

Question: I got a referral from Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Counselor told me that the person used to receive SSI, and is not getting a check anymore. However, the person is receiving Medicaid. Is the person eligible for WIPA Services?

CWICs sometimes get referrals from members of the employment support team that require some investigation to determine eligibility for WIPA services. CWICs provide a valuable service, and it is important to screen referrals for eligibility prior to meeting with them or spending time which could be used on referrals that are eligible for WIPA services.

Using a systematic approach, the first step is to be clear about the WIPA eligibility criteria. SSA restricts WIPA services to individuals who are:

- At least age 14, but not yet full retirement age,
- Disabled per SSA's definition, and
- Already receiving (or approved to receive) Social Security benefits based on disability (SSI or a title II disability benefit such as SSDI, CDB or DWB).
- SSI beneficiaries receiving continued Medicaid under 1619(b) of the Social Security Act,
- SSI beneficiaries receiving only State supplementary payment, and
- Former beneficiaries of the title II disability programs (SSDI, CDB, DWB) receiving Medicare under the Extended Period of Medicare Coverage.

When handling initial calls, the CWIC can ask some probing questions to get clues about eligibility. In the case of a referral from another agency, a release of information form will need to be signed if specific information about a beneficiary is needed. The CWIC can ask the service professional some probing questions to screen for eligibility during the initial call, before a release form is signed.

If the referral source is not able to provide enough information for the CWIC to make a decision about eligibility, it may be necessary to verify benefits, which may save time in the long run. It is better to verify whether or not a referral is eligible for WIPA services prior to meeting with them. This is especially true when the CWIC covers a large geographical area and needs to minimize travel time.

There are several different verification methods that can be used at this stage. If the individual signs a release of information form, the CWIC can request a BPQY report from SSA, or simply speak to the WIL at the local office. In the case highlighted in this

question, the county Medicaid office may be able to tell whether or not the individual is SSI-eligible, and perhaps in 1619(B) status. If verbal verification is used, information must be recorded in the case file regarding the date, who the CWIC spoke to, and what information was given. Keep in mind that a signed release of information is still required to be on file for verbal verification. The CWIC could also ask the individual to provide recent letters from SSA, if available.

There may be situations in which the CWIC may question eligibility, even after verification has been received. To help with this decision, refer to the "Chart: WIPA Eligible or Not?". This chart can be found on the VCU-NTC website at: <http://www.vcu-ntc.org/resources/viewContent.cfm/746> or in Module 6 of the CWIC training manual, which can also be found on the VCU-NTC website: <http://vcu-ntc.org/resources/cwicmanual.cfm>.

If you are still unsure about an eligibility decision, you can discuss the situation with your VCU Technical Liaison. Be sure that you have gathered as much information as possible first so that the liaison will be in a better position to assist you.