

Western NY Work Incentives and Planning Assistance Project (WIPA)



What is the WIPA Project?

Our WIPA Project is funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and provides benefits advisement services to beneficiaries who are either working or interested in going to work. Our benefits advisers, sometimes referred to as Certified Work Incentives Coordinators, are not employed by SSA. Their role is to assist beneficiaries in understanding SSA rules and navigating through the intricate SSA system.

The WIPA Project serves a 16-county area of Western New York. There are no fees for services and services are provided through a number of partner agencies. Neighborhood Legal Services is the lead agency in the Western New York area.

Who is Eligible for WIPA Benefits Advisement Services?

A person must be working or interested in working and eligible for or receiving at least one of the following:

- ◆ Supplemental Security income (SSI) benefits
- ◆ Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits
- ◆ Extended Medicare
- ◆ 1619(b) Medicaid

What are Benefits Advisement Services?

A benefits adviser can provide:

- ◆ Information and advice regarding SSDI, SSI, Medicare and Medicaid
- ◆ Referrals to other supports available to persons with disabilities
- ◆ Written confirmation of information provided

Our Benefits Advisers Can Help Beneficiaries:

- ◆ Obtain and/or retain Medicare and Medicaid health insurance while working
- ◆ Maximize the benefits of wages
- ◆ Obtain funding for vocationally-related expenses such as tuition, a vehicle, and/or a computer
- ◆ Determine special food stamp program eligibility
- ◆ Avoid overpayment(s) of disability benefits
- ◆ Avoid and/or reduce rental subsidy decreases while first working

WIPA Contact Information:

For residents of Erie, Genesee, and Wyoming counties:

Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc., 237 Main Str., Suite 400, Buffalo, NY 14203. Telephone: 716-847-0650 or 888-224-3272 (toll free); TTD: 716-847-1322; fax: 716-847-0227. Contact persons – Krista McDonald, kmcdonald@nls.org; Marta Santiago, msantiago@nls.org.

For residents of Niagara, Northern Erie and Orleans counties:

Independent Living of Niagara County, 746 Portage Rd., Niagara Falls, NY 14301. Telephone: 716-284-4131 or 888-567-6454; fax: 716-284-3230. Contact person – Megan Ostrowski, mostrowski@wnyilp.org.

For residents of Alleghany, Chautauqua, and Cattaraugus counties:

Southwestern Independent Living Center, 843 North Main Str., Jamestown, NY 14701. Telephone: 716-661-3010; TTD: 661-3012; fax: 716-661-3011. Contact persons – Marie Carrubba, marie@ilc-jamestown-ny.org; Linda Rumbaugh, linda@ilc-jamestown-ny.org.

For residents of Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca, Schuyler, Steuben, Wayne, and Yates counties:

Advocacy Center of Rochester, 590 South Ave., Rochester, NY 14620. Telephone & TDD: 585-546-1700 or 800-650-4967; fax: 585-546-7069. Contact person – Jennifer Blais, blais@advocacycenter.com.

For contact information outside of Western New York, go to www.yourtickettowork.com and click on “Directory of WIPAs” in the left hand column or call us at 1-888-224-3272.