Evidence of receiving a subsidy: Extra Support / Supervision / Lower Productivity / Different job functions than co-workers
 - ❑ A Subsidy may be agency sponsored, employer sponsored, or self-employment supports

Note: **Subsidies** apply to **SSI** during the initial eligibility process. Using a subsidy reduces SGA

Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE)

PURPOSE:

IRWE is used to enable SSDI beneficiaries to reduce SGA due to disability-related out of pocket expenses that allow a person to earn income, even if those items or services are needed for non-work activities.

Criteria for an Allowable Expense:

1. The expenses must be directly related to supporting the disability
2. Cost must be paid out of person's pocket and not covered by other funding sources
3. Expense must be paid in a month wages are earned
4. Expense must be reasonable

Eligibility of Benefits - Supplemental Security Income-SSI

- ✓ Must be an individual with a disability or over age 65 with less than \$674/month (\$1011/month/couple) in income.
- ✓ Unearned Income (Not Wages)
 - SSDI, VA, Annuities
- ✓ Deemed income
 - Spouse to spouse
 - Sponsor to alien
 - Parent to child (if under age 18)
- ✓ In-kind Support (1/3 deduction of SSI check)
- ✓ Earned Income (Wages)
 - SGA factor during initial eligibility
 - Once eligible SGA non-issue
- ✓ Resources (NOT Wages or Unearned Income)
 - \$2,000/Individual, \$3,000/Couple
- ✓ Medical Insurance - MEDICAID
 - SSI connected, State Administered

Points of Interest

Supplemental Security Income - SSI

- ✓ Provides Medicaid
- ✓ Requires updates on ALL your income
- ✓ Once you are on the rolls,
they do not care about SGA....
"The more you work, the less you need from SSI"

Work Incentives Comparison Chart

Social Security Disability Insurance

- ✓ Trial Work Period
- ✓ Extended Period of Eligibility
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- ✓ Unincurred Business Expenses (self-employed only)
- ✓ Continuation of Medicare
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- ✓ Expedited Reinstatement
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Continued Medicaid Under 1619 (b)

For those who receive SSI only:

- Loss of SSI check due to earned income
- Remain disabled
- Assets under \$2000 (\$3000/couple)
- Need Medicaid to work
- Have been eligible for SSI for at least one month
- **Annual earnings below the State Threshold Amount**
<http://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/1619b.htm>
 - An individualized threshold amount may be available.

Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE)

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Plan For Achieving Self-Support (PASS)

Allows an individual to set aside income (any income other than SSI) or resources which would otherwise affect the individual's eligibility for a benefit or the individual's payment amount to achieve a **work goal**.

Any person who receives SSI benefits, or who might qualify for SSI, or any person who receives SSDI (or a similar benefit) and could qualify for SSI, may be able to have a PASS.

www.passonline.org

Plan For Achieving Self-Support (PASS)

The PASS plan must:

- Have a specific work goal
- Have a specific time frame for reaching the goal
- Show what money and any other contributions will be used to reach the work goal
- Show how any money set aside in savings will be kept separate from other funds
- Show how the money and resources will be saved and, later, spent
- Be submitted in writing and approved by Social Security's PASS Cadre
- Include a Business Plan if the PASS is for self-employment
- Be reviewed periodically to assure compliance
- Increase an individual's ability to be self-supporting by decreasing the amount they receive in cash benefits from Social Security

Medicaid Buy-In Programs

Purpose of the Program: To provide an opportunity to purchase Medicaid coverage for persons with disabilities who are working.

Sample Eligibility Criteria:

1. Between the ages of 16 and 65
2. Have a permanent disability
3. Be employed (full or part time)
4. Meet the income and asset guidelines

To locate a Medicaid Buy-in program:

http://cwd.aphsa.org/links/medicaid_buyin_resources.asp

Supports to Assist You

Work Incentive Planning and Assistance

Community Work Incentive Counselors provide the following at no cost:

- Provide work incentives planning and assistance;
 - Help beneficiaries and their families determine eligibility for Federal or State work incentives programs;
 - Refer beneficiaries with disabilities to appropriate Employment Networks or State VR agencies based on individual needs and impairment types; and
 - Provide general information about health benefits coverage available to beneficiaries once they enter the workforce
- List of Providers - <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/oesp/providers.nsf/bystate>
 - Fact Sheet - <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work/wipafactsheet.html>

Supports to Assist You

Protection and Advocacy

Advocates are available to provide assistance with the following at not cost:

- Access to Community Services
 - Special Education and Transition
 - Transportation , Housing, Health Care
 - Disability Benefits and Work Incentives
 - Rights and Conditions of employment
 - Vocational Rehabilitation and preparation
 - Rights, Responsibilities, and Reasonable Accommodations under the ADA
 - Wage and hour issues
 - Assistance with removing barriers to a beneficiary's return to work goal
- List of Providers - <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/oesp/providers.nsf/bystate>

Peer Perspective

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- How has MS impacted your financial life?
- Have your financial goals changed?
- Have you made a return to work?
- Please share your return to work experience?
- Do you feel that returning to work has a positive impact on your finances?

Working Resources

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- State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency
 - ▣ <http://rsa.ed.gov/people.cfm>
- Department of Labor – One Stop Centers
 - ▣ <http://www.servicelocator.org/>
- Independent Living Resource Centers
 - ▣ <http://www.ncil.org/directory.html>
- SSA Ticket to Work Program
 - ▣ <http://choosework.net/>
- Federal Hiring of People with Disabilities
 - ▣ http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/scheduleA/abc_Job_Applicants_ODEP_508%20compliant.pdf

Assistance with Accommodations

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- JAN – Job Accommodation Network
 - <http://askjan.org/>

- ADA National Network
 - <http://adata.org/Static/Home.aspx>

Suggested Next Steps

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1. Register with one of the employment support programs noted.
 - Vocational Rehabilitation - <http://rsa.ed.gov/people.cfm>
 - Department of Labor – One Stop Centers - <http://www.servicelocator.org/>
 - SSA Ticket to Work Program - <http://choosework.net/>

2. Meet with a Benefits Planner to make an informed choice about the impact of work on your benefits.
<https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/oesp/providers.nsf/bystate>

Suggested Next Steps

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3. Set a goal to complete items 1 and 2 over the next three months.
4. Share with us your experience.
 - We will send out emails over the next few months to offer you a chance to share your experience.

Contact Information

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