

## Social Security Advocacy Services Newsletter

November/December 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.

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**Happy Holidays and Happy New 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:** Anoka County

**Contact information:** 763-422-7200

**Website:** [www.anokacountymn.gov](http://www.anokacountymn.gov)

**Service provided:**

Anoka County currently has two Social Security Advocates, Hannah Fie and Dana Anderson. A key aspect of their positions is to assist clients in overcoming barriers related to obtaining/retaining Social Security administered programs. They provide non-attorney representation for initial applications, reconsiderations, and continuing disability reviews. They also provide hands on assistance with all aspects of the claim process, including thoroughly completing applications, scheduling, and completing phone appointments, completing, and submitting SSA/DDS forms, communicating with SSA claim representatives, communicating and coordinating with DDS examiners, and providing transportation to consultative exams and field offices when necessary.

Hannah and Dana also provide fee-free information, direction, and hands on assistance with various SSA related matters including filing of hearing requests and

warm hand offs, overpayment appeals and waiver requests, expedited reinstatements, benefit suspensions, representative payee navigation, work incentives, Medicare, Social Security number applications, auxiliary benefits, and more.

It is the mission of Anoka County Human Services to work with people to improve lives. This mission is carried out by several departments and subdivision, which provide a wide array of programs and services to the public in areas of economic assistance, community social services and behavioral health, public health & environmental services, job training, and community corrections.

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## Contract spotlight: When a client passes away

We added language to contracts this time around addressing when a client passes away. Contract section 2.4.1.E lays out what you as a grantee must do when your client passes away. DHS asks that you contact your assigned coordinator to let them know and to have a



conversation about the amount of work that you completed for this client and whether you will continue to work on your client's case to get SSA benefits approved. DHS will consult with the Social Security Administration to determine if you can be paid for your advocacy work.

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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## Request for updated certificate of insurance (COI)

Starting in early 2024, DHS will be reviewing contract files for expired and soon to expire certificate of insurances (COI). DHS will be requesting grantees to send in updated COI's. As a general reminder, the certificate should include the following: worker's compensation, general commercial liability, commercial auto liability, professional liability, network security, and DHS must be listed as a certificate holder. Feel free to forward your updated certificates ahead of the request to contract manager, Nou Vang.

If you have any questions contact the SSAS contract manager, Nou Vang, at:  
[Nou.Vang@state.mn.us](mailto:Nou.Vang@state.mn.us) or call 651-431-5756.

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## SSAS invoice approval summary

### October 2023

A total of 84 invoices submitted by 16 grantees were approved.

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Initial application/reconsiderations | 64 |
| ALJ hearing level                    | 17 |
| Appeals Council level                | 0  |
| Continuing Disability Review (CDR)   | 3  |
| CDR at ALJ hearing level             | 0  |

### November 2023

A total of 94 invoices submitted by 14 grantees were approved.

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Initial application/reconsiderations | 75 |
| ALJ hearing level                    | 18 |
| Appeals Council level                | 1  |
| Continuing Disability Review (CDR)   | 0  |
| CDR at ALJ hearing level             | 0  |

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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 Disability Determination Services (DDS) to make a final decision. Presumptive payments are [expedited SSI payments](#) for claimants who have certain medical conditions, including blindness. Not all claimants who receive presumptive SSI payments will be approved for disability by DDS. For further information, read [POMS DI 23535.001](#).

Grantees should not submit an invoice to DHS because a claimant is receiving presumptive SSI payments. Grantees must continue to work with claimants until there is approval of disability by DDS and the claimant has been receiving presumptive SSI disability payments. Once there is an approval of disability then an invoice can be submitted to DHS.

If you have any questions, contact your assigned coordinator.

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## SSAS grantee monitoring to begin

DHS staff will begin monitoring the use of public funds as well as the more specific day-to-day processes of its contracted Social Security Advocacy Services grantees starting in 2024. The purpose of grantee monitoring is to:



- Build rapport and support effective grantee performance
- Provide accountability and oversight
- Ensure proper spending
- Visit services that may need assistance

Grantee monitoring will be accomplished through the following methods:

- Desk review
- Regular and ongoing communications with grantees
- Technical assistance
- On-site and assessment visits, if necessary

Look for an email from contract manager, Nou Vang, along with your assigned coordinator in the coming months with more information.

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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, Jan. 18, 2024**. Presenting will be retired Administrative Law Judge David Hatfield presenting on *Reopening and Res Judicata*. Mr. Hatfield is currently a consultant with the law firm Chermol and Fishman, LLC. Here is the [link](#) to register for the January TA session.

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



### Updated public data files

Social Security has updated data reports for hearings and reviews of hearings for the fiscal year (FY) 2024. The reports are listed monthly, quarterly, and yearly. To view these reports, visit [Social Security Hearings and Appeals Public Data Files](#) web page.

### Past benefit statements available online

Recipients of Social Security benefits are now able to download a copy of their benefit statement, also known as the SSA-1099 or the SSA-1042S, for the past six years using their personal *my* Social Security account. For further information, read the [dear colleague letter](#).

### Program Operations Manual (POMS) updates

[DI 27515 TN 10](#) Collateral Estoppel. Social Security has reorganized existing content for clarity and usability.

### **Electronic signatures on SSA forms**

Social Security has extended the use of electronic signatures on SSA-1696 forms and certain other forms until June 13, 2024. Read emergency message [EM-20022 REV 3](#) for further information.

### **Semiannual report to congress**

SSA's [Office of the Inspector General](#) has released their [Semiannual Report to Congress](#) for reporting period of April 1, 2023 through Sept. 30, 2023.

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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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