

ESBLN Eastern Shore Business Leadership Network
Putting Ability to Work www.esbln.org
By Jackie Gast, Director

Have you ever had a conversation a former employee that says they are not working because they are on disability or that they can only work part time because, if they make too much money, they will lose their disability benefit? Tell them you know of a program that, if they qualify, allows them to have benefits and make over \$30,000 if single or over 42,000 for a married couple. If they look at you with a blank look then you may want to consider a different promotion plan for them or just know they're not looking for work. On the other hand, if they say "Heck, yes. I'd love to work more!" then you have the basic ingredients for a successful employee and letting them know about this program could be a win win.

The program is called the Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) Program, formerly Medicaid Buy-In, which is administered through the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Improvements have been made to the program as late as October 2008. Of course there are eligibility requirements. The individual and spouse cannot have more than \$10,000 in countable assets such as cash and stock investments. In this financial market, let's face it. More of us might qualify for this program than we think! The good thing about this program is that certain retirement accounts like 401Ks, 403Bs, and Keogh plans are not counted in the \$10,000 limit. For aged, blind, and or disabled, exclusions include the home, household autos, life insurance up to \$1,500, home furnishings, and some other items. An employee could actually make more than the amounts noted above by deducting work expenses related to individuals who are blind, expenses needed for work because of a disability, premiums paid for employer sponsored insurance and some other expenses.

It seems that many employees or potential employees may be reluctant to move to this program, however, because it was so difficult for them to get their current disability benefits. Their EID program benefits would come from a different pot; similar to if your company changed insurance carriers for its health benefits package. Also, there is a monthly premium to pay that depends upon income level ranging between \$0 and \$55. I think it is safe to say that most of us who are working pay much more than that! Think about it though. If your income from disability is about \$500/month and you make \$500/month at your job, you are at the poverty level and the idea of savings is laughable. If you are getting along at that level, you should become a financial advisor to show the rest of us how you survived! Having the opportunity to make even \$20,000/year but paying \$300 per year in premiums with possibly better benefits is a simple decision to make. By the way, this program is for self-employed individuals as well. For more information call the EID Call Center 866-373-9651.