

NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

Local Efforts to Increase Access to SSI for Homeless Persons: Best Practices

- Denver, CO – The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) has developed the Benefits Acquisition and Retention Team (BART) program. Instead of taking clients to file an SSI application at SSA, CCH staff now completes applications and submits them to SSA, along with a complete package of medical records. DDS staff flags cases submitted through this program, and calls CCH when additional documentation (medical or other) is needed.
- Texas – The Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (TDMHMR) has implemented an agreement with the Texas DDS, under which SSI applications are submitted for TDMHMR clients. Much of the agreement focuses on cross-training, which teaches TDMHMR funded program staff how to submit all of the proper medical documentation along with an initial SSI application, while also teaching DDS staff about the special barriers faced by low income claimants with mental impairments.
- Boston, MA – For about a decade the Massachusetts DDS has had a homelessness advisory committee, made up of local advocates and consumers. For much of this time, based on a recommendation from this committee, the DDS has flagged all claims filed by homeless persons, and has established a special unit to process those claims. Because this unit receives all claims filed by homeless persons, its staff has developed good relationships with homeless service providers, which makes it easier for them to obtain important medical documentation. The staff has also developed a better understanding of the barriers faced by homeless persons seeking disability benefits.
- Los Angeles, CA – The Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness (LACEHH) has recently received a grant to do one on one advocacy designed to enroll eligible homeless persons in the SSI program, so that they can both receive a monthly income and qualify for Medicaid benefits through the Medi-Cal program. The program's staff is made up of current SSI recipients. Based on this experience they work directly with homeless persons who are potentially eligible for SSI – convincing people who do not function well that they should agree to apply, completing SSA forms, and attending meetings or hearings to assist claimants.

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