NCIL-ABLE Account Webinar-(Ai-Live to Zoom) (USFINC1511A - Ai-Live Premium)  
  
Captioning by AI-Media   
  
(Recording in progress)   
  
MARY-KATE WELLS:   
Welcome everyone. We will give one more moment for folks to come in.   
  
Alright, just being mindful of time I will jump) so we can give our presenter plenty of time to share this information and answer questions that we can today thanks everyone so much for joining today for our employment resource hub webinar. On ABLE accounts.   
  
My name is Mary Kate Wells and I am the program director at the National Council on Independent Living. This webinar is part of NCIL's pure network project funded through the Christopher Reeve foundation. We have the ABLE national joining us today as speaker through the nationalistic to a disability.   
  
Just to start with a few housekeeping items for accessibility. A brief visual description of myself. White female, short red hair and wearing a flannel shirt. My pronouns are she/her   
  
Today we have ESL and cart available. If you click on your resume menu that says show captions you will be able to access the captioning running via zoom. We will also put the captions running at the Ai-Media link which I will put in the chat momentarily.   
  
The link in the chat will allow you to adjust the font size, color and other features to make the captioning more for you. We also have ASL interpreters present today and they should always be visible. If you cannot see them at any time, please let me know in the chat and we will cause to make sure we have access -- pause   
  
We have the chat open to hosts and panelists and we do ask that if you use the chat for technology and accessibility issues and Jodi our presenter today we'll talk a bit more in question and answer. Any questions you have will be in the Q&A box.   
  
With that I will introduce Jodi Ellis from the ABLE National Center which will be sharing welcome information today. And this will be recorded and the material will be available online afterwards as well. Jodi, take it away.   
  
JODI ELLIS:   
Thank you Mary Kate for inviting me today to talk about ABLE. As a description for me, I am a white female, I have medium length brown hair and I am wearing a cream color and brown striped shirt.   
  
Today I am going to be presenting information about ABLE. ABLE stands for achieving a better life experience. I will talk to you about how ABLE supports Independent Living and employment.   
  
On the next slide I will review a note about submitting questions. If you could submit your questions in the Q&A box and at the end of the webinar we will have some time to cover two and I. In the event that we could not get to your question, I invite for you to email info@ablenrc.org. And one of our subject matter experts will respond to your question.   
  
We also encourage you to explore ABLE national read their website for answers to questions you might have, review our frequently asked questions...   
  
I will start by telling you briefly what the ABLE national read entry is. We provide all the ABLE related information you need in one place. We have reliable, objective information about ABLE plans including plan comparisons, best practices and strategies to increase savings 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. And we are also a collaborative, that we bring together estate plan representatives, advocates and provider organizations to work collectively to advance ABLE.   
  
One of the reasons why I am here today is because we are celebrating National disability employment awareness month. It is observed every October to raise awareness about disability employment issues and to celebrate the contributions of America's workers with disabilities. We want to emphasize workplace inclusion, equal opportunities and focus on removing barriers and showcasing the skills of workers with disabilities.   
  
We join DOL and (Name) to ensure our commitment that disabled workers have access to good jobs. That is the spirit behind this year's official theme, access to good jobs for all.   
  
To commemorate, today we will be providing an ABLE overview. I will talk specifically about the intersection between ABLE and employment and independent living. I will review the ABLE adjustment act that will be coming up. We will cover a bit of ABLE advocacy and I will share with you some ABLE related resources.   
  
Let's get started.   
  
An overview, what is an ABLE account and who is eligible?   
  
An ABLE account is a section 529A savings and investment account. The investment growth is not taxable and it is not countable income. It is owned by a person who has a disability, who has a Social Security number or a tax filing ID number. The disability, there is a couple of caveats. Not everyone with a disability is eligible for an ABLE account.   
  
Right now the onset of the disability has to be before the age of 26. And, it is age-related for onset as well as severity. Either, the individual account owner to be eligible would need to have received SSI or SSDI before the age of 26 further qualifying disability. Or, if you do not have to have SSI or SSDI to be eligible for an ABLE account. If you have not had SSI or SSDI, then it is recommended you have a -- physician sign a written statement saying you are eligible for ABLE. And at able NRC we do have a signed disability certificate that could be used for this purpose.   
  
Please note we talk about the disability onset before age 26. It does not matter what age you open your ABLE account. And we will be talking about the ABLE adjustment act that will be occurring on January 21 of 2026.   
  
That is what an ABLE account is and that is who is eligible for an ABLE account.   
  
There are many different state ABLE account plans or programs that individuals can participate in. There are 46 states that participate or offer an ABLE plan. There are a couple that are open nationwide and there is DC.   
  
There are over 30 state plans now that do not have a state residency requirement to open an account. Even for individuals who are living in either North Dakota, South Dakota Wisconsin or Idaho, you could still open up an ABLE account in another state that accepts outside residence.   
  
ABLE NRC has comparison tools and an interactive state map. We encourage people who are thinking about opening an ABLE account look at the different programs that are available and look at some of the comparisons to ensure that that plan could meet your needs and what you want to use the plan for.   
  
And the comparison charts include the state residency eligibility, reviews speakers such as debit cards and maybe different investment options. It will also leave you account fees to name several different features that you can compare.   
  
I want to talk about why ABLE accounts are important and why someone should save into an ABLE account. One, it supports financial wellness and flexibility. And it doesn't and a variety of different ways. As mentioned contributions grow tax-free and ABLE funds up to the $100,000 in savings are excluded from the SSI asset limit. And any amount of savings does not affect eligibility for other benefits like Medicaid, nutritional assistance programs, student tuition, housing assistance. And contributions from families, friends, trust, a 5 to 9 rollover. Those are directly deposited into an ABLE account, those contributions do not count as income for other means tested benefits programs.   
  
The funds can be spent on things that help the person to stay healthy, independent, have a good life and this does include basic living needs as well.   
  
The power is that really up to right now and 2024 and $18,000 annual contribution limit. It is important to be able to accumulate savings beyond the traditional $2000 limit for an individual for means tested programs so that you can cover a routine and unexpected costs that occur.   
  
It is a fact that there are extra costs living with a disability. And in a study that was published it showed that households with a working age adults that has a disability on average requires 28% more income to have the same standard of living, as a comparable household that does not have a member with a disability.   
  
An ABLE account, the power of that could be used to help cover some of those extra costs that are associated with living with a disability.   
  
For qualified disability expenses, I mentioned that the funds and an ABLE account could be spent at any time to cover these needs that help a person that has a disability to be healthy, independent and to have a good life. The IRS has these categories of expenses and the expenses are called qualified... Expenses or Q DI's for short. They are meant to be categories and it is up to that account owner to determine if it meets the definition of helping them to be healthy, independent and have a good quality of life.   
  
For housing could be utilities, rent, down payment assistance, closing costs, property taxes. For education it could be tuition, books, supplies, educational programs. It is not only inclusive of college. It could be other educational programs. For health and wellness think of medical expenses that might not be covered by insurance. It could be paying health insurance premiums, it can include fitness programs and fitness related expenses.   
  
Basic living expenses, which could include food, clothing, personal care items, other daily living costs. Transportation, for purchase of the vehicle, for using public transportation options that are available in your community. Assistive technology, personal support services, legal fees and financial management. Funeral and burial expenses. And there are employment and vocational expenses. That I will cover in a little bit more detail on the next slide.   
  
At ABLE NRC we do have a decision guide for determining whether something is a Q DE. We do get a lot of questions about that. We cannot always give a clear-cut answer. If it is a grey area. We just encourage the account owner and their family members or circle of support to help determine if that Q DE really does - or if an expense does really meet that Q DE definition.   
  
It is also important to note, the expenses do not have to be disability related. They just have to benefit the account owner. An example of this is a minor account owner, the parents could technically use the ABLE account funds to purchase a vehicle that would transport that minor child. That is one example of how it does not have to be disability related. That car or vehicle, the van would not have to necessarily have to have accommodations for disabilities such as a wheelchair lift. It could be a standard vehicle that is not retrofitted.   
  
Specific to employment Q DE you can use able savings for drop training or certifications. Anything that would help with job skills development and improvement employment opportunities. There are assistive technology for work expenses. Examples could be screenreader, adaptive workstations, could be used for employment support services, job coaching. Any other forms of assistance. Transportation to and from work, that includes rideshare services. Or it could be workplace accommodations.   
  
These are just some of the different examples of Q DE that are very specific to employment.   
  
Specifically with how ABLE account and work intersect, together it can really provide a financial safety net. It can help - ABLE accounts can help people qualify for Medicaid benefits, preserve someone's eligibility for SSI. Even if someone has SSI, and you are not in paid status because you are working, the ABLE account can protect your eligibility on the asset side. And you can remain active on the SSA records so that in the event circumstances change, you would already be active and you could quickly go back to paid status.   
  
There are Medicare related costs that are covered that ABLE account funds could be used for. Some examples that Medicare might not cover could be eyeglasses, hearing aids, dental work, chiropractic services, massages, podiatry. Your ABLE account funds could be used for those types of expenses.   
  
But it is important to note and in the very last part of this slide, you would want to use... Take advantage of programs that cover these costs already. And only use your ABLE account funds when no other programs are available to cover the expenses.   
  
On the next slide just another example, what does it really mean for ABLE account owners? I just want to mention, even though I already mentioned it once, a superpower of ABLE related to SSI and Medicaid is that ABLE can really keep eligibility for both, continue Medicaid longer-term even while working. And SSI related up to $100,000 in savings is not considered accountable resource. That is where ABLE can be recognized as a superpower and have a really significant advantage.   
  
Another significant advantage to ABLE for employed workers is that it is possible that someone who is employed may be able to exceed the annual contribution limit. In 2024, the annual contribution limit is $18,000. But an account owner who is employed and who is not already contributing to a retirement plan in the calendar year, could contribute above based upon how much they are earning.   
  
In the continental USA, and ABLE account owner could contribute an additional $14,580. Or their earnings, whichever is lower. If and ABLE account owner worked and made $12,000 that year they could contribute up to the $12,000. If they were working and they -- earned $20,000 in that year they could contribute the $14,580. In Alaska and Hawaii, residents can contribute higher amounts.   
  
These amounts will increase, are subject to change. But they have always increased since the history of the ABLE act every year. In 2019 -- 2025 the annual amount is going to increase to $19,000.   
  
I like to think of the ABLE account for ABLE account owners who do not participate in an employer sponsored retirement plan. And it could be because they do not qualify, meaning they are not working enough hours to qualify. Or they want to protect their eligibility for benefits and they are worried that assets in a retirement account might jeopardize their eligibility.   
  
I like to think of in ABLE as a Roth Ira. It is even more flexible because you do not have to wait until retirement age. You can disperse those funds as needed. It really is a flexible tool that someone could use in either addition to our retirement or in lieu of the retirement.   
  
Another way that ABLE is an essential tool for people who are employed, it keeps people connected to essential benefits like Medicaid. This allows people to explore work and have the ability to save along the way and build assets and accumulate wealth that they could not accumulate in a standard checking or savings account.   
  
It really creates a question that could pay for a future work expense or personal needs. It really does support coordination with other programs like the ticket to work program or a past plan through SSA. It really is a tool that employed account owners can use to their advantage. It also protects eligibility for SSI in the event that SSI is needed in the future.   
  
You may have never used SSI, have never needed it. In the future your circumstances may change. If your savings are in ABLE your eligibility in terms of your assets keeps you eligible for those types of programs. And for funds that are saved in ABLE.   
  
In terms of maximizing the impact of ABLE, people are encouraged to coordinate with NCIL's employment and advocacy programs and explore different support services that are available. And looking at the state location rehabilitation programs the Medicaid were very programs and use the resources that are available in the community for someone with a disability prior to using the ABLE account.   
  
That is about ABLE accounts, what are the advantages. Next I want to talk to you briefly about the able age adjustment act. In one year and two months, on January 2026, the eligibility requirements are going to be expanded where the onset of the disability must be before the age of 46 instead of 26.   
  
This will increase the number of people in the United States who are ABLE eligible. From currently right now there are about 8 million who are eligible to open up an ABLE account. This will increase to 14 million people.   
  
All of us who are interested in the ABLE space and advocating for financial stability and security, we will need to reeducate people. Because there will be people in a year and two months from now who will be eligible, who have been told repeatedly that they cannot have an ABLE account. And now because of this age change and the expansion in 2026, they may be eligible.   
  
There is a lot of reeducation that is needed. There is a lot of outreach that is needed to all of our networks to ensure that people understand these changes. And I really think what will happen, because there is going to be an older demographic of people who will be eligible, there is a lot of the education that we can do really needs to include investment education, wealth building education efforts. So that people really know the power of ABLE and how they can take advantage of it.   
  
That is the ABLE adjustment act. When we get to Q&A I can answer any more questions you have about that.   
  
Next on the agenda I want to talk to you a little bit about ABLE advocacy. There are currently three ABLE act provisions that are scheduled to sunset the end of 2025 if they are not protected. The provisions are able to work. I talked about that, how an individual who is employed has the option to contribute, say in 2024, $32,580 instead of 18,000.   
  
There is a provision that someone who has a 529 plan could roll over the funds up to the annual contribution limit into an ABLE account. And there is a savers credit that is available, where up to $2000 of contributions from an employed account owners are eligible for a credit. Which will reduce the amount of taxes that they owe.   
  
In terms of ABLE advocacy, protecting these provisions and making these provisions permanent it is very important and something that we all want to advocate for.   
  
There are other ABLE related registration that has been introduced. There is an introduction of an ABLE match act which would match up to $2000 in contributions in the form of a refundable credit.   
  
Another legislation piece is an ABLE awareness act and this directs federal agencies to provide ABLE education and provide funding associated to the outreach activities.   
  
Third legislation introduced, but then the IRS code to allow employers to contribute into ABLE account instead of retirement plans. This is already allowed. Employers can contribute to ABLE accounts now. But it adds this code to the IRS code. Although it is allowable it is making a change in the code. It is streamlining and adding a little bit more clarity. And the same goes for this ABLE direct deposit act. It clarifies the direct deposit process. Especially for federal agencies. And making sure that federal agencies are aware that there is a direct deposit process that can be made for ABLE accounts.   
  
And other federal advocacy initiatives. Things to raise all of our awareness about is, we can push for further expansions and ABLE flexibility and protections. An example of some of the expansions could be, could there be an exemption to an annual contribution limit for extenuating circumstances? Right now it is set at 18,000. And 2025 will be 19,000. A little bit more will be flexibility for employed workers. What if there was say, I trust settlement or payment and you wanted to make a large contribution just one time. Maybe that flexibility or that expansion can benefit some ABLE account owners?   
  
Or another expansion could be having an employer credit for employers that directly contribute to ABLE accounts. Another could be to advocate for more states to eliminate the Medicaid clawback rule. Another ongoing legislative effort could be to just reduce the barriers for savings and for employment. For people with disabilities. Right now, one of the barriers that some account owners have said they have with their ABLE account when they are using their account as a monthly transactional nature instead of the savings tool as there are some with draw hold the rules that make it a challenge for them to pay monthly bills.   
  
They are constantly having to monitor the time, the number of days that funds are withheld before the payment will be released. That is one barrier that we are aware of. I would actually, for anyone who is on the webinar today or if you are watching a recorded version, those of us who are ABLE NRC we would really like to hear if you are an account owner if you have barriers that you have encountered. We want to know about them.   
  
If you already live today put them in a chat. If you could email us at info@ablenrc.org. Having this information of barriers you may have encountered could help guide our future advocacy efforts and appreciate anyone's input that we can get. And to use strategically.   
  
Otherwise you can get involved, engage with your local representatives on these issues. Of course participate in activities and not only for the month of October about all year long. Ask employers to provide ABLE education to their workforce. Provide ABLE resources, provide training to human resources and leadership and frontline supervisors. Ask employers to add ABLE to their organizational policies. And all through direct deposits and matches. -- In lieu of the retirement plan or in addition to.   
  
We really want everyone's support in raising awareness for ABLE. We appreciate NCIL's support in networking and all that you do. Right now there are currently less than 3% of eligible people who have opened up and ABLE account. The latest data that we have is from June 30 of 2024. There are only approximately 180,000 accounts that are opened nationwide.   
  
And then of course as you know, in one year and two months from now this is going to really increase from having a million people eligible for ABLE accounts to 14 million people eligible. If we could all do our piece in advocating for any of these initiatives, that would really help promote financial stability for Americans With Disabilities Act. It would be wonderful.   
  
Next I want to share with you, I will not go into a lot of detail but I want you to be aware of what resources we have on our site. You can use them to your advantage at any time. All of our resources are at no cost to our visitors who visit us. It is@ablenrc.org.   
  
It shows the home screen some of the resources you can find our frequently asked questions, decision guides, comparison tools, informational flyers. You can meet our ABLE NRC ambassadors. We have a home ownership guide, home inheritance guide. Webinars on demand, past webinars as well as upcoming webinar notifications. We have a podcast. That is available. And then we have achievable newsletters. We put out a quarterly newsletter to promote all things ABLE.   
  
And I encourage you to sign up to be on our email list, to get our newsletters and webinar notices would be wonderful.   
  
Our ABLE NRC ambassadors, our ABLE account owners and family members who share their success stories and encourage others to open an ABLE account. On our website we do have the bios of all of our ABLE NRC ambassadors. Sometimes it is good to hear from the lived experience and see how others are taking advantage of ABLE or how others have opened their accounts. How others are using their ABLE account is really interesting to hear the ambassadors perspectives.   
  
We also have ABLE NRC toolkits. In terms of advocacy and expansion and flexibility of ABLE accounts, I mentioned to talk to employers. There is an employer toolkit. All sorts of information are in that toolkit. Could be letters and resources that could be disseminated and guidelines so employers do not have to guess and try to figure it out themselves. There is material that is available, again at no charge to the employer.   
  
We have a service provider toolkit. Earlier this year in 2024 we released an ABLE youth transition toolkit. We feel it is really important for youth that are transition age to take advantage of ABLE just because they will be able to experience the power of ABLE throughout their whole life. The younger they start to take advantage, of the better off financially they will be.   
  
We have a social media toolkit. And besides ABLE related information, NDI - the National disability Institute which operates and manages ABLE NRC, NDI has resources that can also support employment. An example is the American dream employment network, aid in through the SSA to get to work program. We have an assistive technology loan program, we have a financial (indiscernible) Center and an NDI small business hub friendly entrepreneurs in the group.   
  
I encourage you to check out any of those resources that are offered through NDI and ABLE NRC. As you were going about your ABLE journey are helping others to experience their ABLE journey.   
  
That is pretty much the end of the presentation. I look forward to hearing what questions. You have I will do my best to answer. Today I am the only one from ABLE NRC who is in the session. If we cannot get to all of your questions, please remember that you can email info@able NRC.org and a subject matter expert will respond to your question.   
  
Let me stop sharing.   
  
MARY-KATE WELLS:   
Thank you so much. I have known about ABLE accounts for a while but I'll learn something new all the time. It is really helpful to hear the latest. We have some great questions in the Q&A box. I start reading them out loud.   
  
Pete Gonzalez asks and I think this is in reference to the slide with the map of what state. Does Idaho not offer an ABLE account? I pulled up the map on the website, so Pete I will put that in the Q&A box. I do not know if you have all the states memorized. It looks like based on the map that was not highlighted.   
  
JODI ELLIS:   
Right. As of right now they do not have an ABLE plan that they administered. In that case, for people who live in Idaho, they could still open up an ABLE account but it would have to be through estate plan that allows people to an role who are not residents of that plan.   
  
There are national ABLE plans. An example is ABLE now. They are open to anyone who is living in any state. There are still opportunities for people to open up ABLE accounts, even if you happen to live in one of the four states that does not have an ABLE plan specifically.   
  
MARY-KATE WELLS:   
The next question we have from Andy Foreman. Hi Andy it is nice to see you. Andy is a guru at the Boston Center for Independent living. He asks, how do you prove disability onset? In terms of eligibility.   
  
JODI ELLIS:   
If you have received SSI or SSDI prior to the age of 26, that is proof enough. If you have not received SSI or SSDI then your physician, you have to talk to your physician and have that physician determine onset. We have encouraged people to look through their past medical records, talk to family members. But ultimately, physician would have to make that determination.   
  
We have that disability certificate form that people could use. But really, any letter or written statement from a physician would suffice. When you are opening up an ABLE account you are not providing that proof. I do not know when ABLE plan that is asking for that level of proof. Usually what will happen is you are self certifying that you are eligible. And that we recommend that you just keep the signed physician statement or certification form in your records in the event that the IRS ever asks you.   
  
MARY-KATE WELLS:   
When the age adjustment act comes up, that ageâ€¦ If you are diagnosed later in life, what increase opening to more people.   
  
JODI ELLIS:   
Absolutely.   
  
MARY-KATE WELLS:   
Another question from Andy. What happens if you have more than 100,000 in the ABLE account?   
  
JODI ELLIS:   
The hundred thousand asset limit really only applies to people who receive SSI. If you are not receiving SSI, and you have other federal benefit programs that you are involved in and have been eligible for. It could be HUD programs or food stamp assistance, Medicare. Those programs you can have any amount of funds in your ABLE account and you are eligible for those types of programs.   
  
If you are not in any benefit program, then it really does not matter how much you have saved in your ABLE account. It will not be impacted. I will say that each ABLE plan has limits to the maximum amount that you can contribute or have savings in your ABLE account.   
  
In the -- ABLE NRC comparison tools we do have that maximum limit so you can compare. Because it does differ, there is quite a bit of variability. The lowest estate plan I believe allows around $235,000 in assets to be in ABLE savings. And the highest estate plan limit allows $596,000 in assets. That is more than doubled.   
  
If assets accumulation while building is a priority or a long-term plan for that specific ABLE account owner, then probably selecting a plan limit that is more towards the higher end - 500,00 and above would be really important. That is a feature that someone could look at when determining what ABLE plan would be best for you.   
  
I will mention because I do not know if I said this earlier in the presentation, we always encourage people to look at their own state plan first. Because there could be benefits like a tax credit or a deduction that might apply to residents of that state. Look at your own plan first but then go ahead and compare so that you can try to assess which one would be best for you.   
  
MARY-KATE WELLS:   
Awesome. The folks asking, I put in the chat that ABLE and RC select estate link if someone is looking. Some more questions from Don. Where account owners can contribute their paychecks to ABLE account for retirement planning. Is it possible for the employer to direct deposit the paycheck into the ABLE account where musty an individual account on be responsible for all -- deposits   
  
JODI ELLIS:   
It is possible that they can be set up for the employer to directly deposit. How that would work, I guess I will give an example. I think it would differ depending on the ABLE plan. I cannot give you specifics because every ABLE plan may have some nuances. I will give you an example of a plan that has an online portal and a program manager. They manage the ABLE plans in more than 15 different states. In the specific example, the account owner would go into their online portal. There is a way to look at what your routing number is and what the accounting number is. And the account owner and employee would give the routing number and the account number to the employer so that they can then make the direct deposit.   
  
MARY-KATE WELLS:   
Awesome. Thank you. Donna asks, "can you have any ABLE account in addition to a regular account?" Donna we might need more info. Unless you have a sense of what she might be asking   
  
JODI ELLIS:   
? If you mean a regular account that could be a savings account at a local bank, a national bank, checking account retirement account, trust account. There are a variety of different accounts. An ABLE account complements and works very nicely with all those other accounts. You can definitely have more than one account. You can have an ABLE account and regular account.   
  
I will share a best practice. We actually encourage ABLE account owners who are getting SSI to actually put - have the funds go into a checking account, a regular checking account. Use those funds for your monthly expenses, your day to day needs and left over funds that were not needed that month, transfer those funds to your ABLE account.   
  
MARY-KATE WELLS:   
Donna let us know in the chat if there was something else specific you wanted to ask?   
  
Ruth has a question, "why do some states not have ABLE accounts?" Maybe that is not a simple question. I also have this question Ruth.   
  
JODI ELLIS:   
I do not want to speak for the four states that do not have one. My guess is and what I have heard from other states who have opened accounts, is that it could be that they have made a determination that it is a lot of effort and they may not have enough eligible residents to justify the effort that it would take to manage a plan. When other ABLE plans are still available in the country for them to choose from.   
  
That is my best guess.   
  
MARY-KATE WELLS:   
Awesome.   
  
I'll pronounce your name as best I can, (Name) made a comment that they have been waiting to get an ABLE account for years, meet the requirements but it seems like there are so many fees with the ABLE accounts that I have looked at. Which is actually a question of someone else that said, what is the cost of starting an ABLE account?   
  
JODI ELLIS:   
I will answer it in two ways. One, the costs for enrolment and opening up an account. And I will answer the second piece about account fees and some of that. In terms of opening an account, it does differ by the ABLE plan that someone selects. But the majority of the ABLE plans require a $25 initial contribution to activate the account.   
  
There are a couple of states that the initial contribution is just $10. And I believe there is another state plan that has a $50 initial contribution.   
  
So the initial contribution might very a little, but it is fairly low to open up an account. The account fees, those vary as well by state ABLE plan selected. Our comparison tool will have those fees. But there might be a debit card fee per month or an annual account fee of say, $35 a year.   
  
There are some fees associated with ABLE. I have not heard of fees being really exorbitant though. I would hope that those fees would not prevent someone from opening an account but, I could sort of see why it is possible if someone has an initial contribution of $25 and they are not working and have not been able to find funds to contribute. And then if they have an annual fee of $35 I can see how that might not align. If you have the ability to contribute limited funds on an ongoing basis, five dollars a month it should, the power of ABLE should still outweigh the fees at those program managers are charging.   
  
We always advocate, just so you know, we have a quarterly ABLE support meeting which includes some state plan representatives. And we are always talking about and highlighting whatever estate plans lower their fees, state plans representatives are very aware that we are advocating for that lower fees for sure.   
  
MARY-KATE WELLS:   
Awesome. We have a couple more questions. Shannon asks, "how do you begin the initial process?" I might refrain, consumerâ€¦ What is some of the first steps that a person might have to take?   
  
JODI ELLIS:   
On our website, we have a couple of different tabs where you can learn about ABLE. Of course you want to be informed. And that there is a tab to save which would begin the process and start enrolling. The first step is to determine what ABLE plan best meets your needs. Once you know that ABLE plan we have a direct link to the plan on our site.   
  
You would go through the online enrolment process. Most of the accounts require online enrolment but they would have accommodations of heart paper copy, application if someone needed that. -- Hard   
  
We are in the process of updating our website to give visitors a step-by-step of what they can expect in the application process. We heard it only takes about 10 minutes to complete. But you do have to have information available. You have to be aware of what your disability is, because you have to check a box. Am I eligible for an ABLE account because of an intellectual disability or a medical diagnosis? There are different categories. You would have to know your date of birth for identity verification, your mother's maiden name. There is some information you will need and we are hoping to clarify that and add that information on our website.   
  
The online enrolment is pretty straightforward and you are answering the demographic questions. He would have to determine what type of account you want because of some ABLE plans have savings, checking and some have investment options. You would need to identify what account you would want to initially open up. Some people are afraid to jump up in investments right away, especially if they have not had the ABLE account open. You can open up just the savings are just the checking and open up an investment later in future years.   
  
That would be the process. Also on our website we have another tab for manage. People who are already ABLE account holders, some strategies on how to manage their account to their advantage   
  
MARY-KATE WELLS:   
We will be sharing a recording and transcript and information with folks. I will also download the questions that were not answered and coordinate with you so that we can get some follow-up.   
  
I think the next question we might be able to get to is, "can you transfer funds from the state retirement plan to ABLE account?"   
  
JODI ELLIS:   
I believe so but up to the annual contribution limit. I guess it would depend upon the amount of funds that are in there and whether or not it is within that limit. I know for sure you can transfer from a trust, whether it is a special needs pool trust. You can definitely transfer funds from them, the savings account, checking's account and a 5 to 9 rollover.   
  
I do not see why you couldn't. But there would be the annual contribution limits to be aware of.   
  
MARY-KATE WELLS:   
Someone put a comment in the chat, which I think is just about advocacy... Going forward. Someone said just a comment, "the possibility of being subjected to Medicaid payback is a big negative for many potential ABLE account owners."   
  
Is that whenâ€¦ Is that a quick thing Medicaid payback?   
  
JODI ELLIS:   
I will do my best. If I had a subject matter expert on the call with me they would be able to explain it much better than I could. What that means is, some states do you have that Medicaid callback or payback rule in which if an account owner dies it is possible that they could ask for some of the money back that Medicaid has paid that individual for services that they have received.   
  
I will say, I am not aware of any situations in which Medicaid clawback was requested. But there are definitely states who do have that clause or do have that policy. There is always the option that Medicaid could do that. I have heard the same about that being a significant barrier.   
  
MARY-KATE WELLS:   
Massachusetts just eliminated the Medicaid payback, they just passed legislation. They have been trying advocacy for 25 years. There is movement on that.   
  
JODI ELLIS:   
Awesome.   
  
  
MARY-KATE WELLS:   
Thank you so much for the information. We will be sharing the recording with folks. Thank you so much to everyone who attended.   
  
Captioning by AI-Media

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