

Ensuring Equal Access to Benefits Counseling to Maximize Community Inclusion



National Community of Practice (CoP) Webinar Series

June 11, 2024

3:00 – 4:30 PM

Eastern Time (ET)



LEWIN GROUP®



TASH

*This presentation was prepared by The Lewin Group/
TASH under the Administration for Community Living
(ACL), Administration on Disabilities (AoD)
Contract HHSP2332015000881 / 75P00120F37007*

Thank You for Joining us for Today's National Community of Practice (CoP) Webinar

Our program will begin
promptly at 3:00 PM ET.

Until then, please sit back and
enjoy the music!

Ensuring Equal Access to Benefits Counseling to Maximize Community Inclusion



National Community of Practice (CoP) Webinar Series

June 11, 2024

3:00 – 4:30 PM

Eastern Time (ET)



LEWIN GROUP®



TASH

*This presentation was prepared by The Lewin Group/
TASH under the Administration for Community Living
(ACL), Administration on Disabilities (AoD)
Contract HHSP2332015000881 / 75P00120F37007*

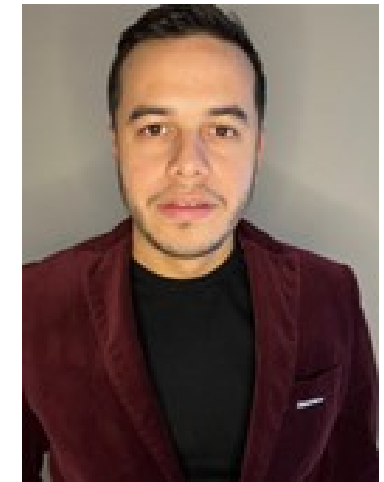
Maximizing Your Webinar Participation: Zoom Tips

- **Audio Settings:** You can change your [audio settings](#). You can also click the upward arrow (^) next to the microphone icon at the lower left of the Zoom window to change your speaker.
- **Accessibility:** Captioning and ASL interpretation are available in today's event.
- **Questions:** If you have a question for today's presenters, please type it in the Q&A box at any time during the presentation. Open the Q&A window, type in your question, and then press "send." We will respond to questions as time allows through the Q&A pod or live, during the Q&A portion of this event.

Agenda

- Welcome
- Speaker Introductions
- Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of Olmstead
- Debunking Myths About Working and Loss of Benefits
- Build The Life You Want. Keep The Benefits You Need.
- Question & Answer (Q&A) Session
- Closing

Speaker Introductions



Samantha Moreno, MS, CRC

Independent Consultant,
Disability Advocate, and Former
CIL employee

Peter Pike

Program Manager,
Center for Independent Living
Office (IL), Division of Vocational
Rehabilitation (DVR), Colorado
Department of Labor and
Employment

Katie Taliercio

Disability Employment First
Collaboration Manager, DVR,
Colorado Department of Labor
and Employment

Douglas A. Alves

Program Coordinator, Work
Incentives Practitioner (WIP-C), IL,
DVR, Colorado Department of
Labor and Employment



Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of Olmstead

Samantha Moreno, MS, CRC



Building On Advocacy

- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination based on disability in services, programs, and activities provided by State and local government entities.
- The U.S. Supreme Court's landmark 1999 *Olmstead v. L.C.* decision (*Olmstead*) allows people with disabilities to receive services and supports in the setting(s) of our choice.
- [Olmstead: From the Case Toward Real Transformation Video](#)

How Centers for Independent Living Connect Individuals with Employment Services and Promote Community Inclusion

- Centers for Independent Living (CILs)
- Core Services
- Employment Services

Debunking Myths About Working and Loss of Benefits

Samantha Moreno, MS, CRC



Myth #1

Myth: I will lose my benefits when I start working.

Truth #1

Myth: I will lose my benefits when I start working.

Truth: Various work incentives allow individuals to work while receiving benefits. For example, the Social Security Administration (SSA) offers programs such as the Ticket to Work and the Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA) that provide continued support while transitioning to employment.

Resources: [Work Incentives General Information](#) (SSA), [Ticket to Work](#) (SSA)

Myth #2

Myth: I will not be able to get my benefits back if I'm unable to continue working.

Truth #2

Myth: I will not be able to get my benefits back if I'm unable to continue working.

Truth: Programs like Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) include provisions such as the Expedited Reinstatement (EXR) process, allowing individuals to quickly regain benefits if they cannot continue working due to their disability.

Resources: [Expedited Reinstatement \(EXR\) Disability Research](#) (SSA)

Myth #3

Myth: If I go to work, I will lose my health coverage.

Truth #3

Myth: If I go to work, I will lose my health coverage.

Truth: Medicaid and Medicare have work incentives that allow us to maintain health coverage even after we start working. For instance, the Medicaid Buy-In program enables workers with disabilities to purchase Medicaid coverage.

Resources: [Continued Medicaid Eligibility \(Section 1619\(B\)\)](#) (SSA), [Ticket to Work Medicaid Buy-in](#) (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS))

Myth #4

Myth: Earning a small income isn't worth the risk of losing benefits.

Truth #4

Myth: Earning a small income isn't worth the risk of losing benefits.

Truth: Benefits Counseling/Benefits Planning helps us understand how to manage our benefits and earnings effectively. Many of us can achieve a better quality of life and participate more fully in our communities with additional income from employment –while still retaining crucial benefits.

Resources

- Connect with your local CIL:
 - <https://www.ilru.org/projects/cil-net/cil-center-and-association-directory>
- Ticket to Work Website:
 - <https://choosework.ssa.gov/>
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC):
 - <https://www.eeoc.gov/>

Contact Information

- Samantha Moreno, MS, CRC: sam.k.moreno@gmail.com

Build The Life You Want. Keep The Benefits You Need. Tus Beneficios. Tu Vida. Tu Futuro.

*Colorado Division of Vocational
Rehabilitation (DVR)*

Katie Taliercio, Peter Pike, and
Douglas A. Alves



Our Why

“I want to make more money so I can get off of SSI, buy a house, get married, and have kids.”

More About Our Why

- **We needed more options for people to get information.**
 - Colorado Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE), Benefits Committee
 - Local grant to fund benefits planning services that then provided a model for the stat

Presentation Objectives

- Describe the Evolution of Benefits Planning in Colorado
- Partnerships and Collaboration
- Funding Sources
- Cultural Sensitivity - Connecting All Populations
- Explain Where we are Today
- Share Our Vision

The Evolution of Benefits Planning in Colorado

2014-2021

- **2014** – Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) was the only option
- **2016** – CO-APSE Benefits Committee
- **2017** – Colorado (CO) Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Accounts
- **2017** – Benefits Planning services add to DVR Fee Schedule
- **2019** – Securing Employment and Economic Keys to Stability (SEEKS) Grant
- **2020** – Disability Benefits 101
- **2021** – Benefits Collaborative

The Evolution of Benefits Planning in Colorado

2023-2024

- **2023**

- Benefits Planning services added to Medicaid Waivers for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)
- Medicaid Buy-In added to Developmental Disabilities Waiver
- National Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) award
- SSA Interagency Cooperative Action Network (ICAN) Grant

- **2024**

- New NEON grant

The Evolution of Benefits Planning in Colorado

June 2024

- **2014 - 2024**
 - Benefits Planning services went from **1** to **3** funding sources
 - Certified Benefits Planners increased from **5** to **30+**

Partnerships: State Agencies

- Health First Colorado (Medicaid)
- Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
- Colorado Office of Independent Living Services (IL)
- Office of Employment First/University Center of Excellence
- Lieutenant Governor's Office
- Colorado Department of Human Services
- Employment and Training Workforce Development Programs
- Employment First Advisory Partnership

Partnerships

- Community-based Service Providers
- Family-led organizations
- Certified Benefits Planners
- People with Disabilities
- Colorado APSE
- Disability Law Colorado
- Ability Connections (WIPA)

Collaboration: Consensus Around Meaning & Use

- **We needed to define what we meant by Benefits Planning.**
 - Includes state & local
- **Who is it for?**
 - Includes people considering work, but not yet committed
- **Why is it important?**
 - Informed choice about work & benefits
 - Options
 - Bridges poverty gap
- **Documented in CO-APSE Benefits Planning Guide**

CO-APSE Benefits Planning Committee

- Created to promote the use of Benefits Planning
- Tools & Activities
 - Colorado Benefits Planning Guide
 - Benefits Planning Infographics (English & Spanish)
 - Intro to Benefits Planning Video
 - Social Media Tool Kit
 - Dedicated Benefits Page on CO-APSE Website
 - National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Benefits Planning Awareness Campaign

Funding Sources

- **Social Security Administration (SSA)**
 - Ticket to Work
 - WIPA
- **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (2017)**
 - Fee Schedule
 - Authorized at Eligibility
- **Health First Colorado (Medicaid) (2023)**
 - Only Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Intellectual and Developmental (I/DD) Waivers

Cultural Sensitivity - Connecting all populations

- **Cultural/Language Sensitivity**
 - It refers to being aware, respectful and considerate of the beliefs, values, languages, and practices of different cultures.
 - Also involves being intentional about adapting behaviors and being mindful of the impact of our actions to promote inclusion
- **Educating communities in native language to bridge the knowledge gap**
- **Language accessibility / plain language / intentional translation**
- **Inclusive outreach efforts**

Colorado Today

- Benefits Planning services available before working
- Benefits Planning for individuals not on SSI/SSDI
- Research and demonstration projects
- Developing state and local benefits
- Emphasis on messaging for all communities
- Collaboration across all partners
- NEON

Resources from Colorado DVR



<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-kFp31v18oippK0w4FuNgOfG7BVZxR8VHni5w77hGS4/edit?usp=sharing>

Contact Information

- Peter Pike: peter.pike@state.co.us
- Doug A. Alves: douglas.alves@state.co.us
- Katie Taliercio: katie.taliercio@state.co.us
- Charlene Parris: charlene.parris@state.co.us

Q&A Session

- Let's hear from you!
- Please type a question in the Q&A pod and we will do our best to answer.



Upcoming Webinar

Job Accommodations Make a Difference: Data Points and Implications

Tuesday, July 9, 2024 at 3:00PM ET

[Register Here](#)

DETAC Contact Information

Email:

AoDeploymentTA@gmail.com

Website:

<https://aoddisabilityemploymenttcenter.com>

On-Demand Technical Assistance (TA)

Requests:

<https://aoddisabilityemploymenttcenter.com/on-demand-ta-requests/>



DETAC Resources

- **Employer Engagement and Outreach: How State Councils on Developmental Disabilities Can Open the Glass Door to Employment**
(podcast coming soon!)
 - [Brief](#)
- **The Intersectionality of the LGBTQIA+ and Disability Communities in the Workforce**
 - [Blog](#)
 - [Podcast](#)

Thank You!

- Please take a few minutes to share your experience with today's webinar.
- The survey will also pop-up as you exit the Zoom webinar.

Post Webinar Survey - June 11, 2024