

## Social Security Advocacy Services Newsletter

May/June 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.



In this issue:

- [Social Security Advocacy Services team member spotlight](#)
- [Grantee spotlight](#)
- [Contract spotlight: Eligibility Criteria for Social Security Advocacy Services](#)
- [SSAS invoice approval summary](#)

- [SSAS Payment System training](#)
  - [Report your agency changes immediately](#)
  - [Completing and uploading SSA-1696 forms to DHS](#)
  - [Reporting SOAR outcomes](#)
  - [Social Security Advocacy Services team trainings](#)
  - [Social Security Administration updates](#)
  - [Social Security Advocacy Services resources](#)
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## Social Security Advocacy Services team member spotlight

We would like to introduce you to Dawn Holmen, Interim Assistance Policy and System Analyst. This is a new position within our team that will focus on the Interim Assistance Reimbursement (IAR) program. This position is responsible for reporting the amount of General Assistance and Housing Support benefits DHS clients receive while waiting for their SSI application to be approved by the Social Security Administration. It also involves monitoring and resolving IAR issues, and training counties and tribal staff.



Dawn has worked at the Department of Human Services for 15 years. In 2014, she began working with grantees providing SOAR and Social Security Advocacy Services. She has seen our team grow from one person (herself) to eight people over the years. Prior to working at the Department of Human Services, Dawn provided case management services to children and adults and worked as a county financial worker.

In her free time, Dawn enjoys training her two yorkshire terriers and competing with them in agility, barn hunt, and earth dog. She loves spending time with her nieces and nephews and attending their hockey games.

You can contact Dawn at [dawn.holmen@state.mn.us](mailto:dawn.holmen@state.mn.us) or by calling 651-458-5865 with any Interim Assistance and/or substitute third party questions or issues. Dawn replaces Cindy Barrier who retires later this year.

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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:** People Development Services

**Contact information:** 612-332-9124

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

### **Service provided:**

People Development Services (PDS) is a community-based company that has been offering mental, behavioral, and social services for over 20 years. PDS envisions healthy, inclusive, and prosperous communities where everyone has their needs met. They provide services for more than 200 people throughout the Twin Cities and surrounding counties. PDS has strong partnerships with communities, religious institutions, and with local and state entities.

PDS staff are made up of 25-30 culturally specific and culturally responsive professionals from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Staff speak many languages including English, Hmong, Amharic, Oromo, Somali, Arabic, and Karen. Their team of skilled, compassionate, bilingual and bicultural, licensed counselors, and clinical social workers offer comprehensive services and care coordination services to promote whole health and wellness by addressing the physical, mental, and social well-being of those they serve.

PDS provides Social Security Advocacy Services, by using the SOAR model, at the initial, reconsideration, and continuing disability review levels. They also provide the following other services: behavioral health, including adult rehabilitative mental health services and psychotherapy, housing stabilization services, 245D waiver transitional services, employment support, legal guardianship assistance, immigration support and advocacy, social services and MNsure navigation.

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## Contract spotlight: Eligibility Criteria for Social Security Advocacy Services

In section 2.3 of your DHS contract, it states that individuals served under this contract must meet the following criteria: Individuals (between the ages of birth and 65) must meet Social Security's requirements for applying for Social Security disability benefits, live in Minnesota for the duration of the time a grantee is working with



them, **and** the individual must also be at risk for homelessness or currently experiencing homelessness.

Examples of how an individual meets our criteria of at risk for homelessness or currently homeless, can be found in your contract, or on the attached eligibility [criteria tip sheet](#).

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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## SSAS invoice approval summary

### April 2023

- A total of 133 invoices submitted by 19 grantees were approved. 103 were initial applications/reconsiderations, 28 were at the ALJ hearing level, and 2 were at the Appeals Council level.

### May 2023

- A total of 108 invoices submitted by 18 grantees were approved. 89 were initial applications/reconsiderations and 19 were at the ALJ hearing level.
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## SSAS Payment System training



The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) is offering a Social Security Advocacy Services (SSAS) Payment System training. This training will show system users how to register, enter cases, and submit invoices in the SSAS payment system. This training is intended for both new users and users with previous experience. The training will allow time for questions and answers, so please come with questions!

The training will be held on Monday, July 10, from 2 to 3 p.m. and you must register at this [link](#). This training will not be recorded.

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## Report your agency changes immediately

SSAS grantees are responsible for reporting any address or bank account changes to Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) immediately. Delays in reporting information to MMB will result in DHS payment delays for your Social Security approvals. You must also report all address and employee changes immediately to your assigned coordinator so that we can update our online directory and the SSAS payment system.

To report changes, you must logon to the [Minnesota supplier portal](#).

If you have not contacted MMB to set up your agency to receive payments by DHS, you must go to MMB's [webpage](#) to start this process.

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## Completing and uploading SSA-1696 forms to DHS

As an advocate you and your client will complete an SSA-1696 appointment of representative form and submit it to your client's local Social Security field office. You must submit this form to the SSA first and then upload the form into the SSAS payment system along with client information.



As a DHS contracted grantee, it is very important that you and your client complete the form correctly. Incorrect SSA-1696 forms could delay DHS' payment for your Social Security approvals.

Please watch this [13-minute video](#) by Jennifer Youngstrom on how to correctly complete an SSA-1696 form per your DHS contract. Here is the [handout](#) that goes along with the video. If you have any questions, contact your assigned coordinator.

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## Reporting SOAR outcomes

As of Jan. 1, 2022, the Minnesota Department of Human Services is no longer reporting Minnesota SOAR cases on your behalf to the SOAR works program.

If you are using the SOAR model, you must report the outcome for adult and child cases for decisions made between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023 to SOAR works through their [Online Application Tracking](#) (OAT) system. The deadline to report these outcomes is Friday, Aug. 4, 2023.

If you have any questions about this reporting responsibility, please contact Minnesota's state team lead, Dan Coladonato at [dcoladonato@pranic.com](mailto:dcoladonato@pranic.com) or call 518-439-7415 x5241 or to local leads, Joan

Madsen-Kirchner at [joank@lakesandpines.org](mailto:joank@lakesandpines.org), Kim Wirtanen at [kimwi@kootasca.org](mailto:kimwi@kootasca.org) or KJ Johnson at [kj.johnson@state.mn.us](mailto:kj.johnson@state.mn.us).

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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, July 20, 2023**. Ali Kofiro, Founder and Kelly Blad, Managing Partner, with Disability Benefit Solutions, will present on *Noncitizen Eligibility Requirements*. This presentation will provide an overview of the noncitizen eligibility requirements under Title XVI of the Social Security Act and Title IV of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), and how these two laws interact. 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](mailto:antonio.reynero@state.mn.us)

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## Social Security Administration updates



### Notice for representative changes

Effective 5/16/23, the Social Security Administration made changes in their policy when a SSA-1696 appointment of representation form has been submitted and there is no pending disability claim or when the appointment form is invalid. For further information, read the full [POMS summary of changes](#).

### New audio series

Social Security has launched a new audio series called SSA Talks. In their inaugural episode, SSA explains their priority hiring initiative and strategies for success. You can listen to the 17-minute audio on their [SSA talks webpage](#). Included on this webpage is an option to download the audio transcript and a fact sheet. There is also the option to subscribe to page updates. We encourage you to sign up for this subscription to directly receive these updates.

## **Social Security Advocates**

On this newly designed Social Security [Advocates](#) webpage, you will find important updated information from the Social Security Administration. Recent articles include: SSA celebrates PRIDE month, best practices when filing exceptions to the Appeals Council, and Social Security launches new audio series. We encourage you to sign up for this subscription to directly receive these updates.

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## **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](#).

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