



DISABILITY BENEFITS TRAINING & CONSULTING, LLC

A.S.S.I.S.T. Assertive SSI Service Team

October 23, 2011

Margaret Van Vliet, Director
Oregon Housing & Community Services
725 Summer St., NE, Suite B
Salem, OR 97301-1266

Re: Advocacy letter to Regional Commissioner of the Social Security Administration

Dear Director:

I have copied you, Duke Shepard, the Governor's Human Services Policy Advisor and James Toews, Director of Oregon Seniors and People with Disabilities and many others on a Social Security disability policy related letter that I wrote to Regional Commissioner Stanley Friendship on a serious matter that needs to be addressed on a local and national level.

Briefly, the Social Security Administration has not been following their own rules on expediting cases for the disabled homeless for a very long time. Some pressure has been brought to bear recently through national advocacy for the disabled homeless and from legal representatives throughout the states. I have been doing client representation work for over ten years. As long as I have been in this business, there has been an unspoken policy to not prioritize these cases in Oregon and there has never been any explanation that I am aware of as to why.

It is my hope that the attached letter not come across accusatory but rather seen as a constructive request that will help many of the disabled Oregonians on the streets that have disability claims in progress. I want to add my voice to others in the United States that would like to see this corrected as well. Right now, the fact is, many of the disabled homeless disability claims languish for literally years and many of them die before their cases are adjudicated. Once a claimant is found disabled by the Social Security Administration that person's options for housing and medical care increase dramatically and all the pieces for the homelessness service providers, that are working so hard with these citizens, begin to fall into place and true recovery begins. Simply put, they have an income for rent and Medicaid for medical and mental health services.

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Page 2

It is my hope that you will read the attached letter and request clarification too on what SSA's official policy is for expediting claims for the disabled who are experiencing homelessness.

Thank you in advance for any help you or your office may be able to provide us with this issue. If you have any questions please give me a call.

Sincerely,

Mellani Calvin, Owner/Director
Non-Attorney Disability Advocate