



Social Security Advocacy Services Newsletter

January/February 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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Welcome to Social Security Advocacy Services

You are receiving this newsletter because you or the agency you work for has a contract with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide Social Security Advocacy Services. Congratulations, your work is very important and is much needed for the residents of Minnesota!



This newsletter will provide you with information on training opportunities, resources that may benefit your or your clients, updates from your DHS Social Security Advocacy team, and other services.

Every grantee is assigned a DHS Social Security Advocacy coordinator. By now you should have received an email from your assigned coordinator. If you have not received an email or have forgotten who your coordinator is, please send an email to DHS.SSAadvocacy@state.mn.us. Your DHS Social Security Advocacy Services team members are:

Coordinators

Vang Her (vang.her@state.mn.us)

Dawn Holmen (dawn.holmen@state.mn.us)

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Grantee Spotlight

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

In this issue, instead of spotlighting just one grantee, we would like to mention all our new grantees who started performing Social Security Advocacy work as of January 2022.



[Accord](#)

[Believe Again Home Care](#)

[Cradle of Love](#)

[Disability Benefit Solutions](#)

[Health Without Gaps Foundation](#)

[Independent Management Services of Minnesota, Inc.](#)

[Live Well Minnesota](#)

Otter Tail Health Care Services, LLC

[Presentation Partners in Housing](#)

[Rural MN Concentrated Employment Program](#)

[Somali Community Resettlement Services](#)

[The Link](#)

For a complete list of our current grantees, visit the [Social Security Advocacy Directory](#).

NOTICE: Our online directory is currently being updated as new contracts are signed. This will be an ongoing project with an anticipated end date of September 2022. We apologize in advance if your agency is not listed on our directory or if your agency has contact information that has not yet been updated.

Social Security Advocacy contract highlights



Our new contract is a little different than previous contracts as we want our advocates to be able to provide their services, free of charge, to more individuals in the state of Minnesota.

Besides Social Security's requirements for applying for Social Security disability benefits, an 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](#).

If you have not already done so, we ask that you watch our [Social Security Advocacy Services' Training video](#) which explains the expectations and deliverables of your contract.

New Social Security Advocacy Services Payment System

In order to be paid by DHS when a client is approved for Social Security benefits, grantees must submit an electronic invoices via the new Social Security Advocacy Services (SSAS) Payment System. The new system allows for grantees to enter basic client information, upload required documents, and submit electronic invoices for payment



Earlier this year, the Social Security Advocacy team provided training sessions on how to register, enter cases, and submit invoices using the new SSAS payment system. [Click here](#) to watch the recorded training.

Additional SSAS system training sessions will be held live in the future.

All users of the SSAS Payment System must have their managers complete an [SSAS access request form](#).

Looking for presenters for upcoming TA sessions



Every other month, DHS' Social Security Advocacy team holds technical assistance (TA) trainings for all grantees to learn from our local Social Security Administration and Disability Determination Services, and about one another.

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.

IMPORTANT - Sending secure emails

If you send an email to your DHS Social Security Advocacy coordinator or to our general email address (DHS.SSAadvocacy@state.mn.us) and it contains protected information about your client (including "private" or "confidential" data and/or "protected health information") you **MUST** send secured emails. This is a state of Minnesota policy and detailed in your contract.

If you do not know how to send a secure email, please send a regular email requesting a secure email to your assigned DHS Social Security Advocacy coordinator or to our general email address. We will send you a secure email in which you can reply back securely with your client's protected information (name, date of birth, Social Security number, etc.) and questions.



Social Security workers return to office update



Social Security Administration Acting Commissioner Kilolo Kijakazi recently announced that the agency had reached agreement with labor unions on a plan to bring staff back into offices.

"This will be a significant step toward improving access to our services as we implement this plan," said Kijakazi.

To read the full press release, please visit [Social Security Press Office](#).

In a separate article dated Jan. 20, 2022 from the Government Executive website, it mentions bringing Social Security workers back to the agency worksites with a target date of March 30, 2022. This target date could be postponed if there is another spike in COVID-19 cases. To read the full article, visit the [Government Executive website](#).

Social Security Office of Hearings update

In late 2021, the Office of Hearings started scheduling in-person hearings on a limited basis for priority cases.

In-person service in the hearing offices will be very limited until further notice. The Social Security hearing office continues to strongly encourage individuals to consider participating in a telephone hearing or an online video hearing as a secure and reliable hearing option.

For more information and current updates visit the [Social Security Online Hearings and Appeals](#) website.

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 does not endorse any of these conferences, nor are you required to attend any of the conferences.

[Minnesota Social Service Association \(MSSA\)](#): 129th Annual Training Conference & Expo, March 16-18, 2022.

[Minnesota Financial Worker and Case Aide Association \(MFWCAA\)](#): Annual Conference Oct. 19-21, 2022.

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

[Minnesota Age & Disabilities Odyssey Conference](#): Due to the continuous high levels of COVID-19, the 2022 Odyssey conference will host two free webinars this year.



Social Security Advocacy Team trainings



Social Security Advocacy Technical Assistance (TA) bi-monthly sessions

On the third **THURSDAY** in odd months from 1:30 to 3 p.m., the Social Security Advocacy team offers trainings and opportunities for Q&A to our contracted Social Security Advocates. Our next technical assistance training will be **Thursday, March 17,**

2022. Brian Rudolph from the Social Security Administration and Sara Dicks from the Disability Determination Services will be presenting on the *Social Security disability process*.

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

Recent trainings:

[Social Security Advocacy Technical Assistance \(TA\) session November 2021](#): *Trauma Awareness*, presented by Jon Katherine Martins from Emma Norton. Understand the event(s), experience, and

effects of trauma and the six key principles of a trauma informed approach. This [trauma awareness handout](#) 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 during this training.

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

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

[Compassionate Allowances Conditions](#) 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 remark 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 for 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](#) will be 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 does not endorse any of these organizations.

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

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

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

[Minnesota Legal Services Coalition](#)

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA)

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.
