

Opportunity for Certification Program for Cornell University's Work Incentives Practitioner Credential ODP Announcement 22-029

AUDIENCE:

Providers or prospective providers of benefits counseling funded through the Consolidated, Community Living, and Person/Family Directed Support (P/FDS) waivers or base funding.

PURPOSE:

To announce an opportunity for providers to have a staff person(s) participate in a virtual certification program with the goal of receiving a Work Incentives Practitioner credential.

DISCUSSION:

Pennsylvania is an Employment First state where competitive integrated employment is the *first consideration* and *preferred outcome* for people with disabilities. ODP believes that all people with an intellectual disability or autism must be encouraged and supported to pursue their goals for an *Everyday Life*, which may include working in competitive integrated employment.

Benefits Counseling services can be an integral part of the development of employment goals for individuals with disabilities and their families. People who depend on continued access to medical care and long term supports and services often fear that earning too much income will result in losing eligibility for publicly funded benefits and

services. ODP is committed to supporting individuals to access comprehensive benefits counseling services that provide information on the full array of work incentives available to individuals as they gain and maintain employment.

The Work Incentives Practitioner credential is accepted by ODP to provide the Benefits Counseling service funded by the Consolidated, Community Living, or P/FDS waivers and base funding. To build capacity to provide benefits counseling, ODP has contracted with Cornell University to deliver the Work Incentives Practitioner certification program to Pennsylvania providers. ODP is covering the cost of the certification program and credential for 25 people (up to two staff persons per provider). Providers will be selected using a competitive application process.

The Certification Program and Credential

The Work Incentives Practitioner certification program will be held virtually. This intensive certification program requires participation in the following:

- Five full-day sessions held once a week over a period of 5 consecutive weeks
- Coursework between sessions
- A 1½ hour review session
- An online examination; and
- The completion of a case study that will be reviewed by Cornell University.

Successful completion of all steps above will result in a Work Incentives Practitioner credential.

The Work Incentives Practitioner credential is issued for a 5-year period during which 60 hours of continuing education units (CEUs) must be completed.

Application Process

The certification program will be limited to 25 persons. Providers may choose up to two staff persons for which they are applying. ODP expects that persons selected for this opportunity are committed to attending, actively participating, and completing all required parts of the program.

To be eligible, providers must already be enrolled with ODP to provide one of the following:

- Supported Employment
- Advanced Supported Employment
- Benefits Counseling
- Small Group Employment, or
- Prevocational Services in Community Participation Support.

Please complete an application (attached to this announcement) to help us to get to know your organization and to measure your interest and commitment in having a staff person(s) receive the Work Incentives Practitioner credential and enrolling with ODP to provide the Benefits Counseling service.

Applications must be submitted by email to Laura Cipriani at lcipriani@pa.gov no later than April 1, 2022.

ODP will notify each provider no later than April 30, 2022, whether they have been selected. Notifications will be sent via email to the email address by which the application was submitted.

Dates

Virtual Class Sessions (all times are 8:00am to 4:30pm):

- Friday, May 27, 2022
- Friday, June 3, 2022
- Friday, June 10, 2022
- Friday, June 17, 2022
- Friday, June 24, 2022

Virtual Review Session:

- Thursday, June 30, 2022; 1:00pm-2:30pm

Online Examination:

- 24-hour access beginning July 11, 2022 through July 15, 2022

Case Study Period:

- Begins July 25, 2022 and runs for 30 days. Exercises can be submitted at any time during the 30-day period. It is expected that the Case Study will take between 10-15 hours to complete.

If you have any questions, please contact Gary Smith at smiga@pa.gov.