



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER  
ACHIEVING A BETTER LIFE EXPERIENCE ACT



# ABLE Accounts

A Primer to Educate Service Providers

Information in this presentation based on guidance and numbers for the year 2020

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# The ABLÉ National Resource Center

The ABLÉ National Resource Center (ABLE NRC) is the leading, comprehensive source of objective, independent information about federal- and state-related ABLÉ programs and activities, including guidance on tax-advantaged ABLÉ savings accounts.

**Our mission** is to educate, promote and support the positive impact ABLÉ can make on the lives of millions of Americans with disabilities and their families.

Our pioneering work in this area and subject matter expertise makes us the foremost authority on topics related to the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act, ABLÉ accounts, state ABLÉ programs, ABLÉ-related policy developments and comprehensive integration of ABLÉ and financial capability strategies for people with disabilities into public service delivery systems.

[ablenrc.org](http://ablenrc.org)



# ABLE NRC Presentation for Service Providers

This information is provided in an effort to increase awareness of ABLE accounts. There are 8 million people with disabilities who are ABLE eligible. An ABLE account can be opened at any age and provides the person with a disability the opportunity to own and manage their money and contributions from family and friends. The ability to save money, rather than spending down or limiting resources, makes it possible for ABLE account owners to reduce stress and improve the quality of their lives.

## What Is an ABLER Account? (slide 1 of 2)

- An ABLER account is a Section 529A savings and investment account owned by a person who has a physical/mental disability or blindness with an onset before age 26 and who also:
  - Receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits,

**OR**

  - Does not receive SSI or SSDI benefits, but has a written and signed disability certification from a licensed physician (a doctor of medicine or of osteopathy, doctor of dental surgery or dental medicine, doctor of podiatric medicine, doctor of optometry or a chiropractor) that indicates a physical/mental disability or blindness that results in “marked and severe functional limitations” which has lasted or can be expected to last for 12 months or more or result in death.



## What Is an ABLER Account? (slide 2 of 2)

- ABLER savings up to \$100,000 will **NOT** affect Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.
- A person can have any amount of ABLER savings and it will **NOT** affect:
  - Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
  - Housing Assistance through Housing and Urban Development programs (HUD)
  - Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP)
  - Social Security and Disability Insurance (SSDI), or
  - Medicare, or
  - Any type of Medicaid benefit including Medicaid waiver services.



## Who can Open an ABLE Account? (Slide 1 of 2)

- An ABLE account can be opened at any age (e.g. 20, 30, 50 years old) by or for a person who has a disability, as defined on slide 4.
- An ABLE account may be opened in this order by:
  - The individual who has a disability,
  - An individual selected by the eligible individual,
  - An agent under a power of attorney, conservator or legal guardian,
  - A spouse, parent, sibling or grandparent,
  - A representative payee (individual or organization).\*

\*The representative payee is subject to all applicable SSA policy rules. SSA is reviewing their policy at this time.

## Who Can Open an ABLE Account? (slide 2 of 2)

- All ABLE accounts are generally opened and managed online.
- The average amount of time it takes to complete the registration form to open an ABLE account online is less than 10 minutes.
  - ABLE programs require that a person read the state ABLE disclosure document prior to opening an account. This takes additional time beyond that “10 minutes” and will provide important information about making savings choices in an ABLE program in addition to preparing to complete the online form.
- Once the account is open, the account owner can grant others permission (revocable) to access various levels of information about the account and/or to take specified actions on the account.



## Why Save in an ABLER Account? (slide 1 of 4)

- There is a resource limit of \$2,000 for most means-tested benefits, but saving in an ABLER account allows the account owner to exceed this limit and maintain eligibility for SSI, Medicaid and other public benefits.
  - ABLER savings of up to \$100,000 are not counted as a resource and will not impact SSI eligibility or monthly payments.
  - A person can have ABLER savings of any amount (including above \$100,000) and it will not affect any type of Medicaid eligibility.





## Why Save in an ABLER Account? (slide 2 of 4)

- The funds in an ABLER account do not replace benefits provided by private insurance, FAFSA, HUD, Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security Disability Insurance, the beneficiary's employment, SSA work supports, Vocational Rehabilitation, employment training and other sources.
- ABLER savings can be used to supplement funding from those other sources, and it is a "best practice" to look to using those other sources and funds first before using ABLER funds.



## Why Save in an ABLA Account? (slide 3 of 4)

- There are ABLA account tax advantages:
  - The account owner, family, friends and others can contribute up to \$16,000 per calendar year.
  - Contributions into ABLA from family, friends, a special needs or pooled trust or a 529 college savings plan rollover do not count as income by federally-funded, means-tested benefit programs.
  - The account balance (principle and income) can be invested through a variety of options offered by an ABLA program. Interest growth is tax-free.



## Why Save in an ABLE Account? (slide 4 of 4)

- There are ABLE account tax advantages, continued:
  - An ABLE account owner who works and does not participate in an employer-sponsored retirement account may save up to an additional \$12,880 within ABLE from their earnings. For residents of Alaska, that amount is \$16,090; residents of Hawaii, \$14,820.
  - The additional contributions may be earned or unearned income.
  - State ABLE plans allow, over time, savings of up to \$235,000 to \$529,000.



## Countable Income:

- Examples of income saved from the following sources still counts as income - *by means-tested benefit programs* - even when deposited directly into an ABLE account:
  - Earned income and pension,
  - Child support and maintenance,
  - Unearned income
    - Examples: alimony, unemployment compensation, workers compensation, SSI and SSDI, retirement benefits, 403b and 401k distributions and veterans benefits.
- SSDI benefits are not “means-tested” benefits.



## ABLE Qualified Disability Expenses (QDEs)

- Education
- Food
- Housing including utilities, rent, modification, purchase, property taxes
- Transportation
- Employment training and support
- Assistive technology
- Personal support services
- Health care expenses
- Legal fees and financial management
- Funeral and burial expenses

# When to Recommend Opening an ABLE Account

(slide 1 of 2)

## When

- A child is born with a significant disability;
- Developing an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for a youth/transition plan;
- Someone says, “We need to spend down;”
- The \$2,000 resource limit is holding someone back from being able to save;

# When to Recommend Opening an ABLER Account (slide 2 of 2)

## When a person

- is working;
- is falling between the cracks and is not qualifying for services;
- has family who would like to help out;
- needs their Medicaid;
- receives an inheritance or insurance settlement up to \$16,000;
- has a savings or spending goal or was never able to save for retirement.



# How Can ABLE NRC Support Your Organization?

- Free use of our comprehensive ABLE website at [ablenrc.org](https://ablenrc.org)
- Educational materials, including free online webinars, best practices and ABLE account owner stories;
- Access to our **ABLE Toolkits**:  
[ablenrc.org/resources/tools/able-toolkits/](https://ablenrc.org/resources/tools/able-toolkits/)
- Fee for service trainings, presentations and/or webinars tailored to the needs of your organization for your conference or event.





# How Can ABLE NRC Support an ABLE Eligible Individual or a Family Member?

- Comprehensive ABLE website at [ablenrc.org](https://ablenrc.org)
- Educational materials, including free online webinars, best practices, and ABLE account owner stories;
- Training and technical assistance activities;
- ABLE Frequently Asked Questions at: [ablenrc.org/frequently-asked-questions/](https://ablenrc.org/frequently-asked-questions/);
- Side-by-side comparisons of the various ABLE programs.

# ABLE Program Comparison Tools

The ABLE National Resource Center website includes tools to help people compare ABLE Programs:

- [The Three State Comparison Tool](#)
- [The ABLE Program Features Tool](#)
  - The “results page” of this tool allows you to download a file for select states or for all states to assist you
- [The Map of USA Tool](#)

Downloadable  
flyer:

Roadmap to ABLE  
Enrollment:

[ablenrc.org/get-started/](https://ablenrc.org/get-started/)

Roadmap to  
Independence:

[ablenrc.org/manage-account/](https://ablenrc.org/manage-account/)

## Roadmap to ABLE

For detailed information and videos on each roadmap step, visit [ablenrc.org/road-map-enrollment](https://ablenrc.org/road-map-enrollment) or [ablenrc.org/road-map-independence](https://ablenrc.org/road-map-independence).

### Roadmap to Enrollment

📍 START HERE

- 1. What Is ABLE?**  
Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts are protected savings accounts for qualified individuals with disabilities and are available nationwide.
- 2. Who Is Eligible?**  
An ABLE account owner must have had a significant disability onset prior to age 26. An account can be opened at any age.

- 3. How Can Funds Be Used?**  
Funds in ABLE accounts can be used for a wide array of qualified disability expenses such as education, transportation job training, housing and more.

- 4. How Do I Open An Account?**  
ABLE accounts are opened through the state ABLE program website. It takes about 10 minutes to open an account.
- 5. How Do I Manage My Account?**  
ABLE accounts are savings accounts that offer choices for investing. You can make changes to your investments twice a year.

### Roadmap to Independence

📍 MANAGE ACCOUNT

- 6. Setting My Financial Goals**  
ABLE accounts allow you to set financial goals based on your disability-related needs.
- 7. Building a Circle of Support**  
Let family, friends and your employer know they can contribute directly to your ABLE account.
- 8. Making Smart Financial Decisions**  
Making smart financial decisions isn't always easy. Learn how to with an ABLE account.
- 9. Monitoring My ABLE Account**  
Learn how to keep an eye on your ABLE account and track your qualified disability expenses.
- 10. Celebrating Being ABLE**  
Celebrate and share your ABLE experiences with others!

For more information on the ABLE Act and ABLE accounts, visit [ablenrc.org](https://ablenrc.org).

# Introducing ABLE into Individual Plans that Support Employment (slide 1 of 2)

Disability and employment-related service providers (Service Providers) can be key allies to employers in creating a disability-inclusive workplace culture with recruitment and/or retention of individuals with disabilities.

Service providers can assist in identifying and directly connecting employers with qualified job seekers with disabilities and provide ongoing supports to ensure the success of people with disabilities once on the job.



# Introducing ABLE into Individual Plans that Support Employment (slide 2 of 2)

Service providers who support individuals with disabilities and prepare plans for employment may include:

- State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation,
- American Job Centers,
- Employment Networks under the Ticket to Work Program,
- Independent Living Centers and others.

The employment plan outlines an individual's vocational goal and the supports, activities and resources needed to achieve that goal. The written plan is agreed upon by the individual, their circle of support and the service providers who will be providing support towards achieving that goal.



# Why should Service Providers integrate ABLE?

(slide 1 of 2)

During the COVID-19 pandemic and times of decreased or limited funding, finding resources for appropriate services to support employment can be challenging.

An ABLE account can fill gaps and augment services and supports already available and/or fund those that are not available. Examples of qualified disability expenses include: paying for additional job coaching, counseling, assistive technology that is not covered, transportation, work uniforms, tools, respite, etc.

# Why should Service Providers integrate ABLE?

(slide 2 of 2)

Sharing information about ABLE accounts and integrating them into discussions and service plan development is an opportunity to encourage employment, the use of work supports and increase savings through the ABLE to Work Act. It can heighten core services provided and strengthen partnerships with employers or others.

ABLE accounts can serve as an anchor for this activity, which will ultimately support customers' success in work and in life and enhance agency outcomes towards customers achieving greater financial stability.



# How Can an Employer Benefit from ABLE?

- Funds in ABLE accounts can be used to support an employees' ability to work and increase their productivity, which results in a diverse, valued and productive workforce.
- Moreover, funds can mitigate the time and financial stress an employed family member may experience caring for a loved one with a disability and funds can support employees around their own disability.
- An employer can elevate their reputation as a disability-friendly employer taking the lead in corporate social responsibility and employee support related to ABLE implementation and elevate the need to increase the financial capability of individuals with disabilities.



# How Would an Employer Integrate ABLE?

- They can utilize the informational resources and NDI-led educational webinars on the benefits of ABLE accounts and strategies for better financial decision-making. They can offer education on ABLE options and even help with access to an ABLE program.
- An employer can help employees with enrollment as well as arrange for payroll deduction and direct deposit to facilitate saving.
- Employers can offer a matching contribution to ABLE accounts. This can bridge the gap between the benefits received by those who are participating in defined contribution retirement plans and those who might choose an ABLE account instead.



## Next Steps

- **Guide** eligible individuals towards opening an ABLE account early and learning the rules of the program!
- **Encourage** working individuals or those planning to work to learn all they can about benefits, work incentives and IRS programs and tax credits which can maximize ABLE savings opportunities.
- **Refer** working individuals or those who plan to work to seek free benefits counseling to learn the work reporting rules and to help decide whether to maintain benefits or transition off of benefits.



## Next Steps (continued)

- **Suggest** a circle of support and help identify members: Trusted members can support an ABLE account owner in learning money management skills, reading monthly statements, sorting out monthly expenses from qualified disability expenses, preparing a budget and spending plan, identifying opportunities for regular ABLE savings and encouraging direct contributions into the ABLE account to support extraordinary expenses and help to reach the ABLE account owner's financial goals.
- **Refer** customers to Free Virtual Financial Counseling/Coaching services: <https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/financial-resilience-center/take-action/#afcpe>

## Other Steps for Service Providers

- **Cultivate** partnerships: Stay connected with other like-minded service providers and consider creating a core group that gets together regularly to share ABLÉ account knowledge and other financial empowerment strategies.
- **Optimize** funding: Share strategies where multiple funding streams have been braided and blended with an ABLÉ account to support employment.
- **Connect** eligible ABLÉ account owners to employment-related, “wraparound” supports and continuing education programs. Learn from one another and celebrate each success.

# ABLE NRC Ambassadors

## Meet our BIPOC Outreach ABLE NRC Ambassadors!



*BIPOC ABLE Account Owners*

# For More ABLE Account Owners Stories and Goals: 2019 and 2018 ABLE NRC Ambassador Alumni Stories

Link to 2019 ABLE NRC Stories:

[ablenrc.org/able-ambassadors/2019/](https://ablenrc.org/able-ambassadors/2019/)



Link to 2018 ABLE NRC Stories:

[ablenrc.org/able-ambassadors/2018/](https://ablenrc.org/able-ambassadors/2018/)



# Other Resources

- Webinar: [Qualified Disability Expense Fundamentals](#)
- [ABLE Case Summary Series](#)
- Fact Sheet: [ABLE and the Student Earned Income Exclusion Support for Transition Age Youth](#)
- Find a Certified Benefits Counselor called a "[Community Work Incentives Coordinator](#)" (CWIC)
- [Assistive Technology Loan Program](#)



# ABLE Tools and Resources

- [Choosing the Right ABLE Program](#)
- ABLE Program [Spotlight webinars](#) on specific state programs and multi-state collaborations
- [ABLE Account, Special Needs and Pooled Trust Comparison Chart](#)
- [ABLE and Tax Benefits](#)
- [ABLE Decision Guide Series](#)
- Other tools are in development– go to our website and check back often!





# Resources: Federal Guidance

- [Treasury/IRS Final Regulations 10/1/2020](#)
- [Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\)](#)
- [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#)
- [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#)
- [Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)



# FINANCIAL RESILIENCE CENTER



Resources and assistance to help those with disabilities and chronic health conditions navigate *financially* through the COVID-19 crisis at the [Financial Resilience Center](#)



# Help Spread the Word!

- Please share information about ABLE accounts with friends, family and community groups!
- To receive up-to-date information on ABLE, please subscribe to our [AchievABLE](#) newsletter.
- Connect with us on social media: [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
- For answers to all of your questions, visit our website: [ablenrc.org](#) and check out our Frequently Asked Questions page at: [ablenrc.org/frequently-asked-questions](#).



The End ~ Thank you!

