

Social Security Advocacy Services Newsletter

January/February 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, Ty Morris, Social Security Advocacy Services system administrator.

Ty joined the Housing and Support Services Division and the Social Security Advocacy Services team in September of 2017. Prior to joining the team, he had a 17 year history with the Department of Human Services (DHS) as a manager for the emergency food assistance program. In his current role, Ty oversees all aspects of the SSAS payment system. This includes payment system training, providing ongoing assistance to system users, verifying documentation and processing invoices.



When Ty is not working he enjoys spending time with family and friends. Ty has been married for 28 years and has two sons ages 20 and 25. They spend a lot of time together at the family farm in North Dakota. Ty has an interest in improving sustainable farming techniques, soil conservation, and organic foods. Ty enjoys outdoor activities in the spring, summer, and fall – not so much in the winter and he is looking forward to moving somewhere warm when he retires.

You can contact Ty at Ty.Morris@state.mn.us or by calling 651-431-6271.

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: Cancer Legal Care

Contact information: 651-917-9000, ext. 702; meghan@cancerlegalcare.org

Website: www.cancerlegalcare.org

Service provided:

Cancer Legal Care's (CLC) mission is to engage the law to resolve the complex challenges facing people and communities affected by cancer. Providing services since October 2007, CLC's staff and volunteer attorneys provide free legal care to Minnesotans with cancer.

A cancer diagnosis is not only physical it also threatens financial security and family stability. Cancer's financial devastation is well-established; it's known as "financial toxicity" and is in play for the majority of our clients. To decrease the impact of financial toxicity for cancer patients, CLC provides direct legal services primarily in the areas of insurance, housing, financial, employment, legal planning, and public benefits.

CLC's Social Security Application Assistance Program assists cancer patients with all aspects of the initial applications and requests for reconsideration. They are currently working to increase capacity to assist with hearings.

Contract spotlight: Submission of data to State

The General Duties section, 2.4.1.D, states a grantee must enter and upload information into the Social Security Advocacy Services (SSAS) payment system. Section D.2 states that a grantee must upload an individual's completed SSA-1696 to the SSAS payment system within ninety (90) days of submitting an application/claim at any level or a continuing disability review or within ninety (90) days of becoming an individual's authorized representative for Social Security Administration purposes. To say this a different way, you must upload a completed SSA-1696 form to the SSAS payment system within 90 days of submitting a client's application/appeal/CDR to SSA **OR** you must upload a completed SSA-1696 form to the SSAS payment system within 90 days of signing/dating the SSA-1696 form. We also encourage you to review all of section 2.4.1.D which provides further details of the submission process.



Additionally, the SSA-1696 form must be completed as defined in section 2.4.1.B in your contract with DHS. This [recorded training](#) and [handout](#) shows you how to correctly complete the SSA-1696 form.

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

December 2022

- A total of 82 invoices submitted by 13 grantees were approved.
- 71 were initial applications/reconsiderations and 11 were at the ALJ hearing level.

January 2023

- A total of 52 invoices submitted by 12 grantees were approved.
- 39 were initial applications/reconsiderations, 11 were at the ALJ hearing level, and 2 were continuing disability reviews.

SSAS grantee monitoring to begin

DHS staff will begin monitoring the use of public funds as well as the more specific day-to-day processes of its contracted Social Security Advocacy Services grantees starting next month. The purpose of grantee monitoring is to:

- Build rapport and support effective grantee performance
- Provide accountability and oversight
- Ensure proper spending
- Visit services that may need assistance



Grantee monitoring will be accomplished through the following methods:

- Desk review
- Regular and ongoing communications with grantees
- Technical assistance
- On-site and assessment visits, if necessary

Look for an email from contract manager, Traci Vibo, along with your assigned coordinator in the coming months with more information.

SOAR success in Minnesota



Kim Wirtanen from KOOTASCA Community Action, Grand Rapids, Minnesota was recently recognized in the [SOAR Works February 2023 e-newsletter](#) for her work with filing child disability claims.

Kim has been a DHS' Social Security Advocacy Services contracted grantee since 2018 and is one of three local leads for the SOAR program in Minnesota.

If you have any questions about the SOAR program, you can email Kim at kimwi@kootasca.org.

Reminder: Adult Function Report training

On Thursday, Feb. 23, 2023 from 1:30-3 p.m. Asha Sharma and Paul McGrath from Disability Partners will be presenting on *How to Complete the Adult Function Report* including the purpose of the report, its role in helping or harming a client's disability claim and tips on how to complete it. This will be a great training for those who are just starting out or for those who would like a refresher course.

Here is the [link](#) to register for this training. This training will not be recorded.

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.



Our next technical assistance training will be **Thursday, Mar 16, 2023**. Amy Pearson and Emily Olson from the Department of Human Services State Medical Review Team (SMRT) will be presenting on *The SMRT Program*. You can register for this technical assistance session at this [link](#).

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

SSAS Payment System training

Training for the online payment system will be held on Monday, Feb. 27 from 10 to 11:00 a.m. This training will show system users how to register, enter cases, and submit invoices into the SSAS payment system. There will be time for questions and answers, so please come with questions! You will need to register for this training at this [link](#). This training will not be recorded.

Social Security Administration updates



Redesigned Military & Veterans Webpage

Social Security recently redesigned the [Information for Military & Veterans webpage](#) on SSA.gov. This new design includes improved navigation to find information more easily with a clearer graphics to explain what resources are available.

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](#).