



A Benefits Counseling Guide

“When to Obtain Benefits Counseling Services”

What are Benefits?

Benefits are government-funded programs provided to people based on characteristics such as disability or financial need. Examples of benefits include:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
- Local/Public assistance benefits e.g. Energy Assistance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Aid to Needy Disabled (AND), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamps)
- Housing assistance
- Health insurance (e.g. Medicaid/Medicare)
- Other assistance

What is Benefits Counseling?

Benefits counseling is a service that helps individuals with disabilities and their families understand how employment and other life decisions will impact their benefits.

Benefits counseling provides a clear, personalized plan to educate individuals with disabilities and their families that, in general, you will not immediately lose your cash benefits and health insurance if you work.

Benefits counseling addresses the fears and concerns many individuals and their families have about a reduction in benefits if they start work.

Benefits counseling helps each individual understand:

- What benefits the individual receives and why
- Work incentives available when they go to work
- How earned income impacts cash benefits, public assistance, and health insurance
- Reporting requirements for each benefit and public assistance program
- How to save money and build assets for self-sufficiency (e.g. Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts)

When to Seek a Qualified Benefit Counselor’s Assistance:

- Prior to seeking employment/education
- While conducting a job search
- When working with a Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Counselor
- Upon obtaining employment
- Currently working and if changes occur while working
- Transition-age students and youth (ages 14-24)
- ***ANY TIME employment is part of the conversation!***

Qualified Resources for Benefits Counseling:

Ability Connection Colorado (ACCO)

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program for Colorado (WIPA)

Credential: Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Community Work Incentive Coordinator (CWIC)

Individuals Served/Criteria for Service:

- MUST BE a Social Security Administration (SSA) disability beneficiary (SSI/SSDI) at least age 14 and not yet eligible for full retirement benefits
- **Priority assigned to individuals served:**
 - Employed, self-employed, seriously considering employment
 - Working towards employment within 12 months through school or training
 - Transition age students (ages 14-24)
 - Veterans

Service/Product Provided (Individualized and Based on Above Priorities):

- Services available statewide
- Triage by phone (based on priorities listed above)
- General phone consultation
- Benefit Summary and Analysis (BS&A)
- Long term supports as needed
- Information gathering meeting
- Verification of all benefits
- Assistance to individuals with more complicated benefit scenarios (e.g. multiple benefits such as SSI, SSDI, housing, Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamps)
- Wage reporting instruction

Cost: No charge or Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (Must be eligible DVR client)

General Inquiries and Ticket To Work Helpline:

1-866-968-7842 / 1-866-833-2967 (TTY)

Western Slope

Kevin Shearrow, CWIC
970-256-2457 office / 303-949-1887 cell
kshearrow@abilityconnectioncolorado.org

Denver Metro/Northeast Region

Harold Lasso, CWIC
855-228-5393 (toll free)
Bi-lingual, Spanish translation available
hlasso@abilityconnectioncolorado.org

Southeastern/South Central Region

Julie Taylor, CWIC
719-250-9686 cell
jtaylor@abilityconnectioncolorado.org

Denver Metro/Northeast Region

Terry McGarry, CWIC
303-226-5537
tmcgarry@abilityconnectioncolorado.org

Denver Metro / Northeast Region

Lisa Linder, CWIC
303-934-0970
llinder@abilityconnectionscolorado.org

For the most updated version of this guide, please visit www.employmentfirstcolorado.org/benefits-counseling/

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Qualified Resources for Benefits Counseling Continued:

Community Partner Work Incentive Counselor (CPWIC) Service Providers and Credentialed Work Incentives Practitioner (WIP) Service Providers

Community Partner Work Incentive Counselors (CPWIC) - Virginia Commonwealth University

Credentialed Work Incentive Practitioners (WIP) – Cornell University

Individuals Served/Criteria for Service - Varies with each vendor, but generally:

- Ages 14-65 – no priority levels assigned
- Beneficiaries of local public assistance only (do not have to be receiving SSI/SSDI)
- Individuals who are not yet working but are considering returning to work
- Social Security Administration (SSA) disability beneficiaries (SSI/SSDI)

Service/Product Provided - Varies with each vendor, but generally:

- Information gathering meeting with beneficiary, family, and/or employment team
- Verification of all benefits (housing, SSI/SSDI, local benefits)
- Benefits Summary and Analysis (BS&A)
- Work Incentive Plan with timeline and action steps
- Assistance to individuals with more complicated benefit scenarios (multiple benefits such as SSI, SSDI, housing, Medicaid, TANF, food stamps, etc.)
- Ongoing relationship with beneficiary established with individualized approach
- Long term supports
- Wage reporting instructions

Sources for Payment:

- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (Must be eligible); Ticket to Work (Must be eligible); third parties (e.g. Employers); self-pay

Community Partner Work Incentive Counselors and Work Incentives Practitioners Available:

- A Circle Works
- Advanced Benefits Consulting
- Arapahoe/Douglas Works! Workforce Center
- Atlantis Community
- Bayaud Enterprises
- Broomfield Workforce Center
- Center for People with Disabilities (CPWD)
- Center for Independence
- Colorado Benefits Dan
- Connections for Independent Living
- Center Toward Self Reliance
- Easterseals Colorado
- Frosted Peak Benefits Counseling
- Integrating Supports Colorado, Inc.
- JMD Group Holdings
- Highpointe Services
- Parker Personal Care Homes
- The Independence Center
- Training Employment Solutions, Inc.

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Community Partner Work Incentive Counselor (CPWIC) and Credentialed Work Incentive Practitioner (WIP) Service Providers

Despite areas of coverage listed, many providers currently offering statewide virtual services.

A Circle Works

NW Colorado / Western Slope

Tom Scilacci, WIP

970-846-5725

acircleworks@gmail.com

Advanced Benefits Consulting

Statewide Virtual / Teleconference / DVR referral only

Janelle Barto, CPWIC

Main Phone: 303-578-8423

<https://myadvancedbenefits.org/contact.html>

Video Relay: 928-683-5511

janelle@myadvancedbenefits.org

Arapahoe/Douglas Works! Workforce Center

Arapahoe / Douglas Counties / Denver Metro Virtual

Matt Kilian, WIP

303-636-1261

mkilian@arapahoegov.com

(Services available through Ticket to Work only)

Atlantis Community

Adams, Arapahoe, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Elbert, Jefferson

Bailey Carlson, WIP

303-733-9324

bailey@atlantiscommunity.org

Bayaud Enterprises

Denver Metro Region / Statewide Virtual / Teleconference

Margaret Janiga, CPWIC

303-830-6885 ext. 342 office

720-691-4154 Cell

Margaret.janiga@bayaudenterprises.org

Broomfield Workforce Center

City and County of Broomfield

Rebecca Champion, WIP (Services available through Ticket to Work and Workforce Center Services only)

303-464-5822

rchampion@broomfield.org

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Community Partner Work Incentive Counselor (CPWIC) and Credentialed Work Incentive Practitioner (WIP) Service Providers (continued)

Despite areas of coverage listed, many providers currently offering statewide virtual services.

Center for People with Disabilities (CPWD)

North Denver Metro / Boulder County / Fort Collins Region / Statewide Video / Teleconference

American Sign Language (non-certified) available

Jan Dabroski, CPWIC

Main Email:

benefits@cpwd.org

Main Phone: 303-442-8662

Video Phone: 720-239-1037

Center for Independence

Grand Junction / Western Slope

Tracy Morton, CPWIC

970-241-0315 ext. 20

tmorton@cfigj.org

Tami Walter, CPWIC

970-241-0315 ext. 22

twalter@cfigi.org

Colorado Benefits Dan

Durango / Western Slope / Teleconference

Dan Rieber, CPWIC

720-443-5236 cell phone

cobenefitsdan@gmail.com

Easterseals Colorado

Denver Metro / Statewide Video / Teleconference

Christian Freeman, WIP-C

720-749-8399

1-510-338-9438 video

cfreeman@eastersealscolorado.org

Marisa Battiest, CPWIC

303-514-3326

mbattiest@eastersealscolorado.org

Pablo Sandoval, CPWIC

720-749-8399

psandoval@eastersealscolorado.org

Frosted Peak Benefits Counseling

Larimer County / Weld County / Teleconference

Brian Clymer, WIP-C

970-335-8263 Phone

frostedpeakbenefits@gmail.com

HighPointe Services

Centennial / Fort Collins / Statewide Video / Teleconference

Luke Bainer, CPWIC

720-295-4304 Phone

luke@highpointcenters.org

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Despite areas of coverage listed, many providers currently offering statewide virtual services.

Integrating Supports Colorado, Inc.

In Person and Statewide Virtual / Video / Teleconference

Shantelle Rockman, CPWIC

719-313-0626

srockman@integratingsupports.com

Norman Karp, CPWIC

719-313-0626 ext. 2 office 518-354-0198 cell

nkarp@integratingsupports.com

Jefferson Center for Mental Health

Jefferson / Clear Creek / Gilpin / Virtual / In Person / Teleconference

Nicole Appelhans, WIP-C

720-584-3005

nicolea@jcmh.org

JMD Group Holdings

Denver Metro Region / Statewide Virtual / Teleconference

American Sign Language available

Jonathan M. Davis, CPWIC

202-601-9091 (V/Videophone)

davis@jmdavisgroup.com

Parker Personal Care Homes

Denver Metro / Boulder / Longmont / Statewide Video / Teleconference

Heather McCalla, CPWIC

720-965-4446 Cell Phone

303-424-6078 ext. 123 Office

hmccalla@parkerpch.com

Dakota Turner, WIP

720-838-4409 Cell Phone

303-422-6078 ext. 147 Office

dturner@parkerpch.com

The Independence Center

El Paso / Park / Teller / Lincoln / Cheyenne / Kit Carson Counties

Suzi Arnold, CPWIC

719-471-8181

sarnold@theindependencecenter.org

Training Employment Solutions, Inc.

Denver Metro / Boulder / Longmont / Statewide Video / Teleconference

Steve Allen, WIP

720-757-8685

steve.allen@trainingemploymentsolutions.com

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For More Information on Accessing Benefits Counseling Services in Colorado:

Melanie Honsbruch, CPWIC

Benefits Counseling Curriculum Developer and Trainer

Colorado Office of Employment First

303-929-2129

Melanie.honsbruch@state.co.us

Colorado Association of People Supporting Employment First (CO APSE)

General Email Inquiries: coloradoapse@gmail.com