For Hoosiers with disabilities and the people who support them, understanding Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, and other federal and state benefits programs can be a monumental, confusing task. For those individuals with disabilities who work, federal and state benefit programs offer work incentives; yet understanding how and when to use the various work incentives to support employment and financial goals can be even more complex.

Indiana’s Benefits Information Network (BIN) Liaisons are a group of professionals trained to support individuals with disabilities by helping them understand benefit programs, work incentives and employment. The BIN, established in 2005, is a collaborative effort between the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, Social Security, and Indiana Works’ Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA). The project is coordinated through the Center on Community Living and Careers, at Indiana University’s Indiana Institute on Disability and Community.

By providing benefits and work incentives information, BIN Liaisons help Vocational Rehabilitation customers, who are interested in pursuing employment or who are already working, learn how to plan for greater financial independence.

BIN Liaisons work in conjunction with employment service providers and the Indiana Works Community Work Incentives Coordinators who provide WIPA services to beneficiaries. Through their work, the BIN Liaisons support individuals with disabilities by compiling a comprehensive profile of their employment goals, their work experience and potential work incentives available to them. After all benefit information is compiled and verified, BIN Liaisons develop a strategic plan for benefits management and support, which is a companion to the individual’s plan for employment. This strategic plan gives individuals information and guidance on how to navigate their benefit programs as they progress on their journey toward employment and greater financial independence.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services now refers more than 2,000 people per year to BIN Liaisons. The BIN helps build capacity for the Indiana Works WIPA, resulting in more benefit and work incentive support to beneficiaries throughout the state.
There are now over 200 trained BIN Liaisons in Indiana. To increase the number of liaisons throughout the state, the BIN project provides annual competency-based trainings for employment and rehabilitation professionals working in community rehabilitation and community mental health centers to enhance their knowledge and skills about benefits and employment incentives. The Basic benefits course combines both a four-day training and a field assignment. Experienced BIN Liaisons who are seeking further professional development and who pass a competency pretest can also choose to take the Advanced course.

In an effort to spread the word about benefits and employment incentives, the Center on Community Living and Careers has also created the Disability Benefits and Work Web site. Complete with a comprehensive glossary, the Web site offers information on Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Insurance, self employment, health care, tax credits, and much more.

Beneficiaries and their families seeking more information may also obtain work incentive supports through Indiana Works’ Work Incentives Planning and Assistance. In Northern and Central Indiana, the toll free number for Indiana Works is 1-866-646-8161. In Southern Indiana, the toll free number for Indiana Works is 1-800-206-6610.