

Social Security Advocacy Services Newsletter

November/December 2022

Social Security Advocacy Services 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.



Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

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Social Security Advocacy Services team member spotlight

We would like to introduce you to, Antonio "Tony" Reynero, a Social Security Advocacy Services Coordinator team member.

In September 2019, Tony joined the DHS team, bringing with him almost 9 years of experience serving as a Social Security disability advocate with Disability Partners. In addition, he has over 12 years of experience working as a supervisor at a community reentry site (halfway house) in St. Paul that serves individuals who have been released from prison, are reentering the community, or are connected with the criminal justice system.



Tony loves to travel and spends his leisure time watching his favorite football team, the Green Bay Packers, and baseball team, the New York Yankees. When he isn't watching sports, you can find him playing soccer, lifting weights at the gym, or attending local classic car events. When he is not active, he enjoys watching TV at home with his wife Rachel and their dog Kique (Key-kay).

You can contact Tony at antonio.reynero@state.mn.us or by calling 651-895-5451.

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: Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota (LSNM)



Contact information: 1-800-450-8585; legalaid@lsnmlaw.org

Website: www.lsnmlaw.org

Service provided:

LSNM provides assistance with Social Security/SSI Disability initial applications and connects clients with the Social Security Administration to set up an appointment to get their application processed. LSNM assists in monitoring SSA processing of claims, and, if an applicant is denied, LSNM assists with preserving appeals, as well as assists at disability hearings when medical records support a disabling condition. LSNM currently has four attorneys and one paraprofessional assisting clients with disability claims.

For over 45 years, LSNM has been providing no-cost high quality comprehensive civil legal help to low-income and elderly citizens in 22 counties in northwest Minnesota.

Contract spotlight: Accessibility

The General Duties section, found in most contracts under 2.5, states a grantee must comply with [Minnesota IT \(MN.IT\) Accessibility Standards](#). This includes any information systems, tools, content, and work products produced under the contract, including but not limited to software applications, web sites, video, learning modules, webinars, presentations, etc.



This web page provides all the information you will need to make your correspondence accessible for all individuals who may have digital barriers. There is an option on this web page to subscribe to the Minnesota IT monthly newsletter and we highly encourage you to do this.

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.

Another successful year for grantees

DHS contracted Social Security Advocacy Services (SSAS) grantees saw another successful year helping clients get approved for SSA disability benefits. I want to thank ALL grantees and your staff for your tireless advocacy and support of some of Minnesota's most vulnerable residents – homeless and disabled. While the calendar year is not quite finished, here are your numbers from 1/1/22 through 11/30/22:

Number of cases entered into the SSAS Payment System	3,056
Total cases currently pending in the SSAS Payment System awaiting a decision	2,061
Total invoices denied by DHS	21
Cases entered and closed by grantees	437
Total approvals between 1/1/22 – 11/30/22	537
Initial applications/Reconsiderations	385
ALJ hearings	145
Hearing before an ALJ on a CDR	3

Appeals Council review	3
Continuing Disability Reviews	1
Total payments issued by DHS to grantees for SSA approvals	\$1,173,985.35
Total mileage reimbursement to grantees	\$1,798.24
Total transportation reimbursement to grantees	\$0.00
Total medical/vital record reimbursement to grantees	\$9,658.30
Total number of grantees with an executed contract	49

Going forward, DHS will provide an update each newsletter on our numbers. Your SSAS coordinator will be providing you and your agency with individualized data reports, and in 2023 we will be conducting grantee audits.

I want to wish everyone a Happy Holidays and a successful new year!

Jill Hillebregt

SSAS Supervisor

End of year invoice and data reports available



All data entered in the Social Security Advocacy Services (SSAS) Payment System is viewable by two separate reports - an invoice report or a data report.

The SSAS invoice report allows users to see detailed client invoice information including who submitted invoices, warrant numbers, and date paid.

The SSAS data report is a more comprehensive report that provides all client information entered into the SSAS system as well as invoice information. It is always a best practice to review these reports on a regular basis.

This [tip sheet](#) provides instructions on how to run and review the invoice and data reports in the SSAS payment system.

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

New Social Security Advocacy Services' webpage

On Nov. 15, an announcement was sent out about our new Minnesota Department of Human Services webpage titled [Social Security Advocacy Services: Policies and procedures for contracted grantees](#).

Moving forward our newsletter will no longer have the following articles: Minnesota conferences and events, Social Security Administration important websites, resources for Social Security advocates, and resources for advocates and their clients. All these resources can now be found housed on your new webpage.



New Social Security Advocacy Services' 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*. Here is the [link](#) to register for this training.

This will be a great training for those who are just starting out or for those who would like a refresher course.

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, Jan 19, 2023**. Martha E. Meszaros, MPA Program Manager, from Citrus Health Network, Inc will be presenting on *SSI for Children*. 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



Social Security Administration updates



SSA needs the help of qualified organizations to serve as representative payees.

In an effort to ensure that beneficiaries who are unable to handle their own benefits have qualified representative payees to act in this capacity, SSA is recruiting organizations that already provide some case management services, spiritual guidance or community assistance. Organizational representative payees can include social service agencies, institutions, and state or local government agencies. For more information read [How to become an organizational payee](#).

Minnesota frontline worker pay

In an [emergency message dated 11/29/22](#), Social Security announced that the Minnesota frontline worker pay meets the criteria for disaster assistance exclusions as a resource for Supplemental Security Income.

SSA launches redesigned website at SSA.gov

In a [press release dated 12/6/22](#), the Social Security Administration announced they now have a new design and fresh homepage at [SSA.gov](#) that will help individuals find what they need more easily.

Special medical-vocational profiles

Social Security has three special medical-vocational profiles in which vocational factors of age, education, and work experience are so unfavorable that an individual who meets one of them will be deemed to be unable to adjust to other work and therefore will be found disabled.

Arduous unskilled work

Sometimes referred as the "worn-out worker rule", is when an individual has a history of 35 years or more of arduous unskilled work, and can no longer perform this past arduous work because of severe impairments(s), and have no more than a marginal (sixth grade level) education. Arduous work is physical work requiring a high level of strength or endurance. Such work may be arduous if it demands a great deal of stamina such as repetitive bending or lifting at a very fast pace.

No work experience

Is when an individual has no past relevant work, are age 55 or older, has no more than a limited (11th grade level) education, and has a severe impairment(s)

Lifetime commitment

Is when an individual has worked 30 years or more in a field of work that is unskilled or is skilled or semi-skilled but with no transferable skills, are age 60 or older, has no more than a limited (11th grade level) education, and can no longer perform this past work because of a severe impairment(s).

For further information about the special medical-vocational profiles, review [POMS DI 25010.001](#), [CFR 404.1562](#), and [SSR 82-63](#).
