EXISTING SSA WORK INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

Congress has enacted a number of work incentive programs, but only a small number of SSA's clients use them.

SSDI:

- **Trial Work Period:** A beneficiary can work for 9 months without losing benefits.

- **Extended Period of Eligibility:** If a beneficiary's income falls below SGA (substantial gainful activity) level during the 3 years after a trial work period, cash benefits are reinstated for that month.

- **Medicare Coverage and Buy-In:** A beneficiary gets 39 months on Medicare after the trial work period. After that, a beneficiary can purchase Part A Medicare coverage.

SSI:

- **Section 1619(a):** A beneficiary who earns more than SGA (normally the point where benefits are cut off) loses $1 of benefits for every $2 earned.

- **Section 1619(b):** Allows a beneficiary to keep Medicaid coverage when earnings become too high to allow a cash benefit. Coverage continues unless earnings reach a threshold amount which varies by state -- examples are $17,000 in Pennsylvania and $22,000 in California in 1994.

- **PASS:** Allows a beneficiary to exclude from their SSI eligibility and benefit calculation any income or resources used to achieve a work goal.

- **Students:** A beneficiary under 22 who is in school can exclude another $1,600 a year from income.

Both SSDI and SSI:

- **Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE):** A beneficiary can deduct from earnings the cost of certain items or services needed to work, such as transportation, medical devices, or attendant care at work.

- **Subsidies:** The value of support a person receives on the job is deducted from earnings to determine if a person is engaged in SGA.

- **Continued Payment While Under VR:** A beneficiary who is no longer disabled can still get benefits if participating in a VR program.