

Virtual Service Delivery



During 2020, many businesses changed the ways they engage with their customers and with the public. Ticket to Work (Ticket) Program Employment Networks (EN) were no different. A group of ENs shared their experiences through a survey that explored how they use remote service delivery to meet the needs of Ticketholders and to achieve successful employment outcomes. In this fact sheet, we relate some of their experiences and offer resources for those ENs seeking to move to or improve their own virtual service delivery.

They explained that the changing economy affected both employed and unemployed Ticketholders:

- Employed Ticketholders were laid-off or furloughed.
- Others are interested in work, but are discouraged or afraid to pursue employment.
- The mix of jobs is also changing: different types of jobs — and jobs in different industries — are becoming available, especially telework jobs and jobs in essential services.

In response, ENs have changed some of their business processes. Examples include:

- Transitioning their service area from in-person to remote-only or offering a hybrid model and adding staff
- Expanding the geographic scope of their marketing and Ticketholder outreach efforts
- Making job development in growing industries a priority
- Building new, and strengthening existing partnerships with Ticket Program allies and employers

Adjusting to Effective Remote Service Delivery

ENs acknowledged that remote service delivery may not be the best approach for every Ticketholder. Many lack the tools and knowledge to access online content via virtual platforms.

Technology can be spotty in rural areas and unaffordable in low-income communities. Physical disabilities, mental illness and learning disabilities, among other conditions, often limit Ticketholders' ability to process information and engage remotely with EN staff.

In these circumstances, ENs acknowledged the importance of maintaining frequent contact with Ticketholders and being supportive of their physical and emotional needs. To do so, they rely on telephone, email and other non-contact communication and engagement methods. In addition, they acquire personal protective equipment supplies for Ticketholders who continue to meet at the office and reconfigure office space to accommodate social distancing protocols. Some also provide gift cards to Ticketholders for food, medical supplies and other necessities.

Other remote solutions include:

- Using secure, electronic (paperless) processes, signature tools and accessible technology
- Making information available in virtual formats (e.g., video conferencing, CART translation services, file-sharing and other types of collaboration tools, email and social media)
- Enhancing content on websites (e.g., employment preparation, Ticket Program materials)
- Using videos, live chat, texting and social media
- Transitioning in-person workshops to online viewing
- Training Ticketholders on how to get hired for remote jobs and how to interview for jobs in an online environment
- Conducting virtual orientation, tele-training and other Ticketholder meetings via commercial products such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet at no cost to the Ticketholder
- Providing benefits counseling and Work Incentives support to enable Ticketholders to understand the effect of earnings from work on Social Security benefits
- Encouraging Ticketholders to plan for the future



Resources to Support Transitioning to Remote Services

If you are interested in transitioning your business to include remote services for Ticketholders, the following resources can provide guidance. These are resources and services you can provide to Ticketholders, as well as ways to manage your staff and operational needs digitally.

- **National Employment Network Association (NENA)**, a membership organization, published **Providing Virtual Services** in response to changes due to the pandemic.
- **Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC)**, a project funded by the U.S. Department of Education, supports the Vocational Rehabilitation community and their partner agencies and shares effective practices. ENs will find the site's collection of resources for distance service highly relevant: on-demand webinars, teleworking, leading and managing operations from a distance, business engagement, technology and programs that facilitate remote service delivery.
- **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)** shares resources on **telework**, **accessibility** and **COVID-19** compliance and accommodation issues.
- **Deaf/Hard of Hearing Technology Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center** supports the transition to 21st century technology for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as their friends and family and provides a variety of technology resources, including **COVID-19 compliance and accommodation issues**.
- Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology has digital accessibility **toolkits**.
- John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development includes:
 - **Virtual Services Toolkit – The Basics**: This toolkit assists service providers in communicating with job seekers and with one another. It discusses a range of services and products to support virtual communication and service delivery.
 - **Suddenly Virtual: A Practical Guide for Frontline Service Providers During the COVID-19 Pandemic** – This guide includes tools and tips for operating in a virtual workforce service delivery environment.

For more information about the Ticket to Work Program, visit yourtickettowork.ssa.gov. To access the service provider directory, visit choosework.ssa.gov/findhelp/.

Follow the Ticket Program's Choose Work on social media!



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choosework.ssa.gov/contact



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Call the Ticket to Work Help Line at **1-866-968-7842** or **1-866-833-2967** (TTY).

To view online and access the resources linked in this fact sheet, please visit:
<https://choosework.ssa.gov/Assets/cw/files/Library/2021/fact-sheet-virtual-service-delivery.pdf>

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