

Social Security Advocacy Services Newsletter

January/February 2024

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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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: Multicultural Care Center

Contact information: 612-491-5002 multiculturalcarecenter@gmail.com

Website: www.multicaremn.com

Service provided:

Multicultural Care Center (MCC) was established in February of 2016 with a mission of providing culturally specific housing and health services to eligible members from the African refugee/immigrant community in the Twin Cities.

MCC provides culturally appropriate, person-centered housing and supportive services. They focus on single adults, single-parent households with small children, and newly arrived immigrant families experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

MCC's Social Security Advocacy Services program serves people from all counties in Minnesota who need help at the initial, reconsideration, and continuing disability review levels. In the seven-county metro area, MCC offers Housing Support, 245D waiver services, relocation services, independent living skills, home making service, integrated community supports, adult foster care, housing stabilization services, and adult rehabilitative mental health services.

Contract spotlight: Unencrypted emails

Effective Feb. 1, 2024, there is a new procedure for unencrypted email violations.

Any emails that contain protected private client data (client name, date of birth, Social Security number, etc.) that are not sent using encryption software to any DHS employee will be considered a Data Privacy Incident as defined in your contract with DHS under Clause 10 and in Attachment A. Failure to resolve a data privacy incident is a breach of your contract, and a potential violation of Federal law.



For further information, read the [New procedure for unencrypted email violations memo](#) and share the memo with all your staff that communicate with DHS.

Please contact Nou Vang, contract manager, with any questions or concerns at: nou.vang@state.mn.us or call 651-431-5756.

SSAS Supervisor is leaving

Jill Hillebregt, SSAS Supervisor, has accepted a promotional opportunity with the Appeals Division at DHS. She will be managing the fair hearing process for clients who appeal the closing or overpayments of their DHS benefits starting Feb. 16th.

Jill has been the SSAS supervisor since 2016 and has worked through many changes over the years while growing the team from 2 to 7 members. Additionally, Jill has created two new positions with a focus on our state's Tribal Nation members and deaf community. Jill is most proud of her work with SSAS grantees and helping people experiencing homelessness get on Social Security disability benefits.

The search for a new supervisor will begin immediately.

Updates from Disability Determination Services (DDS)



Requesting a consultative examination report

The preferred and most effective method for an appointed representative to request a copy of a consultative examination report is to complete the Authorization to

Release Consultative Examination Report form. This form has a barcode unique to the claimant, so when it is returned it will be added directly to the claimant's electronic file. This form is included in the packet that the claimant and appointed representative receive after the consultative exam is scheduled. As long as the appointed representative is established on the claim with a completed SSA-1696 form on file, the representative can designate themselves to receive the report and the claimant's signature would not be needed. If the claimant completes the authorization form and designates their legal representative to receive a copy, this would be processed the same by DDS.

The authorization form needs to include the name of the representative who the report should be sent to, a complete address and contact information, and be signed and dated by the representative. If this information is missing or incomplete, the request cannot be fulfilled. Copies of the exam report will typically be sent out at the time the DDS decision on the claim is completed. If a request for the report was submitted, and it has been more than 2 weeks after receiving a notice of the decision, and a copy of the exam report was not received, the representative should contact the disability examiner to follow-up. Fulfilling these requests is a manual process, so there can be times where the request is missed or there is a printing error causing the report to not be mailed out.

SSAS invoice approval summary

December 2023

A total of 100 invoices submitted by 17 grantees were approved.

Initial application/reconsiderations	79
ALJ hearing level	17
Appeals Council level	1
Continuing Disability Review (CDR)	3
CDR at ALJ hearing level	0

January 2024

A total of 125 invoices submitted by 20 grantees were approved.

Initial application/reconsiderations	95
ALJ hearing level	29
Appeals Council level	1
Continuing Disability Review (CDR)	0
CDR at ALJ hearing level	0

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.

March Technical Assistance (TA) session CANCELLED.

Our next technical assistance session will be **Thursday, May 16, 2024.**

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 publications available

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has a number of publications available for order to use at conferences, display in waiting rooms/lobbies, give to clients or to link to your website.

The publications listed on SSA's [website](#), include brochures, fact sheets, and forms. All publications are accessible in portable document format (PDF). Many publications are available in other languages, large print, in braille, and to listen in an audio format. The website allows you to filter the publications by number or title, by topics, and provides instructions on how order publications.



Social Security Administration updates



Program Operations Manual (POMS) updates

[DI 25025 TN 12](#) Medical-Vocational Guidelines. Social Security updated this section to clarify policy concerning exceptions to the requirement to cite occupations to support a finding that an individual is "not disabled" under the framework of a medical-vocational rule.

New status reports for appointed representatives

Social Security has added a new status report feature that allows representatives to access a list of their initial and reconsideration cases. You must be a registered representative with SSA and have an appointed representative rep ID. For further information, read Social Security's [Appointed Representative User Guide](#).

2024 Social Security Update publication

Each year Social Security provides new information about taxes, benefits, earnings limits, and Medicare costs. By law, many of the numbers automatically change each year to keep up with changes in prices and wage levels. For further information, read this [Update publication](#) for current information.

Revised Social Security form

Social Security has revised the form [SSA-632-BK](#), Request for Waiver of Overpayment Recovery. Read emergency message [EM-23076](#) for further information.

Minnesota Engagement on Shelter & Housing (MESH)

MESH is offering a workshop on Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024, from 1- 3 p.m. on Housing Benefits 101: Navigating Housing for People with Disabilities.

This workshop will provide an overview of Housing Benefits (HB101), a DHS sponsored website that offers up-to-date information as well as interactive tools designed to support decision making.

For further information and to register for the workshop visit the [MN Homelessness Training Hub](#).

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](#).
