



## Social Security Advocacy Services Newsletter

July/August 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.

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## Social Security Advocacy Services team member spotlight

We would like to introduce you to, Camille Hurtado, our Social Security Advocacy Services Coordinator team member.

Camille has been serving residents of the Saint Peter Regional Treatment Center since Feb. 2019. Since starting her position as a Social Security Advocacy Services Coordinator, Camille has handled over 400 requests for assistance. She assists residents with requests for Title II benefit payment reinstatement, request for waiver of overpayment recovery, applications for disability benefits and more. Camille represents residents at all levels of the Social Security adjudication process.



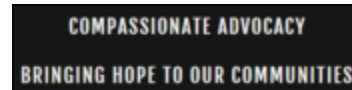
A graduate of Minnesota State University Mankato, Camille spent 23 years as a paralegal with Legal Services of Northwest MN assisting low-income Minnesotans with Social Security disability matters. In Feb. 2012 Camille became eligible for direct fee payment as a non-attorney representative. She was a sole proprietor for six years representing disability claimants prior to serving in her current position as a member of the Social Security Advocacy Services team.

You can contact Camille at [camille.hurtado@state.mn.us](mailto:camille.hurtado@state.mn.us) or by calling 651-592-2023.

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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:** Compassionate Advocacy

**Contact information:** 763-913-6189; [Jtrue@compassionateadvocacy.org](mailto:Jtrue@compassionateadvocacy.org)

**Website:** [www.Compassionateadvocacy.org](http://www.Compassionateadvocacy.org)

**Service provided:** Since 2019, Compassionate Advocacy has been a contracted provider for the Minnesota Department of Human Services. They currently serve clients throughout the state, with a focus on the counties of: Anoka, Sherburne, Hennepin, Wright, Washington, Ramsey, Grant, Olmstead, Todd, Douglas, Ottertail, Scott, St Croix, Dakota, Isanti, Mille Lacs, St Louis, Becker, Clay, Stearns, Pine, Winona, Houston, Blue Earth, and Faribault. They represent individuals at the initial and reconsideration levels and hope to someday expand to represent at the hearing level.

Compassionate Advocacy uses the whole person-centered approach with their clients. Co-owner Jeanne True is nationally SOAR certified and has 10 years of experience providing Social Security

advocacy work and 17 years of state and federal benefit processing. She is assisted by her husband and co-owner, Robert, who has 37 years of experience working at Ramsey County. Jeanne and Robert are experienced advocates for chemically dependent individuals who suffer with severe and persistent mental illness and those suffering with HIV/AIDS. They coordinate with social workers at hospitals to make sure end of life applicants are approved for benefits before they pass away and assist eligible family members with getting benefits they are entitled too. Additionally, they work with social workers at Hennepin County Medical Center to assist individuals with HIV/AIDS, who are no longer able to work, apply for Social Security disability benefits

Their motto “Bringing Hope to Our Communities” is reflective of their work with diverse populations and with multiple social service organizations. Jeanne takes pride in volunteering within her community and enjoys helping individuals who face barriers with obtaining benefits.

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## Contract spotlight: Rules of conduct and standards of responsibility for representatives

As an authorized representative you must follow the Social Security Administration's rules of conduct and standards of responsibility for representatives as described in [20 CFR 416.1540](#) and [20 CFR 404.1740](#). This is a DHS contract requirement that is found in the Social Security Advocacy Services Deliverables section under general duties. In most contracts, it can be found in 2.4.1B.



DHS recommends that at least once a year you read both of the policies to keep yourself familiar with the rules of conduct and standards of responsibility for representatives.

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.

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## New 988 mental health crisis lifeline



On July 16, the 10-digit National Suicide Prevention Lifeline changed to 988, an easy to remember 3-digit number for 24/7 crisis care. The 988 mental health crisis lifeline also links to the Veterans Crisis Line.

For further information about 988, review the [Minnesota Department of Health's full news release](#).

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## July Technical Assistance (TA) session rescheduled

The July TA session has been rescheduled to **Thursday, Aug 25, 2022** from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. Thomas A. Krause, attorney at law with Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, will be presenting on *Returning to Work Before an Award of Benefits: Don't Give Up Yet!* Click [here](#) to register for this TA session.

We apologize that we were not able to hold the July session at its normally scheduled time. There were technical issues with WebEx that afternoon. The technical issues were found and have been corrected. We are sorry if this caused you any inconvenience and we hope this does not happen again.

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## Looking for grantees to assist individuals leaving a DHS facility with their SSA disability applications

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) have an agreement in place that allows residents in some state facilities to file a disability application 120 days prior to being discharged back into the community. The goal of this agreement is to ensure prompt receipt of benefits for eligible individuals upon re-entry into the community.



If you are interested in learning more about this agreement or would like to assist with disability applications for these individuals, please contact Jill Hillebregt at [jill.m.hillebregt@state.mn](mailto:jill.m.hillebregt@state.mn), 651-373-0295 or Camille Hurtado at [camille.hurtado@state.mn.us](mailto:camille.hurtado@state.mn.us), 651-592-2023.

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## Updating your payment system password

All users of the Social Security Advocacy Services (SSAS) Payment System must update their password every 90 days. You will receive a system notification instructing you to change your password. You also have the option to update your password at any time.

You do not need to contact our office to update your password. Follow the instructions listed on our [tip sheet for updating your password](#).

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

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## Celebrating 55 years!

This year marks the 55th anniversary of the Minnesota Human Rights Act, one of the strongest civil rights laws in the country.

The Minnesota Human Rights Act was written for times like this - when racism, transphobia, ableism, antisemitism, sexual harassment, and so many other forms of discrimination are pervasive and persistent.



If you or someone you know has experienced or witnessed discrimination or bias call the Discrimination Helpline at 1-833-454-0148 or [report online](#).

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## Social Security Administration (SSA) updates



### Presumptive Disability and Presumptive Blindness (PD/PB)

SSA recently modified the language in the Program Operations Manual System (POMS) [DI 2335.010](#) to make it easier for and to encourage adjudicators to make PD or PB findings for SSI claims when appropriate. They have also added four categories to consider as having a potential for a PD finding.

### SSA Mobile Wage Reporting App

With this app, an SSI recipient, deemor, or representative payee can report gross wages. The app now includes with the following features:

- take a photo or upload an image of a pay stub,
- manually enter each pay stub for the requested month,
- submit all pay stubs for the requested month in one submission.

For further information review the [SSI Wage Reporting](#) website and this [instruction guide](#) issued by the Social Security Administration.

### Evaluating cases with Coronavirus Disease 2019

On Aug 9, SSA issued an emergency message [EM-21032 REV](#), which updated their policy for guidance for evaluating disability cases that include an allegation or diagnosis of COVID-19. While

there is no medical listing for COVID-19, an individual may meet another medical listing based upon the duration and severity of the symptoms they suffer from.

### Upcoming National Disability Forum

The next Social Security National Disability Forum will be on *Homelessness: Working with stakeholders to improve access to SSA benefits and services*. The forum will use Microsoft Teams and will be held in a two part series. Part I is on Wednesday, Sept 21, 2022 and Part II is on Wednesday, Oct 19, 2022 from noon to 2:00 p.m. For more information, visit the [National Disability Forum](#) webpage. If you have any questions, send an email to [OEA.Net.Post@ssa.gov](mailto:OEA.Net.Post@ssa.gov)

### New Compassionate Allowance conditions

The Social Security Administration recently announced 12 new Compassionate Allowance conditions. The Compassionate Allowance program quickly identifies claims where the applicant's condition or disease clearly meets Social Security's statutory standard for disability. Due to the severe nature of many of these conditions, these claims are often allowed based on medical confirmation of the diagnosis alone. For further information, review [Social Security Administration's full press release](#).

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## 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, Sept 15, 2022**. Laura Melnick and Nicole Mourgos, attorneys at law with Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, will be presenting on *Strategies for Working with Clients with Mental Illness*. Watch your 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](mailto:antonio.reynero@state.mn.us).

### Recent trainings

[Social Security Advocacy Services Technical Assistance \(TA\) session May 2022: Spotting Winning Cases: Tips for Interviewing Clients, Training Staff, and Referral Sources](#), presented by Asha Sharma and Paul McGrath from Disability Partners. This [training hand out](#) was provided for the TA session.

[Social Security Advocacy Services Training](#): Presented in January 2022 as a live WebEx training session about the roles and responsibilities of DHS-contracted grantees based on contract language. This [training handout](#) was provided for the presentation.

[Social Security Advocacy Services Payment System](#): Learn the basics of how to register, use, and submit invoices via the Social Security Advocacy Services (SSAS) Payment System.

## Tip Sheets

[Eligibility to apply for Social Security disability benefits](#) discusses how an individual must meet certain criteria to apply for Social Security disability benefits.

[Social Security Advocacy Services eligibility criteria](#) lists the required criteria that grantees must use based upon their current contract with DHS.

Social Security Advocacy Services payment system tip sheets:

- [updating your password](#),
- [invoice and data reports](#),
- [status codes](#).

If you have suggestions for training topics, or would like more information about our trainings, please contact [DHS.SSAadvocacy@state.mn.us](mailto:DHS.SSAadvocacy@state.mn.us).

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## Minnesota conferences and events



Each year organizations across Minnesota have informative conferences that you may want to attend or have a booth at. This is a great networking and educational opportunity for you and your agency. DHS cannot endorse any of these conferences, nor are you required to attend any of the conferences.

[Saint Louis County Health & Human Services Conference](#) 40th Annual Training Conference & Expo, Oct. 12-14, 2022. This year's theme is Come Together; Community, Unity and Hope.

[Minnesota Financial Worker and Case Aide Association](#) (MFWCAA) annual conference Oct. 19-21, 2022.

[Minnesota Age & Disabilities Odyssey Conference](#) hosted two free webinars in April and June 2022.

[Minnesota Social Service Association](#) (MSSA) annual conference was held in March 2022.

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## Social Security Administration important websites

[My Social Security](#) is a free and secure account that provides personalized tools for everyone, whether you receive benefits or not. You can use your account to request a replacement Social Security card, check the status of an application, estimate future benefits or manage the benefits you already receive. This is a great resource tool for your clients to receive updates regarding their disability claims and benefits.



[Social Security Online Services](#) is the main webpage for online services. Here you can find the links to apply for disability benefits, appeal a decision, plus many more online features provided by the Social Security Administration.

[Social Security Office Locator](#) is a tool where you can enter a zip code to find an individual's local SSA office and contact information.

[Compassionate Allowances](#) are a way to quickly identify diseases and other medical conditions that, by definition, meet Social Security's standards for disability benefits. If you believe that your client meets this definition, you should include a comment in the remarks section of their disability application or appeal. This will then alert Social Security of this serious condition, which will then prompt them to expedite the application or appeal you are submitting.

[SSI COLA Fact Sheet](#) commonly referred to as COLA, contains the 2022 cost-of-living adjustments and financial thresholds that you should be aware of.

[Social Security Forms](#) are needed to complete your client's disability claim. Please note, this is a comprehensive list and not all forms listed are needed for a disability claim.

[Disability Evaluations](#) contain the medical listings of impairments for adults and children, and the criteria for meeting or equaling the listings. These medical listings are commonly referred to as the Blue Book.

[Program Operations Manual System](#) commonly referred to as POMS, is the primary source of information used by Social Security employees to process claims for Social Security benefits. It is important for you to know how Social Security employees process a disability claim and the eligibility requirements that pertain to different situations. There is a lot of information in this manual and it is a good idea to keep this as a bookmark on your internet browser.

[Emergency Messages](#) are sent out from the Social Security Administration when there are changes or updates to policies and procedures. You can subscribe to have these messages directly emailed to you.



## Resources for Social Security advocates

If you are looking for additional trainings or would like to become a member of a disability organization, here are a few organizations that may interest you. DHS cannot endorse any of these organizations.

[National Association of Disability Representatives](#) (NADR)

[National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives](#) (NOSSCR)

[Minnesota State Bar Association](#) (MSBA)

[Minnesota Legal Services Coalition](#)

[SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery](#) (SOAR)

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## Resources for advocates and their clients



[Arc Minnesota](#) provides information and assistance to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families statewide.

[Disability Hub MN](#) is a statewide resource network that helps people solve problems, navigate the system and plan for their future. Disability Hub MN also has resources, tools, and trainings

for support professions and advocates.

[Minnesota Disability Law Center](#) provides assistance with legal issues related to a disability or for help with representative payee issues. You can also call the Minnesota Disability Law Center at 1-800-292-4150 or 612-334-5970.

[Minnesota's Disability Benefits 101](#) (DB101) helps people with disabilities learn how income may impact benefits so they can make informed choices, reduce fears, and ensure work is part of the plan. Minnesotans with disabilities want to work. With DB101, people can explore different ways to balance benefits and work.

[Minnesota's Housing Benefits 101](#) (HB101) is a statewide resource for individuals to find programs that can help pay for housing or get the services they may need.

[Minnesota Able Plan](#) helps disabled individuals save money for qualified disability expenses without losing their eligibility for certain assistance programs, like Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) and Medicaid.

[MNBenefits](#) is an online application for public assistance benefits such as food benefits, cash benefits and housing support.

[Public Benefits: A Bridge for People with Disabilities](#) is a 19-minute video that provides basic information about public assistance benefits in Minnesota and how they support work.

[LinkVet Support](#) is run by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, and offers support seven days a week for Minnesota veterans and their families.

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