

# 15 Minute Presentation Companion Guide

## Objective

- Develop an understanding of NC ABLE benefits and features
- Discuss the eligibility criteria and how to apply for ABLE
- Explore the Authorized Agents and their roles
- Learn about the investment options and applicable fees
- Describe ways to contribute to the ABLE accounts
- Provide information about withdrawal options
- List examples of Qualifying Disability Expenses (QDEs)

## Advocate Preparation

- Prior to delivery, the Advocate should review the following videos and websites: Prior to delivery, the Advocate should review the following websites:
  - **NC ABLE Accounts-What you need to know** (duration - 41:09 minutes)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9i\\_ne-S8wvk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9i_ne-S8wvk)
  - **WEBINAR: ABLE Accounts, Trusts, Financial and Benefits Planning** (duration - 1:30:50)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4wecVvXT9A>
  - **WEBINAR: #ABLEtoSave Series: Understanding Qualified Disability Expenses** (duration - 1:00:58)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTIPMkw5Q3Y>
  - **#ABLEtoSAVE-ABLE Account Eligibility** (duration - 3:05 minutes)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQvec7DMtGQ>
  - **ABLE National Resource Center**  
<http://ablenrc.org/>
  - **NC ABLE: National ABLE Alliance Member**  
<https://savewithable.com/nc/home.html>
- Review **NC ABLE-Eligibility, Features, and Benefits (5-10 minute Presentation)** PowerPoint Presentation

## Materials

- PowerPoint Presentation: **NC ABLE-Eligibility, Features, and Benefits (5-10-minute presentation)** (Print presentation as a handout for participants)

- Easel Pad, Easel, and Markers (**optional depending on the size of the audience**)
- Laptop and LCD projector (**if one is not available at the venue**)
- **Ten Things to Know about ABLE** handout
- Copies of the Evaluation

## Advocate Script:

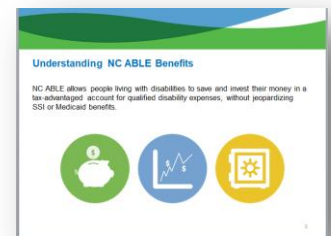
Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ with the NC ABLE Advocates Network. Welcome and thank you. We appreciate our host, **[insert the name of the host and hosting organization]**, for allowing me to talk to you about the NC ABLE Program.

Today, we will share a brief overview of the program and how it can benefit people with disabilities. We will also focus on the eligibility requirements along with the application process, investment options, general information on how ABLE compares to Special Needs Trusts, and how to contribute and withdrawal funds for qualifying expenses.

Please keep in mind that this presentation is not intended to provide legal or tax advice, and people are encouraged to seek such advice from their attorney or tax professional.

## Overview and Benefits

The Achieving a Better Life Experience Act, also known as ABLE was signed into federal law by President Obama on December 19, 2014. North Carolina Governor, Pat McCrory, signed ABLE into law here in North Carolina on August 11, 2015. The NC ABLE program formally launched on January 26, 2017.



Since 2017, NC ABLE has allowed people living with disabilities to save and invest their money in a tax-advantaged account for qualified disability expenses, without jeopardizing their SSI or Medicaid benefits. NC ABLE accounts, which are similar in some respects to 529 educational savings accounts, provide people with disabilities with an avenue for savings not available before, giving account holders access to a pathway to financial independence while also allowing them to save and invest in their future.



*This project was supported, in part by grant number 1901NCSCDD-02, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.*

## Eligibility and Certification

Two criteria must be met to open an ABLE account: 1.) The person must have a medically supported impairment or blindness **OR** qualify for SSI or SSDI benefits due to a disability or blindness AND 2.) The disability must have occurred before 26 years of age. NC ABLE account owners must self-certify at the time of opening the account, and every year after, that they are eligible. The IRS may require account owners to produce a written diagnosis from a licensed physician or SSA eligibility letter for the disability or blindness. Therefore, it is recommended that account owners maintain a record of all relevant documents.

It's important to note that potential account owners don't have to be currently receiving benefits of any kind to be eligible to open an account, they simply must meet these eligibility criteria.

## Opening an NC ABLE Account

Opening an NC ABLE account is easy. Potential account owners may apply online or download and complete a paper application at [NC.SaveWithABLE.com](http://NC.SaveWithABLE.com). For assistance with opening an account or to ask questions, please call the NC ABLE Program at (888) 627-7503, Monday-Friday, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST.



## Authorized Agents

The person who qualifies to open an NC ABLE account is considered the account owner. However, we understand there may be a need or desire for assistance. Therefore, the account owner can designate “authorized agents” on their account with varying degrees of access. The higher the level designation, the greater the access. Let's review the different agent options available:



- **Level one:** Agents can access information on the ABLE account.
- **Level two:** Agents can access information, receive duplicate statements, and make investment decisions within the account.
- **Level three:** Agents can access information, receive duplicate statements, make investment decisions and withdraw money from the account.
- **Level four:** Agents have all the same access that the account owner has, including changing the ownership of the account.

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## Contributions Sources and Limits

### Contribution Sources

For NC ABLÉ accounts, contributions can come from two primary sources. First, the account owner or their family and friends can contribute after-tax dollars to the account. The “hand’s off rule” applies for contributions made by family members and friends. This rule states that contributions from this source will not be considered income if money is deposited directly into the NC ABLÉ account. We will talk more about the different ways contributions can be made to the ABLÉ account in just a moment.



Second, funds may be transferred to an ABLÉ account from a 529 college savings account of (1) the ABLÉ account owner; or (2) certain members of the 529 account owner’s family, including siblings, parents, aunts, uncles and first cousins. It’s important to note that these rollovers count toward the annual contribution limit, and rollovers higher than the yearly limit are considered income. This is important to remember because money that counts toward income is money that could potentially jeopardize benefits. One final note: The 529 rollover contribution option is a limited time provision that will expire on December 31, 2025 if it is not renewed by the federal government.

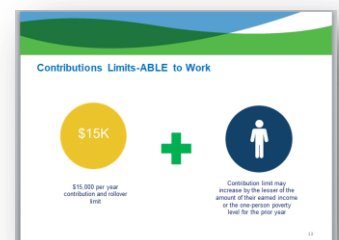
### Contribution Limits

There are three contribution limits for the account owner to keep in mind. First, the combination of contributions from friends, family, and the account holder and rollovers from 529 accounts cannot exceed \$15,000 annually. Secondly, for beneficiaries receiving SSI, up to \$100,000 will be excluded from the calculation of the resource limit for SSI benefits. Lastly, the maximum account balance is \$450,000. Once the account has reached the maximum limit, no further contributions can be made to the ABLÉ account until the balance falls below that amount.



### Contribution Limits – ABLÉ to Work

There is a way for account owners to contribute more money in their account thanks to the ABLÉ to Work provision. This rule allows ABLÉ account owners to increase their annual contribution limit by the lesser of the amount of their earned income or the one-person poverty level for the prior year. For example, if an account owner is



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employed and makes \$6,000 per year, the annual contribution limit increases by \$6,000. However, if an account owner earns more than the poverty limit, the annual contribution limit increases only by the one-person poverty level for the prior year. To be eligible, the account holder cannot participate in an employer-sponsored defined contribution retirement plan, such as a 401(k). As with 529 rollovers, this provision is scheduled to expire on December 31, 2025.

Contributions to an ABLER account made by an account owner who is 18 or older, not a full-time student, and not claimed as a dependent on someone else's tax return may qualify for the federal Saver's Credit. The maximum Saver's Credit from all sources, including contributions to an ABLER account, is \$2,000 per year, depending on the account owner's adjusted gross income. (Please consult a tax specialist for more details.) This provision expires on December 31, 2025.

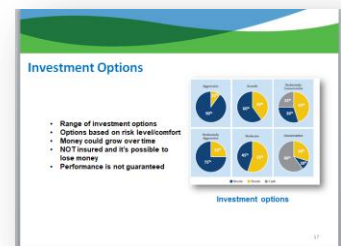
So, let's talk about the ways to contribute to the account. Contributions can be made to the account by either mailing in a check, setting up an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) from your bank accounts, as a payroll deduction, or through our partnership with Ugift.

## Investment Options

NC ABLER offers two primary ways the account holder can invest money. The first is an interest-bearing checking account insured by the FDIC up to \$250,000 through Fifth Third Bank. With this option, account owners can withdraw money by writing a check or using a debit card at more than 53,000 ATMs nationwide with no service fee.



In addition to the checking account option, NC ABLER offers a range of investment options to match both the account owner's goals and comfort with risk. Available investment options allow account funds to possibly grow over time. However, unlike the checking account, funds invested in these options are not insured, and it is possible to lose money in these investments. Account holders are encouraged to review the descriptions of the investment options, including their levels of risk, in the Plan Disclosure Statement, which is available on the NC ABLER website, before choosing any of the available investment options.



Account Owners may decide to have the checking account, as well as one or more of the investment options.

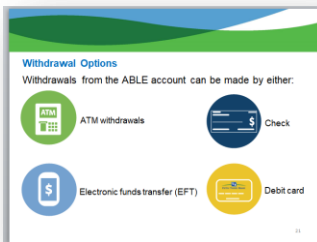
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## Qualified Expenses

An NC ABLE account allows account owners to access their money when they need it most. The ABLE Act allows beneficiaries to withdraw their money tax-free when it is used for a Qualified Disability Expense or QDE. A QDE is any expense that is related to the individual's blindness or disability and for the benefit of the account owner to improve, such as health, prevention and wellness, education, housing, transportation, employment training and support, assistive technology and personal support services, financial management and administrative services, legal fees, expenses for oversight and monitoring, and funeral and burial expenses.



## Withdrawal Options



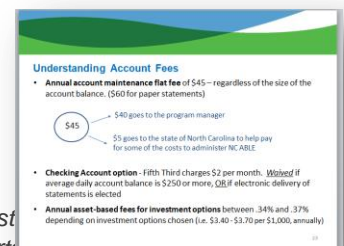
When withdrawals are used for expenses other than QDEs, the earnings portion of the withdrawal will be treated as income, so it will be taxed at the account owner's tax rate and will be subject to an additional federal tax of 10 percent.

Like any typical financial account, withdrawals from the ABLE account can be made by either electronic funds transfer, check, debit card or ATM withdrawals.

## Annual Cost

### Account Fees

There are no hidden fees when it comes to NC ABLE! Regardless of the investment option the account owner chooses or the size of the account balance, there is an annual account maintenance fee of 45 dollars. Broken down, 40 dollars of that goes to the program manager, Ascensus, and the other five dollars goes to the state to help pay for some of the costs to administer the program. If the account owner opts to receive paper statements instead of electronic statements, the fee is 60 dollars per year.

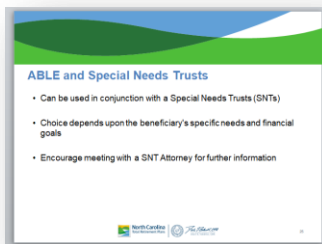


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If the person chooses to open a checking account to access their NC ABLE funds, Fifth Third Bank will charge a two-dollar monthly fee. However, this fee can be waived if the average daily account balance is 250 dollars or higher OR if the account owner elects to receive electronic statements.

Annual fees for the investment options range from .34% to .37% depending on the investment options chosen. This fee is applied to the balances held in the account. That equates to \$3.40 to \$3.70 per one thousand dollars in the account.

## ABLE vs Special Needs Trust



An NC ABLE account can be used in conjunction with or as an alternative to a Special Needs Trusts. The choice will depend on the potential account owner's specific needs and goals. We encourage potential account owners and their families to speak with a Special Needs Trust attorney for further information.

## Closing

Thank you again for allowing me to talk to you about NC ABLE. For further information about NC ABLE, please visit [NC.SaveWithABLE.com](http://NC.SaveWithABLE.com) and [ABLEncr.com](http://ABLEncr.com). For further information about ABLE accounts and programs, please visit [ABLEncr.org](http://ABLEncr.org). You may also join the discussion on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

It has been a pleasure meeting everyone. Have a great **[day, evening]**!

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