



Things to Think About!



By Brandan Atkin

Useful Websites:

Social Security Administration

<http://ssa.gov>

SNRP Resource Links

<http://www.snproject.com/Resource/Links>

SNRP Forms Link

<http://www.snproject.com/forms.html>

If there is anything that is not discussed in our newsletters and you would like to see it discussed, or you would like to be added to our newsletter mailing list, please contact us at snproject@hotmail.com

Benefits and Services: Apply, Follow Up, and Follow Through Part I

By Linda Jorgensen

Over the last several months I have received a good number of enquiries regarding government services and programs (both state and federal) and the application processes required to obtain them. Many are expressing frustration about the process required while others are finding the application requirements difficult to meet. Unfortunately there are no simple shortcuts in the application process. The only way out is through.

The biggest majority of individuals that lose benefits don't lose them because they are denied it's because they fail to apply in the first place or fail to follow through once the initial application has been made. If you want that benefit or monthly check you're going to have to follow through until the process is complete and you have that determination letter in your hand. The biggest obstacle seems to be making that first phone call. For some it's actually finding the contact information, for others it's the actual call itself. Let's see if we can make this easier.

Finding Contact Information

Need to apply for Social Security programs? Start here:

Social Security Administration Information for Parents

National Information Line 1-800-772-1213

<http://ssa.gov/kids/parent1.htm>

*Benefits information and local office addresses with contact information available.

Looking for your State Health and Human Services program contact information? Go to Special Needs Resource Project's Resource Links page, found here:

<http://www.snproject.com/Resource/Links>

Click on your state, scroll down to the **Agencies/Assistance Programs – Government**. Look for Health and Human Services or a title similar. Not all states use the same agency title. Phone numbers and web links are provided.

First Contact

Ok, here it is. How to make that first call.

- Find the phone number or e-mail address. Write it down at the top of a blank piece of paper.
- Be sure to make your first contact, whether by phone or e-mail, at a time when you'll have a few uninterrupted minutes. You'll want to concentrate all your attention on the matter at hand and not the screaming 2-year old hanging on to your pant leg (ask me how I know...) Nap time is a great time for this. If need be, hire a sitter or ask a friend to come play with your child while you make your phone calls uninterrupted. Be sure to have a Call Form or blank paper, pencils, and a pen or two handy to take notes.
- Write a list of questions you feel you need to ask. Be sure to write the answers as you receive them.
- Dial the number!

Unsure what to say? Here is a suggestion:

"Hello. My name is _____ . I have a child with _____. I believe he/she may be eligible for benefits through your program. Is there someone I can talk to about eligibility requirements and how to make an application?"

Be sure to take notes while you are still on the phone. You may use SNRP Call Forms or a lined notepad. It doesn't matter what you use, just take notes.

If you are corresponding via e-mail be sure to make a hard copy for your file. Document the following information:

- Date
- Time
- Agency name and phone number
- Person you are talking to
- Basic information about the conversation
- Instructions needed for filing a claim or application
- List information you need to gather and submit
- Contact information such as mailing addresses, fax numbers or other means of communication
- **Be sure to note if a case manager is assigned and who that is and their contact**

information! This person will be your main contact. Failure to maintain good communication with a case manager will mean the difference between an approval or a denial. WRITE THIS INFORMATION DOWN!

- Any other important information such as due dates etc.
- Be sure to get a confirmation, or verification, number for your call if provided.

Making the Application

Once you've made your initial contact it is important to follow the instructions you were given. **DON'T WAIT!** Get that application form and fill it out right away. Make copies, fill out forms and find documentation while you still have your list fresh in your mind. Once your application packet is complete make a copy of the entire set of documents for your own records. This is especially important when sending original documents through the mail or hand carrying them to an office. Make copies and keep them handy.

If you are mailing your information don't just drop the package in the mail. It is generally recommended packets with irreplaceable information be sent **Registered Mail with a Return Receipt Requested** form from the post office. This feature allows you to track your application packet by confirming the date it was delivered and identifying the person who received it. If, for some reason, your application is lost you can use these confirmation documents to initiate a search for your missing documents through the office that signed for them. This doesn't happen often but it's best to be safe, rather than sorry. Be sure to file your post office receipts, documents, etc. along with the copies of your original packet. You'll have them handy should you need them. Be sure to ask your local postal worker any questions you may have.

Hopefully by now the toughest part of the initial application process is complete and your application is winging its way to the appropriate agency office. Your next step will be to keep records and follow up.

Next month: **Benefits and Services: Apply, Follow Up, and Follow Through Part II**