



Things to Think About!



By Brandan Atkin

Useful Websites:

Social Security Administration

<http://ssa.gov>

SNRP Resource Links

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

SNRP Forms Link

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

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

By Linda Jorgensen

By now the most difficult part of the application process should be over. You've found your contact information and made that first phone call. Hopefully your application is completed and on its way to the right office. The next step in the process is following your application through to completion.

Following Up

Many programs have a deadline for application submissions. This often includes any other requests an agency may make for more information. It is your responsibility to IMMEDIATELY answer requests for further information you may receive. Agencies will often extend a deadline if you are attempting to obtain requested information and are staying in touch with the case manager or appropriate Customer Service representative. However, Agencies will close an application if no movement occurs after a certain length of time. They can't leave cases open indefinitely. You'll need to act quickly when asked.

If a request for more information involves a written letter or other documentation from a medical professional, such as a physical therapist or your pediatrician, you will need to follow up with them as well. Contact the individual as soon as possible and explain you are working under a deadline. Explain what you need and make arrangements to physically pick up the documentation yourself. I have to do this every so often. It saves time in the long run and I am better able to get the information submitted quickly. Time is of the essence.

Be sure to stay in touch with the office case worker or customer service office. Be aware of any deadlines you may have. Most folks think "No news is good news. Everything must be OK if I don't hear anything." No news makes ME nervous, unless I am told to wait for a specific amount of time or date. If that time or date has passed and I still haven't heard anything I will often call to check on the status of the application. Don't be a pest, but do be on top of it.

Keep track of the dates you called, who you talked to and any updates that may have occurred since your last query. If more documentation is needed be sure to act right away. If you are NOT responding to directions, requests for documentation or other needed information you risk closure of your application for lack of cooperation.

You may find it helpful to have someone come in once or twice a week to help keep children entertained/taken care of while you spend necessary time on the phone. If you've got a scheduled time that you know you can devote to "chasing bureaucracy" you'll find it easier to do the necessary work.

Keeping Track

I know, I can hear parents groaning about paperwork and bureaucracy but if you want services you have to fight for them. Unfortunately paperwork is a part of the system we all have to deal with. While paperwork is a less than pleasant task and you cannot change program requirements you can make it easier to follow through until your application has been completed and a letter of determination is issued.

Start with your first contact. Once your phone conversation is complete make yourself a To-Do list. Make sure to note all information, documents, application forms etc. you need to submit, the person you need to send them to, their address and dates applications must be submitted by.

Gather all your information into a packet, make a copy to keep in your file, and then get it in the mail! It does no good if it simply sits by the back door waiting for someone to take it to the post office! Be sure to note when it was sent and attach all your postal receipts to your note and add to your file for future reference.

Mark all important dates on your calendar or in a prominent place. It is important to keep good records during the application process. "If it isn't on paper, it didn't happen"! Backup copies and copies of conversation notes may be used as proof of your application. If an agency loses your application you can often assist them in keeping your application open by providing them with the copies of the originals you made at the beginning of the process. Post office documents and delivery signature cards will also be useful. No note is unimportant. Keep everything until the process is complete!

Use any filing system that works for you. Many find a 3-ring binder to be most effective while others, like me, prefer a small hanging file. Even a notebook will do as long as it helps you keep all your notes and documents together. I find it most useful to have a

hanging file near the phone with pertinent information right at my finger tips. I keep pencils, pens, several different call forms and note pads handy as well. If the phone rings all my information is handy near the phone. I can also make copies and send faxes right away as all my documents are in one place.



My Active File ~ Phone records, e-mail, regular mail, faxes and copies of application forms and other documents are all here within easy reach in this small hanging file.

By making that first contact, filing your application, staying in communication with the agency and tracking your progress you'll be able to follow your application through to a (hopefully) successful completion.

Next Month: What To Do If Your Application is Denied