



# NAVIGATING SOCIAL SECURITY & EMPLOYMENT

DDS Employment Grant Presentation

# ALI TABATABAI, NEW LEAF SOLUTIONS

## About the Presenter



### TRAINING

Masters of Public Administration - McGeorge School of Law, valedictorian

B.A. Journalism, SF State University

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### EXPERIENCE

Current: CEO, **New Leaf Solutions**, serving 4,000+ Californians

North Bay Regional Center - Board Member, Vendor Advisory Chair (2019-2022)

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### PASSIONS

Disability Employment, NY Pizza, Backpacking, Basketball w/ my 11 yr old daughter

## THE PROBLEM - BARRIERS TO CIE

# FEAR OF LOSING SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

Substantial Gainful Activity Limit

# \$1470

Per month pre-tax dollars at which you lose

SSA



# IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH TO REACH SGA

and lose your benefits  
working in California

CA State Min. Wage

**\$15.50**

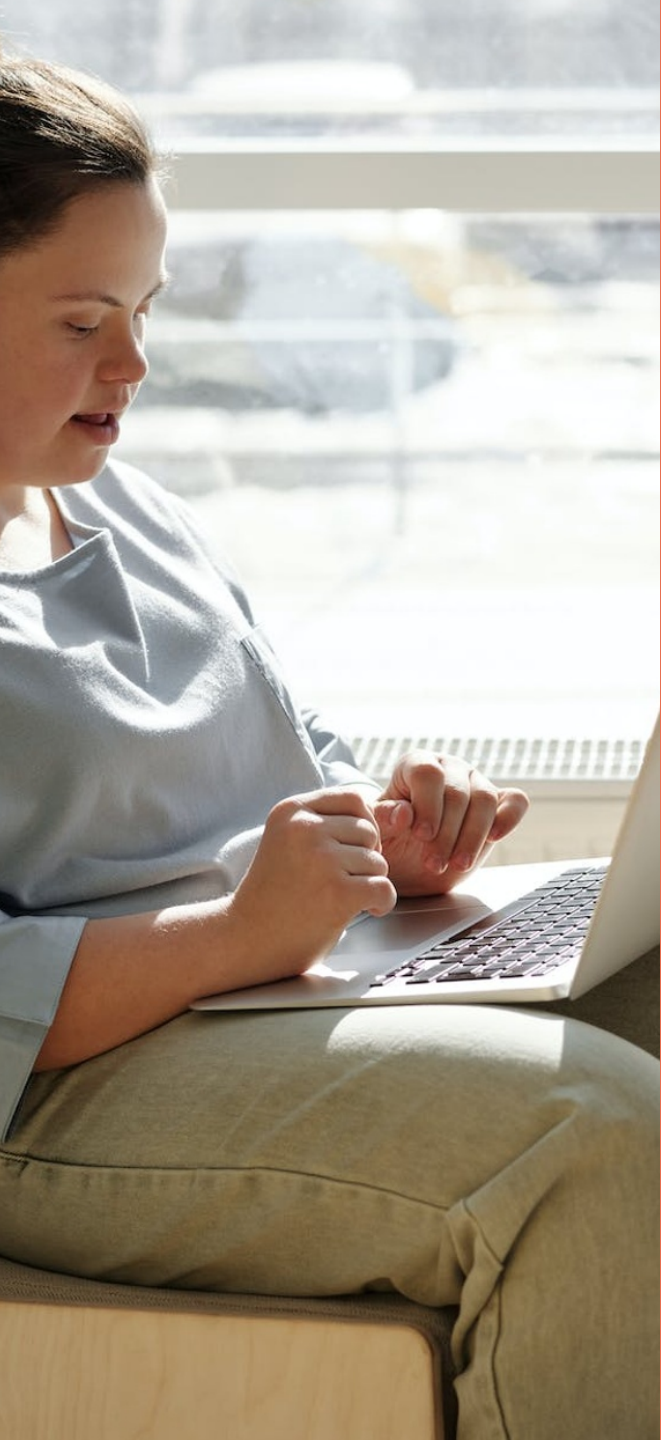
Median of California Local Min. Wages

**\$16.77**

Many Californians will lose SSA benefits working just

**22 HOURS/WEEK**

There are workarounds, but...

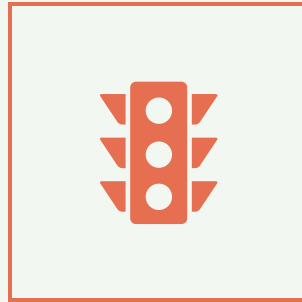


ABLE SUBSIDIES TICKET-TO-WORK  
IDSS OVERPAYMENT WIL  
PABSS 0740 CESSASTIONS GA  
WIPA \$1470 WIP MEDI-CALSSI PASS  
PROGRAM IRWE MEDICARE  
TRIAL-WORK-PERIOD DOR



## FEAR OF LOSING BENEFITS

# BARRIERS TO CIE



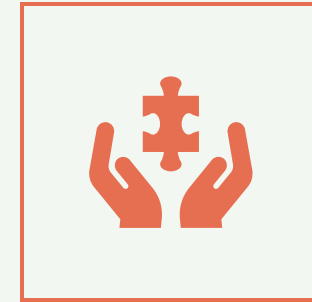
Fear of Losing SSA/SSI & Medical Benefits

Reduce Hours

Pass-up promotions

Past experience w/overpayments &  
disruptions

Fears & influence of family members



Benefits Counseling is a Missing Piece

PIPs & SE placements don't access DOR

DOR counselors at capacity anyhow

Not part of the RC employment pipeline

Overlapping and complex programs at SSA

\$88K

Grant

# PURPOSE OF THIS PILOT PROJECT

PROVIDE BENEFITS COUNSELING TO PIPs & DEVELOP A REPLICABLE SERVICE MODEL

Fill the benefits gap in the CIE pipeline

Overcome the fear & help connect to long term benefit supports through one-on-one counseling

Create a model for RCs and service providers

# PROJECT TYPE

18-MONTH TIMELINE



**Centers Involved**  
Alta, Kern, & North Bay



**Employment Preparation Services**

Service Models for  
Individuals with High  
Support Needs



**1** Counsel 15 PIPs & prepare benefits summaries

**2** Employ 4 PIPs in our Sacramento Office

**3** Survey pre & post feelings towards benefits & work

**4** Ideate! Build service model, pilot, & get vendored

**5** Replicate & involve more providers



## PROJECT GOALS



# PROGRESS & ACTIVITY

- ✓ **Outreach & Networking**
  - Help from Employment Specialists at the RCs
  - Joined Employment Taskforce at NBRC
  - Planning & Brainstorming with SE vendors
  - Featured session speaker at upcoming Supportive Life Conference
- ✓ **Service Model Research**
  - Conversations with regional DOR representatives
  - Service Code & vendorization discussions with RC community service directors
- ✓ **Positive Counseling Outcomes**
  - Benefits Summaries & Analysis Provided
  - **Direct connection & warm hand-off process with Nor. Cal WIPA**

A person is walking up a set of blue metal stairs. The person is wearing bright orange sneakers with white soles. The stairs have a blue metal railing and a blue metal mesh floor. The background is a bright blue sky. The text "SUCCESS STORIES" is overlaid in the center of the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

# SUCCESS STORIES

## BARRIERS & RESOLUTIONS

# TURNING TALK & ENTHUSIASM INTO ACTUAL COUNSELING APPOINTMENTS

Refocus our expectations and strategies for working with supportive employment providers (SE)

Help make the referral process easier for them

**Mindful of their time and responsibilities**

Meetings with SE not producing expected level of referrals

Increase our visibility, on-site, and active

"meeting them where they are at" .... like literally

Thank you,  
UCP North Bay  
& Southside  
Unlimited!

## BARRIERS & RESOLUTIONS

# ADDRESSING PARENT & FAMILY FEARS

Negative past experiences create distrust in the system

Often the biggest influence in limiting hours/pay

Misunderstandings and benefits, rules, and where to get help

Despite counseling on SSA exceptions, subsidies and workarounds there is still strong hesitation due to past bureaucratic trauma

Past Trauma with  
Benefit Bureaucracy

Speak to the  
individual directly,  
provide family with  
success stories

One of the main root  
causes of barriers to  
employment

**Our biggest battle  
will be defeating a  
culture of fear**



# FUTURE GOALS

Beyond the Grant

CA university-based  
counseling certification  
programs

Educating Parent  
Support Groups