



Providing Assistance With the Social Security Process Helps Homeless Individuals Secure Income

Applying for Social Security Benefits is challenging under usual circumstances. The process is lengthy with a heavy application process. When someone is experiencing homelessness and mental health challenges, the process can be more difficult and frustrating. That is where Couleecap can help.

The Social Security Outreach, Access, and Recovery Program (SOAR) provides assistance to individuals struggling with homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness and have a mental health diagnosis. Services offered through SOAR include help with the application process for Social Security Disability. Couleecap staff can assist people at the initial applications stage all the way to the Administrative Law Judge stage, even if they have begun the process on their own. Once income is received through the disability program, it can be used to secure safe, stable housing.

One individual who worked with the program met with Tina Tryggestad, Couleecap's SOAR caseworker, following a yearlong stay at a nursing home while recovering from a difficult surgery that was plagued with complications. Unable to maintain their housing during treatment, they were discharged to homelessness. When Tina met them, they were staying at the Salvation Army.

"The doctors told this client that they were lucky to be alive and needed to focus on their health," explained Tina. "But Social Security denied their claim, causing the client to throw up their hands and walk away from the application process."

Through close collaboration between Couleecap and the Salvation Army, a meeting between the client and Tina was set up. Through supportive conversations, the client decided to continue with the appeal process.

"We completed the necessary paperwork allowing me to represent them, and I immediately got to work with a reconsideration appeal," Tina shared. "Being able to utilize me to help communicate with the Social Security Administration (SSA) was a huge help to this client as they continued to struggle with their physical health. Their mental health also suffered with every difficult communication from the SSA during the initial application and they were relieved to have someone walking alongside them during the onerous process."

Tina first requested an extension of the initial application because the window for the reconsideration appeal had lapsed. During this extension a request for reconsideration was filed and the client was approved for benefits by submitting updated medical records reflecting their current needs.

Partnering with our clients to enable their self-sufficiency is the backbone of Couleecap's work. Programs like SOAR are just one example.

**"[...]they were relieved to have someone walking alongside them during the onerous process."
-Tina, Couleecap Case Manager**

Couleecap
your local community *action* program



A United Way member agency

A equal opportunity employer and service provider.
Auxiliary aids and services available upon request.

Our Mission

Couleecap fights poverty and promotes self-sufficiency, economic development, and social justice. We are **People Helping People**, and every day our actions make a difference in the lives of people and families throughout the Coulee Region.