



Social Security Advocacy Services Newsletter

July/August 2023

Social Security Advocacy Services (SSAS) is dedicated to assisting Minnesotans with the Social Security disability benefits process so they can secure stable housing, live in dignity, and achieve their highest potential.



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Social Security Advocacy Services team member spotlight

We would like to introduce you to the SSAS supervisor, Jill Hillebregt.

Jill joined the SSAS team in 2015 as the system administrator and moved into the supervisor position in 2016. Since then, Jill has expanded the SSAS team from two to now seven positions with specialized focuses on serving our state's residents of the St. Peter Regional Treatment Center, our Tribal Nation members, and our deaf and hard of hearing constituents. Additionally, Jill is committed to reducing inequities for people wanting to become contracted by Social Security Advocates by redesigning services and providing a one-year timeline to apply to become a grantee.



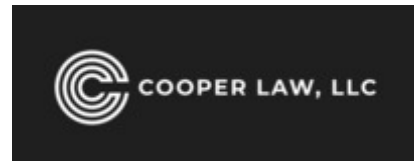
Prior to joining the team, Jill worked in various positions within DHS as an instructional designer, document manager, and on special projects since 2007. Before joining DHS, Jill was an eligibility worker for Anoka County.

When not working, Jill is a board member of two nonprofits ([ACCAP](#) and [MMA](#)) and a student at Hamline University in the Management and Public Service PhD program. Jill has three sons ages 19, 23 and 26 and is an honorary grandmother. She lives in Elk River and loves spending time outdoors golfing, kayaking, biking, snowshoeing, and hiking. As an introvert, Jill also greatly enjoys quiet moments reading books and napping.

You can contact Jill at jill.m.hillebregt@state.mn.us or by calling 651-373-0295.

Grantee spotlight

This section of our newsletter spotlights a Department of Human Services-contracted Social Security Advocacy Services grantee in hopes of fostering partnerships and open communication among all grantees.



Agency Name: Cooper Law, LLC

Contact information: 612-568-4529

Website: www.cooperlawmn.com

Service provided:

Cooper Law, LLC, established in 2010 provides services to low and middle-income clients in the areas of family law and Social Security disability.

Cooper Law provides assistance with all levels of Social Security disability claims. They offer one-on-one services for those who need to start a new disability claim and assist with filing initial appeals and request for hearings. Their target audience is people who are currently receiving state cash assistance and with the use of the SOAR model those who are at serious and imminent risk of homelessness. Cooper Law can represent these clients at no charge through the DHS SSAS contract. For those who

do not qualify under the DHS contract, they offer services as private attorney representatives.

Cooper Law also provides family law services for low and middle-income clients. They offer a sliding scale fee rate for divorce, child custody, parenting time, third party custody, and support/maintenance issues. They strive to help those who cannot afford commercial rate attorneys by providing experienced, high quality legal representation at affordable rates that are based on income and household make-up using the federal poverty guidelines.

Cooper Law welcomes case managers, social workers, advocates, and agencies to work with them in assisting clients with Social Security disability claims. They accept warm hand offs at the initial, reconsideration, and hearing levels.

Contract spotlight: Referring individuals to apply for DHS public assistance benefits

All Social Security Advocacy Services contracted grantees should be referring individuals to apply for Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) public assistance benefits such as cash, food, and health care while you help them apply for Social Security disability benefits or complete a continuing disability review and wait for a decision from SSA. See section 2.4.1.C of your contract.



To refer an individual simply let them know that they may qualify for additional income, food, and health care assistance. For more information and to apply they can go online to [MNbenefits](#) or contact their local county or Tribal Nation health and human services office. To find a county or Tribal Nation human services office use this [online directory](#)

It is very important that you are aware of all the services and deliverables within your agency's contract with the Department of Human Services. **Note:** If you do not have a copy of your agency's current contract, please contact your assigned coordinator for a copy.

SSAS invoice approval summary

June 2023

- A total of 85 invoices submitted by 15 grantees were approved. 73 were initial applications/reconsiderations, 11 were at the ALJ hearing level and 1 CDR at the ALJ hearing level.

July 2023

- A total of 90 invoices submitted by 18 grantees were approved. 71 were initial applications/reconsiderations, 15 were at the ALJ hearing level, 2 CDR's at the ALJ hearing level, and 2 CDR's were at the Appeals Council level.

New tip sheet available on how to submit expenses for reimbursement

If mileage, transportation, medical or vital record expenses were incurred while assisting a client with their SSA application/claim, CDR or ALJ hearing and client is approved for SSA benefits, the state will reimburse grantees for these expenses.

This [tip sheet](#) will guide registered users in the SSAS payment system on how to properly submit expenses for reimbursement.

If you have additional questions, please contact the SSAS system administrator Ty Morris at ty.morris@state.mn.us or call 651-431-6271.

Social Security requests help in identifying homeless cases

The Social Security Administration is noticing a decrease in the number of claims being flagged as homeless. A claimant is homeless if they do not have a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Social Security will also consider claimants homeless if they expect to lose current accommodations within 14 days, and will not have a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. For further information review Identifying and Flagging Homeless Cases, [POMS DI 11005.004](#).



Social Security asks that advocates help them properly flag these cases. When a case is flagged as homeless, that case will be given priority over non-flagged cases, and may receive some special accommodations.

If your client meets the Social Security Administration's definition of homeless, you need to report this homeless status in the remarks section of an initial application, appeal or continuing disability review form. SSA recommends that our contracted grantees use the following sentence in the remark section: "The claimant meets SSA's definition of homeless according to POMS DI 11005.004". Additionally, SSA requests that you also provide a description of your client's living situation.

If your client meets the Social Security Administration's definition of homeless, after you file an initial application, appeal or continuing disability review form, Minnesota's Disability Determination Services (DDS) requests that you report this change immediately to the assigned DDS examiner.

Social Security Advocacy Services team trainings

Technical Assistance (TA) bi-monthly sessions

On the third **THURSDAY** in odd months from 1:30 to 3 p.m., the Social Security Advocacy Services team offers



trainings and opportunities for Q&A to our contracted Social Security advocates.

September Technical Assistance (TA) session CANCELLED

Our next technical assistance training will be **Thursday, Nov 16, 2023**. Presenting will be retired Administrative Law Judge David Hatfield on the topic of Reopening and Res Judicata. Mr. Hatfield is currently a consultant with the law firm Chermol and Fishman, LLC. Watch for an upcoming email for registration information.

If you are interested in presenting at an upcoming TA session on any topic related to Social Security advocacy services, please contact Tony Reynero at antonio.reynero@state.mn.us

Social Security Administration updates



New Compassionate Allowance listings

Social Security recently announced 12 new Compassionate Allowance conditions. For further information about the new listings, read the full [press release](#). This [link](#) lists all of the Compassionate Allowance conditions.

Faxed applications no longer being accepted

Social Security recently announced that they will no longer be accepting faxed applications. For further information read the full [announcement](#).

Social Security Advocacy Services resources

Additional resources can be found at the Minnesota Department of Human Services webpage [Social Security Advocacy Services: Policies and procedures for contracted grantees](#).