

“In Their Own Words”

Reflections from SSI Ohio Specialists

- My client had been previously denied and was in process of preparing for a hearing. With the information that was provided to me through the SSI Ohio Project process I was able to get my client granted benefits.
- Steve was on life support and not expected to live. With the help of our local hospital I was able to have his case expedited at the ALJ (Adjudicative Law Judge) hearing level. He was awarded benefits in less than 30 days from when I became involved. He will begin receiving benefits next month.
- This quarter, I assisted a young lady (20-years-old), who has experienced mental health issues for most of her life to apply for disability benefits. She is chronically homeless. Her mental health issues will not allow her to remain in a stable situation. After applying for SSI her initial application was approved. We filed the application on June 1. She was awarded SSI on September 29. This will allow her to become more stable by moving into independent housing.
- I have only been doing applications for about 5 weeks, so I don't have an actual completed success story yet. What I do have is a gentleman who's application has been submitted and we are waiting on the outcome. He is - truly - living under a bridge. By working with our shelter, the caseworker there and I have gotten him ready for the 'fast track' re-housing program. His acceptance into that program depends on his having an income. Since he is an ex-offender, he is not eligible to stay at the shelter. I have also been in contact with his probation officer and the local sheriff's department to assure them that we are indeed working on getting an income for him, as that is part of his requirement for probation. A favorable decision from Columbus will allow us to place this gentleman in housing and get him in off the streets before the weather gets any worse.

- Being an SSI Ohio Specialist is a very rewarding job because I get to help others in desperate need. I look forward to receiving word of awarded cases.
- Mr. Howard was recently released from jail and had a felony record, he was homeless. He was placed in housing at which time a very serious heart condition became worse. In 6/2011, Mr. Howard was diagnosed with unspecified essential hypertension and arteriosclerotic heart disease and had open-heart surgery for the second time. Mr. Howard was discharged to home with a home health agency providing services two times per month. He is working with a surgeon and a cardiologist and continues to experience serious complications related to heart disease requiring several hospital admissions since 6/2011. Most recently, he has been placed on bed rest due to a blood clot in his leg. Mr. Howard had applied for SSI/SSDI several times in the past. He became housed but had zero income and was beginning to have difficulty accessing health care due to lack of private or publicly funded health coverage. Mr. Hampton was awarded benefits 8/2011.
- I met with a client who had become ill with cancer, she received Chemotherapy and recovered from the cancer, however, the Chemotherapy caused other serious health issues. She had to quit her job due to these health issues and was unable to keep up with her house payments and other bills. She lost her home and has been staying with her daughters, one, then the other. She meets the criteria for the Permanent Supportive Housing and will have her own home soon. I am continuing to assist her with the SSI/SSDI application process along with additional resources that will help maintain her housing stability.
- I have been working with a 42 year old female who had digestive problems. Her employer put her on permanent leave of absence so she could not apply for unemployment benefits. She had her gall bladder, spleen and partial pancreas surgically removed. I worked to gather several reports from three different hospitals and she was awarded SSDI benefits and SSI benefits are pending.

- I have a client who was in a nursing home and had applied on her own, but with no results. This client had been in a nursing home for nearly a year with her family (which included a teenage son, a daughter nearly 20 and a grandchild.) dispersed to other relatives due to the loss of their home to a fire. She was due to leave soon and had no income nor a home to go to. I started working with the client in May and by July 14, 2011 she received word that she had been approved. When she first applied for SSI she did not apply for benefits through Jobs and Family Services (JFS) but I worked with her to help her get the JFS benefits before she left the nursing home. We were able to get her Medicaid established (outside the nursing home) by the time she left and I worked to get the food stamps going after she move out. She had a Section 8 application through another organization in Toledo. Together the representative of this organization and I worked to see that the client had a decent home with amenities and food within 2 weeks of the client's move from the nursing home. The only drawback was both the client and I expected a large back pay for the client since she had applied in October 2010. The client could only receive the initial supplement from SSA because she was in a nursing home a month after application. I had to help the client understand that piece of disappointing news. But she was grateful for the amount and speed in which she received everything that she did get which was a home, furniture, food and medical with her family back and all together in her new home.
- I had a gentleman who was exiting prison and was both physically and mentally disabled. I was able to use what I had learned in my SSI Ohio Project Specialist training to reactivate his benefits on the trip home from prison, thus minimizing difficulty with re acclimating himself to the community.
- A client was referred to me after both she and her son presented very confused about whether they applied for SSI/SSDI benefits or not. The client's claim had been floating in the SSA system since January and the client had no income to pay the rent where she was staying. The client's son had been paying her rent to keep her housed but was not going to be able to any longer. Once the client began working with the SSI Ohio Project she was immediately awarded presumptive SSI. Only a few short weeks later the client was awarded full SSI benefits thus allowing her to pay for her rent and keep her in housing.

- Sometimes just advocating for a client and understanding the process can help someone that is lost and does not know what to do. For example I was working with an elderly gentleman that seemed to be lost in the system. Once I contacted SSA to start the application process I was able to learn that the client had previously filed an SSI application. SSA had stopped working on his case when the client was shuffled around between 2 nursing homes, the homeless shelter and the local hospital all within the last 6 months. After taking the time to advocate for the client SSA informed me that the client will be awarded, with back pay within the next week.
- My client was 28, greatly wants to appear "normal, as a result he often minimizes his illness to providers, despite clearly suffering significant impairment. He could not eat in a restaurant, go into a grocery store, or wait in the lobby to see a doctor. He avoided hospitals at all costs. His anxiety was so bad, he lived in a tent on the river, eating fish he caught for every meal, and slept outside throughout the winter for the past several years. He had applied twice in the past, denied both times. Working with BDD, we realized that his application was going to be a difficult approval (due to his avoiding hospitals, missing psych appointments and minimizing symptoms), despite my belief he should be awarded. As a result of the SSI Ohio Project process, we completed a thorough medical summary and obtained a third party statement from his treating psychiatrist explaining the difficulties he faces. As a result, he was awarded and given a large back pay. He is now in his own apartment and can afford medications, which he says helps him greatly with his anxiety and constant headaches.