

Millions More Can Start Their ABLE Journey in 2026

Webinar Transcript

>> Recording in progress.>> CHEYENNE RIVERS: Welcome. Thank you for joining us today. The webinar will begin soon. This webinar is being recorded. The materials, including a transcript and links, will be placed in our resource library. Resources, ABLE National Resource Center, filter by webinars. (Silence) >> CHEYENNE RIVERS: Welcome, everyone. We will be getting started in about two minutes. Welcome to Millions More Can Start Their ABLE Journey in 2026. [MUSIC]>> Keep the faith Build with care ABLE is your future, always there What you see is what you made Every leap is yours to take Dreams are whispers They are a shout ABLE helps you work it out You've got dreams >> CHEYENNE RIVERS: Listening to the webinar, the audio for today's meeting can be accessed using computer audio or by calling in by phone. If you select computer audio, please make sure your speakers are turned on or your headphones are plugged in. If you do not have sound capabilities on your computer or prefer to listen by phone, dial 19292056099. Meeting code 843 1852 4220. >> JODY ELLIS: Cheyenne, I can cover these next slides, if you would like. For questions and technical assistance, we will answer questions placed in the Q&A box during the webinar. And if your question is not answered, please email info@ablenrc.org or visit our website, ablenrc.org and contact us if our resources do not provide the answer you are seeking. Our chat has been disconnected for this webinar. technical issues, if you have technical difficulties during the webinar, use the Q&A box to send a message to the NDI host, or you may email infor@ablenrc.org with the subject line "Webinar Help." For captioning and American sign language interpretation, realtime human captioning and American sign language interpretation are being provided. The captions can be found by clicking on the closed captions icon in your Zoom controls at the bottom of the screen. And to access the ASL interpretation, please click on interpretation in the menu bar at the bottom of your screen

and maybe under the more. And then select American sign language. Please note there are two interpreters who will switch on and off throughout the presentation. And if you do not see captions after clicking the button, nor see the ASL interpreters on the screen, please alert the host via the Q&A box. All right. The ABLE National Resource Center, ABLE NRC for short, provides all the ABLE information you need in one place. We share reliable, objective information about ABLE plans, including plan comparisons, best practices, and strategies to increase savings for now and into the future. Our mission is to educate, promote, and support the positive impact that ABLE can make on the lives of millions of Americans with disabilities and their families. ABLE NRC is celebrating their 10th year anniversary. We are owned and managed by the National Disability Institute, and we are an online resource center. I would like for you to consider us your one-stop ABLE shop. We have curated a large selection of educational materials that help people along their ABLE journey. And we have materials that are customized for services providers, employers, individuals with disabilities, youth in transition, families and caregivers. Welcome. My name is Jody Ellis. And I am the director of the ABLE NRC. And I will be presenting some of the ABLE education. And then I will have the pleasure of moderating the panel for today's webinar. And I am supported by an amazing team. You heard from Cheyenne Rivers at the beginning. She is our project coordinator. And I am also supported by Laurie Schaller, who is the Manager of Financial Empowerment, and Marlene Ulisky. And both are subject matter experts. And both Laurie and Marlene are going to be manning the Q&A. If you do see responses by either of these ladies, they are part of the ABLE NRC team. I am thrilled to have you with us as we explore how ABLE accounts are empowering individuals and families across the country. I am going to provide an ABLE overview and explain what the ABLE Age Adjustment Act is. This is going to be followed by our panel discussion. This is the main portion of our webinar. You will learn how current and perspective account owners use or plan to use their ABLE accounts. After the panel, I will share some steps that you can take to prepare now to open your ABLE account in 2026. And then we will end by sharing some helpful resources. On the next slide, I am going to begin by providing the ABLE overview. One more after the agenda. What is ABLE? ABLE is an acronym for Achieving a Better Life Experience. The ABLE Act was signed into law in December of 2014. And ABLE accounts have been able since 2016. And an ABLE account is a savings or investment account that is designed inclusively for people with

disabilities. And it allows millions of people with disabilities the opportunity to save, invest their money, and grow their wealth. ABLE is modeled after 529 qualified tuition plan accounts. And ABLE can also be referred to as a 529A account. And consider it a pathway for people with disabilities to save not only for their current, but also for their future needs. Why is ABLE so important and why save in an ABLE account? Save and invest while maintaining eligibility for federally funded means tested benefits. And I'm going to go into more detail on that on a future slide. ABLE savings can be used to pay for a variety of things, and these are called qualified disability expenses or QDEs. And these are things that help the account owner stay healthy, independent, and have a good quality of life. Savings growth is taxfree. And contributions or ABLE deposits from family, friends, trusts, 529 accounts, they do not count as income for benefits programs. And the annual contribution limit in 2025 is 19,000 annually. And this is going to increase to 20,000 in 2026. And the amount is higher for working account owners who do not participate in a retirement account. And in 2025, working account owners may be able to contribute up to \$34,060. And note that these annual limits are subject to change annually. ABLE can also be used in lieu of a retirement account for people who do not participate in an employersponsored plan. And ABLE provides the opportunity for the account owner to have control of their funds, even if they need others to help them manage their account. On the next slide, we have a quote called Build the Life You Want and Keep the Benefits You Need. This came from the Colorado DVR and I think this sums up one of the core powers of ABLE. Up to \$100,000 in ABLE savings is disregarded as a resource, and it will not affect supplemental security income. Any amount of ABLE savings up to the plan's limit, and these do range from state plan to plan. The current range in 2025 is between 235,000 or almost up to 600,000. And it will not any amount of those savings does not affect your eligibility for FAFSA, HUD, SNAP or food assistance, SSDI, Medicare Parts A, B, C, or D, Medicare savings programs, or Medicaid. And for Medicaid, this does also include Medicaid waiver services. On the next slide, I will share that even if you already have a retirement account, you don't receive public benefits, all ABLE account owners can benefit from the taxfree growth that is offered by ABLE. And based on recent research from NDI, an ABLE account is associated with increased financial literacy, selfadvocacy, choice making, financial engagement and these outcomes in turn are associated with increased goaldirected behavior and improved life satisfaction. If these

outcomes sound appealing, an ABLE account might be a good match for you. ABLE eligibility. There are two factors that determine your eligibility for ABLE. One is the age of onset of disability, which in 2025 is that the disability began before the age of 26. And this is changing and this is why we are all here today. The other factor is severity of disability. The disability must cause severe functional limitation. And eligibility is met in one of two ways. If you have received SSI or SSDI for that disability, that automatically qualifies you in terms of severity of disability. If you have not received Social Security benefits, a signed doctor's statement, or a disability certification, and this form is going to be explained on another slide and we will put the link in the chat. Those are the two ways in which the severity of eligibility can be met. And eligibility continues, even if your SSDI or your SSI stops due to work. Because we are really talking about assets as opposed to earnings when it comes to ABLE. And it's important to note that individuals to qualify could have one disability diagnosis, they could have a combination of impairments, or it could be a disability that's a condition that has worsened over time. And with this, I want to explain what exactly is the ABLE Age Adjustment Act. This Act was passed in December of 2022. It was part of the secure 2.0. It passed as part of the omnibus spending bill in the Consolidated Appropriations Act. Since December of 2022 we have been waiting three long years to extend this opportunity to have an ABLE account for individuals who became disabled later in life. On January 21st of 2026, it changes the age range of disability onset from before age 26 to now before age 46. Individuals who have acquired a disability later in life will be eligible to have an ABLE account on January 1st. And this expands the number of ABLE eligible individuals from the current estimate of 8 million Americans to, in January 1st, 14 million Americans. And this includes over 2 million veterans. Really is opening up doors for opportunities. And I do want to point out along this discussion of ABLE eligibility, there are a lot of factors that do not affect ABLE eligibility. Your ability to work, your past or present employment status, your sources of income or your income level, the amount of assets or savings that you have, your current or past receipt of public disability benefits, and your current age as the perspective account owner, none of those have any impact on whether or not you would be eligible to have an ABLE account. And with that last bullet of a current age of perspective account owner, this means that a person can open an ABLE account at any age. Now that I have given a little bit of ABLE overview of what ABLE is, why it's important, and the eligibility requirements, I want

to introduce you to three panelists who have so graciously agreed to share their stories with you today. I welcome Teresa, Ty, and Mark. They are three incredible panelists who each bring unique perspectives and experiences to this conversation. You're going to learn what ABLE means to them, how they use their ABLE account, and how they are preparing to open an ABLE account in 2026. With that, we are going to stop screen sharing the slide deck. And we will have Teresa, Mark and Ty join us on the screen. All right. Welcome. >> TERESA PRICE: Hi. >> JODY ELLIS: I am going to start by asking each of you to share your story. And I am going to start with Ty. Ty, I want to welcome you as an ABLE NRC ambassador as well as a panelist. Can you share your story around ABLE and how it has impacted your life so far? >> TY SMITH: Sure. Hello, everyone. My name is Ty. I am a white person with white male with brown hair and a long beard, hoping to maybe do something for the holidays with it. I am wearing a tiedyed Tshirt. Yes, I tiedyed my own shirt. And the last thing to introduce myself is, I legally changed my middle name to Tired, so I have a license to be tired. I am a person who grew up in the mental health system. My professionals told me that I had no future. They told my mom to relinquish all custody to the state, that I was going to spend the rest of my life behind bars. I have worked very, very hard my whole life to make sure that didn't happen. I graduated college with an individualized degree in administrating nonprofits for highrisk youth, and about three years ago I got my very first fulltime job. I am a peer, a person with invisible disabilities mostly. And this is the first job I have ever had that I actually got paid for. The rest was just a lot of volunteer work. I quickly opened up an ABLE account because this is the first time I actually had money. My family lives in poverty for most of my life, for as long as I have been around. I opened up an ABLE account. And now, in addition to being fulltime employee and having my job held for three years, I am a proud homeowner and policymaker. And I am very far removed from where my providers thought I would be today. I do a lot of work, I share my story freely. My job is at a Center for Independent Living. I am a benefits planner. I get to use my story to help like people down their own journey, helping them navigate the systems. And from Colorado I was a part of the group that helped create keeping the benefits or maximizing the income you can learn to keep the benefits that you need. I was the peer voice in the committee which did that. I have a long history of things that I can share. But ABLE has changed my life. I am so happy to be a proud homeowner and moving to the steps towards the dreams I have always had of

having a family able to support that. It's a pleasure meeting people and I am happy to answer questions. Thank you. >> JODY ELLIS: And, Ty, I don't know if you see this, but throughout the screen there are so many claps and hearts and love going your way. Congratulations on how many obstacles you have overcome and where you are today. Teresa, next, could you update us on your ABLE journey as a parent of an ABLE account owner, and maybe just explain a little bit about how your son uses his ABLE account and what brought you here today? >> TERESA PRICE: Okay. Thank you so much. I am really honored to be sharing today, because ABLE has meant so much to our family. My husband and I are guardians for our adult son, Logan, who has schizophrenia. And he has given me permission to share about him. That's why I feel free to do so. When he went off to college, he was studying biomedical engineering at the University of Texas, and long story short, he started acting strangely and was diagnosed with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. It was totally out of the blue. He had never had any issues before. We were just thrown for a huge loop. Over the years, he lived at home with us for a while but it wasn't tenable for him or us. It wasn't a good situation. I found him independent housing, and I did finally get him on Social Security benefits. And each one of these, it's like playing Mario brothers because there are all these hidden treasures but nobody tells you where you are so you have got to jump and reach and try to find them. We were fortunate that I could do that. In the midst of this journey, someone on a totally unrelated website said I have been reading about your son. Have you thought about getting him an ABLE account? And I had never heard of it. That was back when it was pretty new. That's why I started looking into it, because I was worried, because his expenses just are not that high. He's got his monthly rent at his supported housing. But that's about it. And I had too much money. I mean, I already had too much money for him. I was just keeping in cash which I knew I couldn't keep doing that. That's why it was so exciting for me. We got that. And that's been quite a few years. And the fund just keeps building and it's been wonderful for him. >> JODY ELLIS: Yeah. And I think, Teresa, you really highlight how not only can ABLE provide stability for the built owner, but you are kind of sharing also how it adds stability to the family in general, too, right? >> TERESA PRICE: Yeah, for sure because he's got to younger siblings and I worry about them because they love him dearly and I don't want them to feel burdened, especially, you never with the government, when benefits could end. It's really important for our whole family. >> JODY ELLIS: Right, right. Mark, welcome.

Mark Raymond Jr., now, to disclose, Mark Raymond Jr. is involved in the ABLE industry. He is an outreach lead for ABLE today. But he is joining our panel because he is preparing to open an ABLE account. Mark, I would like for you to share your story with us about how you are preparing, what have you done already, what's still on your todo list? >> MARK

RAYMOND JR.: Thanks for having me, Jody. You know, I think like everybody else, ABLE was introduced to me way later in the learning about disability. To Teresa's point, you just get kind of hodgepodge information. I didn't learn about ABLE until six years after my disabling accident. And only to find out that I was not eligible because my accident happened at 27, and the eligibility age was 26. But nonetheless, such a great tool for people with disabilities to be able to save and really shift the financial focus from a monthly or even sometimes now weekly and daily financial plan to something way more substantial, right, a lifetime plan. And the things that I have been doing to prepare have really been centered around reaching to the investment options and which state, you know, I would like to open my account in. You know, I love the beauty that some programs offer outofstate enrollment, even though you have to kind of still function under the policy and the regulation of your state. But there might be different investment opportunities. And I as an investor and someone who really just enjoys macro economics, and I am looking for the program that really can offer me the most in that perspective as these accounts can really grow, even after you have hit your contribution limits. I think for a longterm financial strategy, I mean, the tax implications alone are just so conducive. I'm excited to be able to open an account at some point in the near future. >> JODY ELLIS: That's awesome. While you are talking about, you know, comparing ABLE plans and finding one that's most important for you and your factors of investing and saving long term, what are your goals for saving and investing? >> MARK RAYMOND JR.: I think, one I like to think about my lifespan. And one thing that wasn't put together for me in the wake of my disabling accident was a life care plan. Thinking about all of the equipment that I will need and, you know, just being able to cover expenses over time, and maybe buy a house. All of those things are kind of in play for me. And again, as an investor, I just think that the opportunity there for growth is immense. Just I'm excited about it, if I'm being quite honest.

>> JODY ELLIS: I'm excited for you. Thank you. Ty, you have mentioned that you have pursued training and you now provide benefits counseling. Can you talk a little bit about what inspired you to do that and how does now ABLE play a role in the guidance that you

give? >> TY SMITH: It's part of my biweekly presentation on Social Security workshops that we run at the CIL that I am at. I highly recommend ABLE accounts because of resource limits both on state and national benefits are really too low. If a paycheck is over \$2000, you can get in trouble! And really we want people to live independently. It's a winwinwin situation, it's a win for quality of life for individuals. It's a win for the services that they use is less because, you know, when they have a higher quality of life, they use less intensive services. And it's a win for the taxpayers because those services are expensive. It's a huge fight, you know, to help people live in the community that they want and give them the information that they need to do that. And ABLE has been a key resource for that. I use my personal story frequently. I share that, you know, I am a proud homeowner. You know, I never thought that was going to happen. You know, I have looked at houses my whole life where I thought were mansions and I have been told that they are average, middle house income houses. It's amazing to pursue my dreams. And last weekend I purchased a classic vehicle because now I have a garage to fix it up. I got a 1949 Chevrolet, fire truck. Chevrolet fire truck. I have no idea what I am doing. But I can pursue my dreams. And if I can do it, then anyone can with the right support. And that's what ABLE is. It is a support. And ABLE National Resource Center is a great tool that I use frequently to help people understand their options, to help people look and make informed decisions. That's all I do, is I provide the tools for people to make informed decisions and pursue the life that they want. >> JODY ELLIS: Yeah, thank you, Ty. And you really bring home a point that ABLE can be a game changer because I don't want to say it's impossible, but it is really challenging to consider homeownership if you are on benefits and can only have \$2000 in savings, right? That is a real significant challenge and nearly impossible. There might be a few homeownership programs that make it possible, but it really does change that game, for sure. So, thank you for guiding others and telling them about that. Teresa, I understand you serve on the NAMI board. Can you share how you use the able Age Adjustment Act In terms of helping people who have a disability, including a mental health diagnosis that began after the age of 26? >> TERESA PRICE: Being on the board I do have the opportunity to talk to a lot of groups and I speak all over the state of Maine to different groups, parents and law enforcement officers and social workers. And I went to a meeting at a church recently because they have a disability ministry. And believe it or not, nobody in the room except me had considered the

fact that a mental illness is a disability. It's very surprising to hear that. I think some people even with a mentally ill child might not understand that they can benefit from this. That's been one of the main points I try to get across. And I am always bringing it up. And like I say, I'm just surprised even when I bring it up to doctors and people at hospitals, a lot of them still don't know about it. That's my goal, is just to educate people. >> JODY ELLIS: Yeah. And so that's as a board member for NAMI. As a parent, do you have any advice for other parents who are unsure about whether an ABLE account is the right tool for their child? >> TERESA PRICE: I can't recommend it highly enough because it's so simple to use. I have got an account in Tennessee and I don't think they are allowing outofstaters anymore, but for me I'm grandfathered so I can go on there with a click of button, make contributions for my son and withdraw money if I need to. And I can always call them and ask questions. It's been easy. I know there are different vehicles some of my friends have used, like trusts and everything. But it sounds so complicated, that I see no reason to do anything else other than the ABLE account at that point. >> JODY ELLIS: Great. Thank you. And, Mark, I am curious about, what is the prospect of having an ABLE account mean to you personally and then maybe for others who you work with in the ABLE space whose disability did begin later in life? >> MARK RAYMOND JR.: I think one personally, it means that I have another financial tool in my kit, right, to help me manage my life and plan for the future. Again, being able to like on the investment side, have really intentional strategies and another vehicle for growth, not to mention the flexibility to use the account for shortterm spending on qualified disability expenses. But going back to something Teresa said, still, there are so many people in the disability ecosystem that don't know what ABLE is or have heard hodgepodge information and still don't trust what how flexible the program is, right? Especially now, as you open the doors to, I think, 6 million more people to be eligible for an account, when you have only got 220,000, you know, accounts nationwide in a pool that was already 8 million. Like it's a little bit over 1% adoption. And we have got a lot of just work to do in outreach and communicating to the disability community that these are great options for just spending accounts. We also get a lot of questions about special needs trust and do they work well together. Jody, I'm sure you do, too. And a special needs trust is such a more cumbersome vehicle, right? But when you get to some of the higher account balances, if you do have meanstested benefits, they become another vehicle for you to protect your assets as your

ABLE account value appreciates. And what I mean by that is the Social Security has the \$100,000 resource limitation, after 100 grand it starts counting as a resource. Those are like some of the things that I think about in how I'm trying to structure my life as a 37yearold with a disability that has a lot more life to live, right? But like everybody, you know, it helps me with my family as we as they also want to contribute to my longterm financial strategy, and it's a great savings vehicle for them to egift me funds, too. It's just so flexible and a lot, again, less cumbersome than some of the other options, Medicaid Protection Trust, like you need a lawyer. It's a lot of paperwork. You got to have permissions on what you can spend and moving money, and even lawyers know that now. I think lawyers are always looking for legal solutions, as opposed to accounting solutions. And ABLE is a great noncumbersome accounting solution. >> JODY ELLIS: Yeah. You certainly highlighted a lot of the flexibilities that are built into ABLE, right? And then just, again, as you said, and I think we are going to talk about raising awareness, kind of at the end of the webinar, but, yes, ABLE accounts are already underutilized with the existing number of people who are eligible. But now it's like our point is we need to reeducate people who have been told pretty much probably their whole life that they weren't eligible for ABLE, who now may be eligible. >> MARK RAYMOND JR.: Yeah. >> JODY ELLIS: It will be rewriting some of their future and their potential and possibilities that they have with ABLE. Thank you so much. Ty, you mentioned that you live in Colorado. When you think of disabilities that occur after the age of 26, but before the age of 46, can you share what comes to mind in terms of some of the challenges, as well as the opportunities that exist for Coloradans in this age group? >> TY SMITH: Yeah. You know, Colorado is trying to do a lot of things, changing the paradigm to work and benefits instead of work or benefits. And for people who get disabilities later in life, this is we have done a lot. We have tied in benefits planners, Centers for Independent Livings and DVR together to provide more comprehensive services so people can apply for benefits at the same time as working and getting meaningful work. And you need ABLE to do that. We have done what we can, you know, to kind of change that narrative. There is still a lot of work to be done for people who have been on benefits their entire life and that belief that they have been told that they can't work and receive benefits. You know, it's a little easier when you get people who have an accident later in life because there's some resources and there's not the stigma and the things that everyone in your circles have told you. But that doesn't mean that there isn't

hope for everyone. And we really want to try and help everyone achieve the life that they want, which is part of ABLE, achieve better life experiences. That's the goal. That's the dream. >> JODY ELLIS: Absolutely. Yeah. Thank you. Teresa, can you talk a little bit about how your son's access to an ABLE account has impacted or/and your family's just sense of independence, as well as financial security? >> TERESA PRICE: Right. I think the main thing for my son is any kind of stress exacerbates his symptoms to the point when he was living at home, when we asked him to take out the trash, that was stressful for him. I know he used to worry about money a lot because he knew he didn't have much and my husband and I are getting older. The main purpose for him to have an ABLE account is the peace of mind. At this point he really doesn't need to buy much. He's happy going out and getting pizza but at least he knows. I put in a good bit of money each month that he has on a debit card and he knows he's free to spend that because he knows he's got a really good savings account and it's invested in an account that's done incredibly well. He has about \$30,000 I think right now. And he knows if anything happens, he will be okay. And if anything happens to his parents, that he will also be okay. And for that reason, that's what is reassuring for my husband and me. >> JODY ELLIS: Yeah, absolutely. To wrap up our panel, just in the interest of time, I do kind of want to hear from each of you. I am going to ask the same question and I am going to start with Teresa, then Ty, and then Mark, I'm going to have you bring it home. But I would like it if you could you know, we talked a lot about the benefits and advantages of ABLE. But if you could share one tip or one lesson learned about using ABLE with someone who is new to the program, what would it be? Teresa, we will start with you. >> TERESA PRICE: For me, I would say the situation is getting better, but it's not what you would expect when I am dealing with Social Security or the State of Maine. Some people still don't understand it. And I have to fill out a representative payee report for my son every year. And they ask how much you have saved for him and then they ask you what you put it in. And they don't have an ABLE box. And none of the other choices apply. I put other. And then inevitably I get the dreaded phone call. When I know or they schedule ahead of time and it makes me nervous. And once I explain to them, they are like, oh, okay, that's fine, thank you. That would be my main tip. Also I learned, they also ask you is the account in the person's name, the disabled person or your name or whatever. And I called Tennessee and they said ABLE accounts need to be in the name of the disabled person, which is kind of

different from bank accounts that I am in charge of. I think those two things. Don't be nervous if you are questioned. It will be okay. But it can be a little bit upsetting 81st when you think you are going to be challenged. It always works out. >> JODY ELLIS: Yeah. And I think you bring up a good point, too, that ABLE is new. A lot of people don't know about ABLE accounts, right, including disability communities and networks, but also for some employees who work for some of these benefit programs and really understanding the true intersectionality between ABLE and maybe their program that they are experts in. Thanks for that. And Ty, what about you? What is one tip or one lesson learned that you would like to share? >> TY SMITH: If you are interested in working and receiving benefits or you need to receive benefits, I highly recommend look for a benefits planner or that are scattered throughout all the nation. And we can help you access the resources like ABLE and the incentives and the exclusions. And really help you maximize your income. You can make a really good amount of money and still maintain your benefits. I am currently full time and I still have Medicaid buyin and waiver services. And I still have the supports that I need to thrive, but be able to have a house and a classic vehicle. The other thing, tying into what Mark said a little bit earlier is the more people who use ABLE, the better it is. Not many people are using it right now. And I was told by a banker that, you know, just like free checking, the more people who use it, the lower the fees will be and eventually it will become free. >> MARK RAYMOND JR.: Yeah. >> TY SMITH: It benefits us all to get all of us an ABLE account. That's a little hidden tip that people may not know. >> JODY ELLIS: Great, great. Thank you, Ty. All right. And Mark Raymond Jr. >> MARK RAYMOND JR.: I think my biggest tip would be learn as much as you can about the programs, especially if you plan to invest. Again, different programs offer different options. Most of them are pretty much the same, but slight differences, especially with the investment options. And then just make sure you have everything in line when you go to enroll in the program. Enrollment, from what I have heard does not take long, 15, 20 minutes. But it's such a great spending tool, again, and the flexibility, too, from what I understand with the dashboard and being able to allocate funds either from a savings perspective or from, again, to the investment options, it makes the experience very simple, easy to use and it's a way better accounting tool than some of the other options, like special needs trust. >> JODY ELLIS: Right. Thank you so much. Yeah. I have heard in terms of opening an account that really the time frame, if you have

everything prepared, really could even be in the 10minute time frame. But I guess it's just not let the fear of the unknown prevent you from pursuing this powerful tool. Yeah. >> MARK RAYMOND JR.: Correct. >> JODY ELLIS: Yeah. Thank you, thank you. Thank you, Ty, Teresa, Mark, for sharing your journeys and your insights. I think we all have a lot to learn from your experiences. Thank you for sharing with us today. It's been a pleasure having you on the webinar. Okay. Now we are going to finish up with going back to just a couple more slides. Kind of, Mark shared that it's pretty easy to prepare, and from what he's heard, it's pretty easy to open up an ABLE account. I do want to share some steps that people can take now. On the next slide, we have steps for people who are SSA beneficiaries. If you receive SSDI, SSI or even childhood disability benefits, then these are some steps that you can follow. We do recommend to create a my Social Security account. You can do that through Social Security Administration's website, dot gov. And you want to ensure that your information is current and updated. Then in your my Social Security account, you want to be able to identify the disability benefit that you do receive. And it could be SSI, SSDI, or a combination of both. And that will be important to know because on the applications, usually you do have to indicate what type of disability benefit you are receiving. And then thirdly, you want to know what your disability is. And that is because you are going to be selfattesting the type of disability you have on the ABLE account application. And if you don't know your disability, you can call the Social Security office. We have provided a 1800 number on the screen. It's 18007721213. And then if you have not received a benefit from SSA based on a disability since before you were age 46, you will follow steps in the next slide. These are just for people who have received Social Security. By receiving Social Security, you automatically meet the severity of the disability requirement in terms of eligibility to open up ABLE. On the next slide, for people who do not receive Social Security administrative benefits, you can schedule a visit with a licensed physician. And bring medical records with you that provide information about your disability. If it's a physician who doesn't have your historical medical record and hasn't been your physician for since before you were age 46, other medical records could help. Or if you are missing medical records, certainly, you can share the symptoms that you have experienced, but you could also ask a family member to join you who can also share what some of your experience has been. And this is for the physician to evaluate. You can provide a copy of a disability certification form to your

physician for their review and signature. And we have this link in the chat. We will put it in the chat. It's also a live link in the PDF document that you can find under resources. And it's also been placed in chat, all of the slides with active links. Now, this specific disability certification form is a sample form. A physician can sign his or her own statement. But this is just one that is easily downloadable, printable, and bring it right in the office and make it easy. And then what you will do with that is you are going to maintain that signed physician statement for your records. The ABLE plans, as of right now, have not been requiring any upload of that form. That is for your own protection, for your own reference. Just in the event that it is ever requested by the IRS about why you are eligible for ABLE, you will have that. But in the enrollment process, you are selfcertifying. But you can be pretty confident in selfcertifying if you have a signed physician statement or, on the other hand, if you have already received Social Security benefits and you have a Social Security statement. On the next slide, we will talk about additional preparation steps for all prospective account owners. One, verify your driver's license or your nondriver ID card. Ensure it's active. Ensure your information such as your address is current. And then conduct ABLE plan comparisons. Mark talked about it a little bit during the panel discussion. But there are 49 active ABLE plans right now in 2025 nationwide. And as much as the plans are similar in terms of ABLE eligibility, the contribution limit, how you can spend your ABLE funds on QDEs, they are different in some important ways. They are different with the account fees. They are different with whether or not they accept outofstate residents. The majority do, but that is not across all ABLE plans. They are different in the investment options that they offer. And then they are also different in the state plan balance limits, how much you can save in entirety of ABLE funds. Those are some of the differences. It's important to compare, choose a plan that best meets your needs. And ABLE NRC does have three different comparison tools that you can use for this step. You want to compile your contact information. And this is, again, to help with the enrollment process and completing the application. You want to have your email address available that you are going to use to access your online portal in your ABLE plan that you selected. Again, know your disability type, the type of SSA benefit you receive, if that's applicable. And you want to compile your personal banking information so that funds can easily be transferred. Say it costs \$25 to open an ABLE account. How are you going to fund that account? And it can be an electronic transfer from your regular savings account or

checking account into ABLE. It's knowing those details would be important to be prepared. And you want to decide with your ABLE plan what account savings or investment options are best for you and how do you want to place your contributions in your ABLE account. Do you want an FDIC insured account? Do you want some investment options? They range in many of the plans from conservative to moderate to more aggressive. And then if you are not interested in investment option now and you kind of just want the FDIC insured account, you can certainly just select that 100% of contributions would go in that (insured). You can always select investment options later if you decide. Investments are not a requirement in ABLE. You can do the FDIC insured by itself. You also want to think about whether or not you want or need someone added to your account who can help you review, manage it or make transactions. Teresa had mentioned that the account is always opened in the person who has the disability's name. But there are times when that account owner wants support, and it could be an authorized legal representative who has full privilege permissions to make any transactions or it could be an agent that you identify who simply can view statements. It's those types of things that you will want to kind of consider in terms of what support is needed. I recommend to set a calendar reminder to complete an online application. You could use ChatGPT and do a countdown clock. Anything to kind of keep track of that time is ticking when you can start to experience the power of ABLE. And you can open your ABLE account as early as midnight on January 1st, 2026. And also in terms of people who support your account, this could be a guardian, a conservator, a power of attorney, could be a parent or even a close friend. That ABLE account owner and their support network can identify who, if anyone, could help in that regard. You know, Mark talked about it during the panel that ABLE accounts are still underutilized. Right now this is as of June 30th of 2025, there are over 214,214,000 accounts open. There are \$2.68 billion of assets under management. And the average account balance is just a little bit over 12,500. This has been in a short nine years. Because as I mentioned earlier, the ABLE accounts, even though the ABLE Act went into law in December of 2014, the ABLE accounts didn't start opening or being active until 2016 and beyond. The longest ABLE plans have only been open nine years. And think of where we have come. There's still so much potential. But really we have come a long way. And the impact for ABLE account owners is really evident. It's helped people, as Ty mentioned, to purchase homes and vehicles. You can acquire assistive technology. You can complete

college programs, start small businesses, make home modifications. There really is a tremendous impact that ABLE can make. You can all help. We know that ABLE opens doors for opportunities. ABLE can create independence. It promotes financial and community inclusion. It supports financial empowerment. It aligns with the supported decisionmaking model. It can help account owners meet their goals. It protects assets for public benefit programs. And truly ABLE can change your financial future. Collectively we need to work together to raise awareness of this expanded ABLE eligibility. Share this eligibility criteria within your networks. Share resources. And we have three links. We are placing them in chat. Again, they are on the PDF that has been provided as well. We have an ABLE information page. We have an ABLE age adjustment fact sheet. We have got an ABLE age adjustment case summary. And then also, there are many ABLE plans that offer a platform for organizational entities who serve as representative payees to efficiently open and manage multiple ABLE accounts. I just we didn't talk about that today, but just want to, again, share how easily an ABLE account can be managed. And there are only 58 days remaining until January 1st, 2026. With that, I know we only have a couple more minutes. I am just going to outline some of the resources that are available to you to help you get started beyond what we have shared today. For ABLE ambassadors, ABLE successes and learn from others, you have learned from Teresa and Ty, as well as Mark. You can hear other ambassador success stories and hear from family members about what a difference ABLE has made in their lives. On the next slide, we have an ABLE NRC home screen. Ablenrc.org. And these are just some of the things that you can find on our website. Frequently asked questions, the information flier, the comparison tools that we talked about. We have all of our previously live webinars are recorded and there's transcripts and slide decks and the recording available. We have achievable newsletters. There's decision guides, toolkits, all sorts of stuff that can help you. For the decision guides, here are just some of the different decision guides we have, talking about eligibility, which we need to update for age of onset of disability. But even tips for selecting an account, ABLE plan or opening an account, and some more information about being able to work and the ABLE to work provision that is available. And then we also have toolkits. We have an employer toolkit. We have a service provider toolkit, youth transition toolkit. And we actually, hot off the press, it just got uploaded on our site yesterday, we have a veterans toolkit that we just created since the ABLE Age Adjustment Act increased

the number of inventories who are ABLE eligible from 1 million to 2 million. And we want to be sure to reach veterans to let them know about this valuable financial tool that they can access. NDI has other resources as well. We have an American Dream Employment Network for people who are ticketholders. We have got a Financial Resiliency Center. And we have a Small Business Hub. And I will just mention that our Small Business Hub is having a virtual convening tomorrow and Thursday of this week. And we will put the registration form, the link in chat as well, in case it's something that interests you. This is for small business owners and those who are entrepreneurs at heart. But the convening is on Wednesday and Thursday from 12:30 to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. We encourage you to register. And then lastly, just please stay connected with all things ABLE. Subscribe to our achievable newsletter. Connect with us on social media, register for upcoming webinars. Visit us on the web. Visit our YouTube channel. And really just kind of stay informed about ABLE and please share that with your networks. Thank you for taking time out of your day to learn more about the ABLE Age Adjustment Act. And until we meet again, all of us at the ABLE National Resource Center wish you a happy financial journey. Thank you. >>
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