

Social Security Advocacy Services Newsletter

September/October 2024

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.



"There is something so special in the early leaves drifting from the trees - as if we are all to be allowed a chance to peel, to refresh, to start again." ~Ruth Ahmed

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New Social Security Advocacy Services supervisor

We would like to introduce our new supervisor, Caryn Ye, who started this position on October 9.

Although she is new to this role, Caryn is not new to DHS; she began her career here twenty years ago as a legal analyst and later served as the department's data practices attorney. After leaving DHS, she primarily focused on helping people obtain Social Security disability benefits and representing immigrant clients in various legal matters. Caryn also co-founded a disability law firm who is currently a grantee. She brings a wealth of substantive knowledge and leadership experience. Caryn received a bachelor's degree in economics from Carleton College and a law degree from Hamline University.



Caryn is excited to return to DHS in a new capacity, bringing a fresh perspective and valuable insights. She looks forward to working with the SSAS team to support our grantees in their efforts to serve the homeless and disabled communities.

In the next few months Caryn will be busy learning her new job duties, we ask that you continue to reach out to your assigned coordinator with any questions or concerns you may have with your Social Security Advocacy Services work. If you encounter any issues that need a supervisor's attention, you may reach Caryn by email at caryn.ye@state.mn.us.

Contract spotlight: Referring individuals to apply for public assistance benefits

All Social Security Advocacy Services contracted grantees should be referring individuals to apply for Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) public assistance benefits such as cash, food, and health care while you help them apply for Social Security disability benefits or complete a continuing disability review and wait for a decision from SSA. See section 2.4.1C of your contract.



To refer an individual let them know that they may qualify for additional income, food, and health care assistance. For more information and to apply they can go online to [MNbenefits](#) or contact their local county or Tribal Nation health and human services office. To find a county or Tribal Nation human services office use this [online directory](#).

New Social Security appointed representative rule

As of Sept. 30, 2024, all appointed representatives assisting SSI/SSDI claimants using the [SSA-1696](#) form must now register as a representative.

To register you must use the [SSA-1699](#) form and fax it to Social Security's Office of Central Operations. You will only need to register once using the SSA-1699 form unless your information changes. Once you are registered, you will receive a

representative identification number. Moving forward, this number must be entered on all SSA-1696 forms you and your client complete.

Additionally, once you are registered you can then enroll in the [Appointed Representative Services \(ARS\) system](#). The ARS is an application that allows appointed representatives to view electronic folder documents in real time, download the contents, and upload documents directly into a claimant's folder.

If you have any questions, please contact your assigned coordinator, Vang Her, Tony Reynero, or Jennifer Youngstrom.

SSAS invoice approval summary

August 2024

A total of 108 invoices submitted by 15 grantees were approved.

Initial application/reconsiderations	78
ALJ hearing level	29
Appeals Council level	1
Continuing Disability Review (CDR)	0
CDR at ALJ hearing level	0

September 2024

A total of 83 invoices submitted by 15 grantees were approved.

Initial application/reconsiderations	63
ALJ hearing level	20

Appeals Council level	0
Continuing Disability Review (CDR)	0
CDR at ALJ hearing level	0

Continuing disability reviews resume

Social Security has announced that effective Oct. 18, 2024, they will resume processing continuing disability reviews (CDR).

CDR processing will be done in two stages. The first stage will be to resume processing CDR cases that were pending at the time of the CDR pause. The second stage will be to resume receipt, assignments, and processing of all CDR workloads.



For further information and the guidelines for resuming CDRs, read emergency message [EM-24021 REV 2](#).

2025 cost-of-living adjustments

Social Security recently announced benefits will increase in 2025 by 2.5 percent. Some increases you should be aware of are:

- Substantial gainful activity (SGA) amount will increase to \$1,620/month for non-blind persons.
- SSI federal payment standard will increase to \$967/month for an individual and \$1,450/month for a couple.
- Review the [2025 COLA fact sheet](#) for the full list of increases.

For further information read this [Social Security press release](#).

This year, for the first time, Social Security beneficiaries will receive a newly designed and improved cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, notice. Notices will start to be issued in December 2024. This [short video](#) from Social Security provides further information and shows what the new one page notice will look like.

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, Nov. 21, 2024**. Matt Davison from the Social Security Administration will be presenting on *Third party applications for initial, reconsideration, and iClaims*. 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.

Social Security Administration updates



Updated Supplemental Security Income (SSI) policy

Effective Sept. 30, 2024, Social Security will no longer include food in the in-kind support and maintenance calculations. Additionally, Social Security has expanded the rental subsidy exception and its definition of a public assistance household. Read this [press release](#) for further information.

New email and text message communications

Effective Sept. 30, 2024, Social Security has updated instructions for collecting customer electronic communication preferences (text, email, or both). Read [EM-24051](#) for further information.

Program Operations Manual (POMS) updates

[GN 03913 TN15](#), Individual registration for appointed representative services.

[DI 22515 TN13](#) and [DI 22515 TN14](#), Vocational evidence case development procedures. Provides information on what constitutes sufficient vocational information and provides guidance on when additional vocational development is required.

[GN 03970 TN21](#), Suspension or disqualification of representatives. Several POMS sections have been updated including the rules of conduct and standards of responsibility for representatives.

For a complete list of all POMS updates, visit Social Security's [POMS recent changes](#) webpage.

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](#).
