

applications from social and medical service providers, such as community mental health centers, hospitals, Health Care for the Homeless clinics, faith-based organizations, and other community-based organizations that serve the target population.

SSA favors applicants that consider the full range of needs of individuals they serve, and that provide a continuum of care and case management. Since these projects are part of the broad Federal strategy to end chronic homelessness, SSA is interested in funding projects that provide assistance to project enrollees, not only with the disability benefit application process, but with obtaining other services that result in stabilization, recovery, and eventual entry or return to a productive lifestyle and full community integration. This includes becoming representative payees when a beneficiary is not capable of managing his/her benefits, and no other preferred payee is available.

Grantees must provide certain core functions, and may choose to perform other optional functions, as described in sections A and B:

A. Core Grant Activities—grantees who receive funds under this announcement must conduct outreach and provide assistance with the disability benefit application process. Specifically, grantees must:

- *Conduct outreach activities to locate homeless individuals with disabling impairments.* Applicants must have existing capacity to conduct outreach activities, and are not required to increase the actual amount of outreach activities, although they are expected to serve at least 50 individuals annually within their projects. Applicants are encouraged to use approaches that make use of existing resources, including staff, and to use cooperative agreement funds to improve their organizational capacity to provide assistance to homeless individuals. In other words, applicants are encouraged to use the cooperative agreement funds to develop sustainable approaches that can continue after cooperative agreement funds are no longer available.

- *Provide direct assistance to homeless individuals in the application process.* Activities must include helping these individuals to:

- Schedule an appointment to apply for benefits;
- understand the need to sign application and other forms needed to process the application;
- complete application paperwork; and
- communicate effectively with SSA staff when filing a claim.

- *Assist claimants with finding necessary documentation, including proof of identity, financial records, and medical records.* Many homeless individuals lose identity documents. Grantees will assist homeless individuals in establishing identity, and replacing lost immigration paperwork. Grantees will also help homeless claimants to document past medical treatment, and assist the DDS in obtaining evidence of past treatment. Finally, grantees will help claimants to find relevant financial records, including documenting and reporting any income and resources obtained throughout the disability application and appeal process.

- *Provide existing medical evidence in the grantee's medical records.*

- *Perform any necessary medical examinations, arrange for such examinations, and/or establish a collaborative relationship with an organization that will perform any examinations needed to make a disability determination.* Cooperative agreement funds may be used to pay for examinations conducted by psychologists, psychiatrists, general practitioners, or specialist physicians.

- *Assist claimants with attending consultative examinations, when necessary.* In general, evidence from treating sources that have an on-going relationship with claimants is preferred, and the DDS attempts to get such information before scheduling a "consultative examination" (CE) with a medical provider, who examines a claimant, and provides a report to the DDS. As noted above, the grantee may use cooperative agreement funding to arrange for an examination with a qualified provider; however, in some areas, grantees may have difficulty establishing such relationships with medical providers. In such cases, the grantee will notify the DDS immediately, so that the DDS examiner will know that a CE will be necessary. The DDS will pay for such examinations, when necessary, and the grantee will enable the claimant to attend the examination.

- *Provide information regarding the effect that a claimant's impairment has on the ability to perform work.* SSA needs information about how impairments limit a claimant's functioning, including restrictions in exertional activities, such as bending and lifting, as well as non-exertional factors, such as the ability to concentrate and/or persist in the performance of tasks. Grantees will provide information about claimants' ability to complete activities of daily living and instrumental activities of

daily living, with and without assistance.

- *Maintain contact with the claimant throughout the determination process, and help the claimant to respond to requests for further information.* A key responsibility of grantees will be to help SSA maintain contact with claimants. This may include serving as an authorized "representative" for a claimant, but can also include informal steps, such as establishing a contact within the grantee agency for claimants served by the grantee.

- *Assist claimants with filing reconsiderations and appeals.* Claimants have appeal rights when they receive denials or partially favorable decisions. Appeal rights are described in SSA's publication, *The Appeals Process* (SSA Publication No. 05-10041, April 1999) which can be found at <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10041.html>. If a claimant disagrees with SSA's decision on their initial claim, the grantee will assist the claimant in filing a timely reconsideration. If the claimant disagrees with a reconsideration decision, the grantee will assist the claimant in filing a timely request for a hearing.

- *Collaborate with and make referrals to other organizations to ensure favorable outcomes for claimants and beneficiaries, including working with agencies that provide:*

- Mental health services;
- supportive housing;
- community-based health care providers;
- employment rehabilitation services;
- job placement;
- benefit planning assistance and outreach;
- veteran's health benefits;
- substance abuse treatment;
- translation and/or interpreter services; and
- services to parolees and those in work-release programs

- *Assist claimants with participating in SSA electronic application and case processing initiatives.* SSA is moving in the direction of establishing an electronic disability claims process, known as "eDib." While not every applicant will be capable of or required to file claims via SSA's electronic claims process, SSA will be establishing an electronic claim folder for all claimants. SSA plans to implement this new way of doing business in stages, by rolling out the process gradually in some locations. When possible, grantees should assist claimants to complete the Disability Report form (SSA i3368 or SSA i3820) on the internet, and claimants for disability insurance to complete the application form on-line.