

## Social Security Advocacy Services Newsletter

July/August 2025

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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*Keep your face to the sun, and you will never see the shadows. ~ Helen Keller*

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### Grantee Spotlight

This section of our newsletter spotlights a Department of Human Services-contracted Social Security Advocacy Services grantee to promote fostering of partnerships and open communication among all grantees.



**Agency name:** KOOTASCA Community Action

**Contact information:** 218-999-5842

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

#### Service provided:

KOOTASCA Community Action empowers individuals, families, and communities to overcome multiple causes and challenges of poverty. Through comprehensive crisis support, anti-poverty services, and partner referrals, KOOTASCA helps people help themselves make meaningful changes and move toward self-sufficiency. Their mission is "Building Community to End Poverty".

They offer a variety of programs including Head Start, energy assistance, weatherization, first-time homebuyer support, crisis housing, MNSure navigation, in-house food pantry, and Social Security Advocacy Services.

Their Social Security Advocacy Services program uses the SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery) model. In 2019, they launched their SOAR program with one full-

time SOAR navigator who began building strong partnerships with hospitals, counseling agencies, schools, and social service providers to promote the program and create referral pathways. Today, SOAR is widely recognized across their region receiving referrals from Itasca, Koochiching, Aitkin, Carlton, and Cook counties. They assist children and adults in completing applications and connect them to additional community resources. By addressing multiple needs and collaborating with partners, they help clients access the supports they need to achieve stability and long-term success.

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

Section 2.3 of your DHS contract 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 work with them, and the individual must also be at risk for homelessness or currently experiencing homelessness.



Examples of how an individual may meet the criteria for being at risk of homelessness or currently experiencing homelessness can be found in your contract, or in this [eligibility criteria tip sheet](#).

We encourage you to periodically review your responsibilities and deliverables outlined in your agency's SSAS grant contract with DHS. If you need a copy of this contract, or have any questions, please reach out to your assigned coordinator for assistance.

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### **SSAS invoice approval summary**

#### **June 2025**

A total of 117 invoices submitted by 16 grantees were approved.

Initial application/reconsiderations	93
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ALJ hearing level	23
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Appeals Council level	0
Continuing Disability Review (CDR)	0
CDR at ALJ hearing level	1

## July 2025

A total of 111 invoices submitted by 21 grantees were approved.

Initial application/reconsiderations	88
ALJ hearing level	22
Appeals Council level	1
Continuing Disability Review (CDR)	0
CDR at ALJ hearing level	0

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## New Compassionate Allowance conditions

Social Security recently announced that 13 new conditions have been added to the Compassionate Allowance List (CAL). The CAL helps quickly identify 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 the list of these new conditions, read this [press release](#) and for the list of all CAL conditions visit Social Security's [Compassionate Allowance webpage](#).

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## Presumptive SSI disability payments

Sometimes the Social Security Administration may make presumptive SSI disability payments for up to six months while a claimant is waiting for a final decision from Disability Determination Services (DDS). Presumptive payments are [expedited SSI payments](#) for claimants with certain medical conditions, including blindness. Not all claimants receiving presumptive SSI payments will be approved for disability by DDS. For further information, read [POMS DI 23535.001](#).

Please do not submit an invoice to DHS while a claimant is receiving presumptive SSI payments. DHS will not approve an invoice until there is a finding of disability by DDS. If you have any questions about this, contact your assigned coordinator.

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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, September 18, 2025**. Elizabeth Johannis, from Independent Management Services of Minnesota will be presenting *On the Record Requests: Best Practices for Success*. 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



### Update to in-person services

Social Security recently issued an updated emergency message that provides broader walk-in exceptions for services and post entitlement scheduling. For further information, read [EM 24059 REV 2](#).

For the full list of other recently issued emergency messages, visit Social Security's [emergency message webpage](#).

### POMS recent changes

There have been many recent policy changes. For further information, visit [POMS recent change webpage](#).

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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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