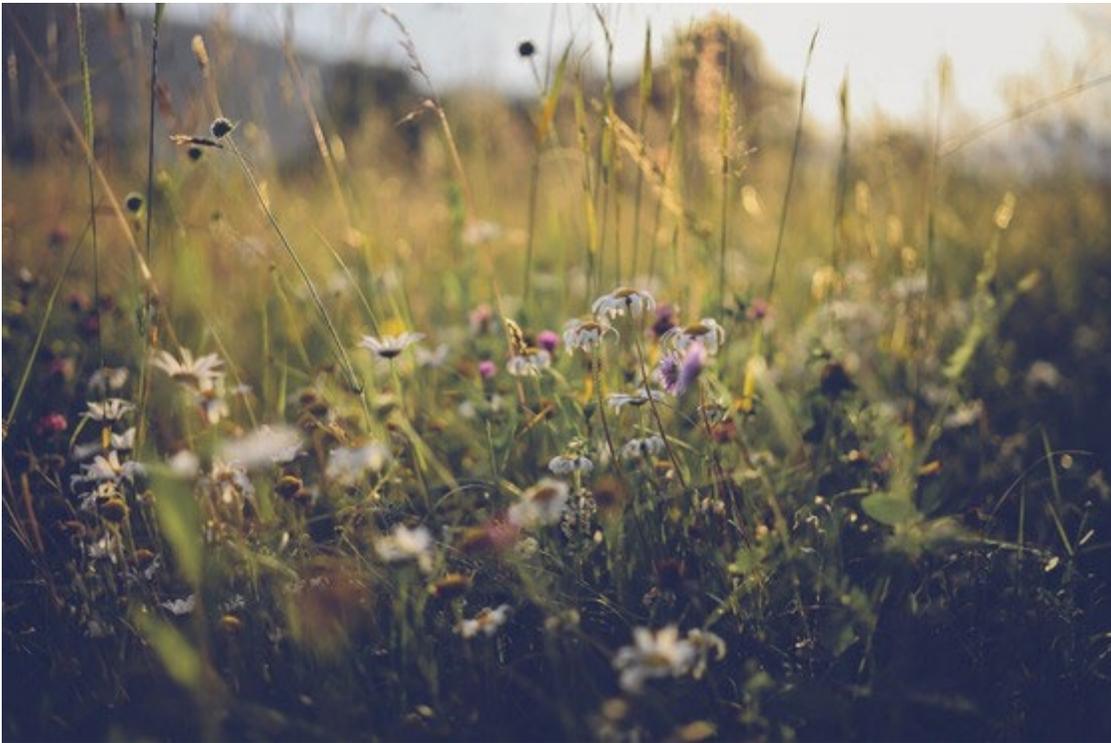


**Social Security Advocacy Services Newsletter**

March/April 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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*No matter how chaotic it is, wildflowers will still spring up in the middle of nowhere. ~Sheryl Crow*

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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:** Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program

**Contact information:** 218-850-1453

**Website:** [www.rmcep.com](http://www.rmcep.com)

#### Service provided:

Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (RMCEP) is a private, non-profit corporation that provides quality workforce development services in a nineteen-county area in North Central and West Central Minnesota.

RMCEP has been committed to improving the lives of people in Minnesota since it was incorporated in 1968 to operate employment and training programs, which include Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) services. RMCEP offers a wide variety of services to support workforce development in their service area. In addition to assisting the public with finding jobs, RMCEP has specific services for employers, adults, low-income adults and families, youth, senior citizens, dislocated workers, individuals with disabilities, and MFIP & SNAP recipients. RMCEP's vision is to be viewed by customers and prospective customers as the leader in employment development services in the state. Currently, they serve over 6,000 customers annually.

RMCEP has two Social Security Disability advocates who provide advice and non-attorney representation to assist individuals with initial disability applications, reconsiderations, and continuing disability reviews. RMCEP is also a provider affiliate of the American Dream Employment Network (ADEN) providing Ticket to Work services to SSI and SSDI beneficiaries. The combination of these services allows RMCEP to advocate for individuals with disabilities and to educate Social Security disability recipients about the work incentives available.

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### **Contract spotlight: sending client data securely**

It is critical that emails containing client data (client name, date of birth, social security numbers, etc.) are sent to DHS staff encrypted.



The requirement for sending client data securely can be found in your contract under Clause 10 - *Information Privacy and Security* and the subsequent Attachment A – *Data Sharing Agreement and Business Associate Agreement Terms and Conditions*. Specifically, Section 2.2, Subsection C, paragraph 4 of this agreement states, “Grantee must use encryption to store, transport or transmit Protected Information and must not use unencrypted email to transmit Protected Information”.

If you do not have email encryption software and you need to send client data securely to DHS, call or send a regular email to your SSAS coordinator requesting an encrypted email. Your SSAS coordinator will then send you an encrypted email in which you can respond back with protected private client data. See our [tip sheet](#) on how to access and reply to DHS encrypted emails.

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### **Social Security identity proofing requirements**

Effective April 14, 2025, the Social Security Administration (SSA) implemented stronger [identity proofing requirements](#). People who are unable to use a personal [my Social Security account](#) for certain services, will need to schedule an in-person appointment at their local Social Security office. This new requirement does not apply to people applying for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Medicare, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

To help people understand this new requirement, SSA created a webpage, [What to Know about Proving Your Identity](#), that provides answers to many common questions about this new requirement.

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**SSAS invoice approval summary**

**February 2025**

A total of 90 invoices submitted by 15 grantees were approved.

Initial application/reconsiderations	75
ALJ hearing level	15
Appeals Council level	0
Continuing Disability Review (CDR)	0
CDR at ALJ hearing level	0

**March 2025**

A total of 85 invoices submitted by 15 grantees were approved.

Initial application/reconsiderations	67
ALJ hearing level	16
Appeals Council level	0
Continuing Disability Review (CDR)	1
CDR at ALJ hearing level	1

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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, May 15, 2025**. Asha Sharma and Paul McGrath from Disability Partners will be presenting on *Navigating Appeals Beyond Reconsideration*. 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



### Reinstate overpayment recovery rate

Effective March 27, 2025, Social Security will increase the default overpayment withholding rate for Social Security beneficiaries to 100 percent of a person's monthly benefit. This new rate applies to new overpayments related to Social Security benefits. The withholding rate for SSI overpayments remains at 10 percent. For further information, read this [press release](#).

### Same-sex marriage claims

Social Security has updated its policy for same-sex marriage claims. See POMS [GN 00210 TN65](#) and [GN 00210TN66](#) for further information.

### Special continuing disability review issues

Social Security has created a new POMS section for an individual's whereabouts unknown during continuing disability reviews, separating the content for failure to cooperate and whereabouts unknown into two separate sections. See [DI 28075 TN25](#) for further information.

### **Increase in transparency and accountability**

SSA announced several new initiatives and resources to promote greater transparency and accountability. Further information can be found in this recent [SSA blog article](#).

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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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