

program for a specified period of time, will significantly increase the likelihood that the individual will not have to return to the disability benefit rolls.

Our regulations provide that these continued benefits generally will be stopped with the month the individual completes the program, stops participating in the program for any reason, or we determine that the individual's continuing participation in the program will no longer significantly increase the likelihood that the individual will be permanently removed from the disability benefit rolls.

The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1987

Section 9112 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1987 (OBRA 1987), Pub. L. 100-203, amended section 1631(a)(6) of the Act to extend eligibility for continued benefits under that section to individuals who receive SSI benefits based on blindness and whose blindness ends while they are participating in an approved State vocational rehabilitation program. This amendment was effective April 1, 1988. We implemented this amendment through the issuance of operating instructions reflecting the extension of eligibility for continued benefits under section 1631(a)(6) of the Act to individuals receiving SSI blindness benefits. In addition, when we added §§ 416.2201(b) and 416.2212 to our regulations governing payments under the vocational rehabilitation cost reimbursement program, we included rules in §§ 416.2201(b) and 416.2212 to reflect the expanded scope of the benefit continuation provision under section 1631(a)(6) of the Act resulting from the amendment made by section 9112 of OBRA 1987.

The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990

Section 5113 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 (OBRA 1990), Pub. L. 101-508, amended sections 225(b) and 1631(a)(6) of the Act to permit the continuation of benefit payments on account of an individual's participation in a non-State vocational rehabilitation program. Section 5113 amended sections 225(b) and 1631(a)(6) of the Act to allow the continuation of payment of Social Security disability benefits or SSI disability or blindness benefits to an individual whose disability or blindness ends while he or she is participating in a program of vocational rehabilitation services approved by us. These amendments extended to Social Security disability beneficiaries and SSI disability or blindness beneficiaries who medically

recover while participating in an approved non-State vocational rehabilitation program the same benefit continuation rights applicable to individuals participating in an approved State vocational rehabilitation program. The amendments made by section 5113 of OBRA 1990 were effective for benefits payable for months beginning on or after November 1, 1991, and applied to individuals whose disability or blindness ended on or after that date. We implemented these amendments through the issuance of operating instructions reflecting the extension of eligibility for continued benefits under sections 225(b) and 1631(a)(6) of the Act to individuals who medically recover while participating in an approved non-State vocational rehabilitation program.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Pub. L. 104-193, amended section 1614(a)(3) of the Act to require redeterminations of the eligibility for SSI benefits based on disability of individuals who attain age 18 (*i.e.*, age-18 redeterminations). The law requires us to redetermine the eligibility of individuals who attain age 18 and who were eligible for SSI benefits for children based on disability for the month before the month in which they attained age 18. In these disability redeterminations, the law requires us to use the rules for determining initial eligibility for adults (individuals age 18 or older) filing new applications for benefits. The medical improvement review standard used in continuing disability reviews does not apply to these redeterminations.

In § 416.987(b) of our regulations, we explain the rules for adult applicants that we use in redetermining the eligibility of an individual who has attained age 18. If we find that the individual is not disabled, we will find that his or her disability has ended as explained in § 416.987(e). For an individual whose disability has ended as a result of a redetermination using the rules described in § 416.987(b), and who is participating in a program of vocational rehabilitation services when disability ends, our operating guides provide that we will consider the individual for eligibility for continued benefits under section 1631(a)(6) of the Act. For benefits to continue, the individual must be participating in an approved program of vocational rehabilitation services. In addition, the completion or continuation of the program must satisfy the test of increasing the likelihood of the

individual's permanent removal from the benefit rolls. Also, the individual must meet all of the other requirements of SSI eligibility.

The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999

On December 17, 1999, the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999, Pub. L. 106-170, became law. Section 101(a) of this law added a new section 1148 of the Act to establish the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program (Ticket to Work program). The purpose of the Ticket to Work program is to expand the universe of service providers available to beneficiaries with disabilities who are seeking employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, or other support services to assist them in obtaining, regaining, and maintaining self-supporting employment.

Under the Ticket to Work program, the Commissioner of Social Security may issue a ticket to Social Security disability beneficiaries and disabled or blind SSI beneficiaries for participation in the program. Each beneficiary has the option of using his or her ticket to obtain services from a provider known as an employment network or from a State vocational rehabilitation agency. The beneficiary will choose the employment network or State vocational rehabilitation agency, and the employment network or State vocational rehabilitation agency will provide services. Employment networks will also be able to choose whom they serve.

We published final regulations implementing the Ticket to Work program in the **Federal Register** on December 28, 2001 (66 FR 67370). The final regulations were effective January 28, 2002. Under the provisions of these final regulations, service providers that provide vocational rehabilitation services, employment services, or other support services can qualify as employment networks and serve beneficiaries under the Ticket to Work program. The expansion of options available to beneficiaries to obtain these services are intended to enhance the choices of beneficiaries in getting the services they need to obtain, regain and/or maintain employment.

Section 101(b) of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 amended sections 225(b)(1) and 1631(a)(6)(A) of the Act by deleting "a program of vocational rehabilitation services" and inserting in its place "a program consisting of the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program under section 1148 or another program of vocational rehabilitation services, employment services, or other support