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The Claimant Experience in Social Security's Disability Process

Participant Bios

Annie Almog is a Program Analyst in the Office of Electronic Services and Technology in the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Office of Operations. Almog serves on the Leads & Intakes Team in the Division of Programmatic Applications.

April Bass is a Division Director in the Office of Disability Determinations in the SSA's Office of Operations. Bass directs the Division of Disability Determination Services Automation Support.

Rachel A. Emmons is a Government Relations and Public Affairs Specialist with expertise in the federal legislative process and currently represents the National Council of Social Security Management Associations (NCSSMA), Inc. Emmons joined Greystone Group in 1994 and currently serves as Principal, specializing in appropriations and public policy issues for educational and other not-for-profit organizations. Emmons received a Bachelor of Music from Iowa State University and Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

Renita Mackall is a Team Leader in the Office of Electronic Services and Technology in SSA's Office of Operations. Mackall serves on the Leads & Intake Team in the Division of Programmatic Applications.

Christopher Mazzulli is President of Disability Support Services, Inc. in Baltimore, Maryland and an Elected Officer of the National Association of Disability Representatives (NADR).

Ashley Moore joined the social services team at Bread for the City in 2011, where Moore serves as Associate Director of Care Management. Moore is

responsible for clinical oversight and facilitation of direct service care management programs within the Bread for the City's Northwest DC Social Services Department. Responsibilities include care management within Bread for the City's medical clinic, management of the SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery) Program, which is designed to increase access to social security disability benefits for eligible at-risk or disadvantaged individuals, oversight of walk-ins/on-call, and social work student training program. Moore is also the Co-Lead for the District's SOAR Leadership Team. Moore graduated with a master's degree in social work from The Catholic University of America.

Peggy Murphy was elected to serve as President of NCSSMA in August 2018. Prior to that, Murphy served as NCSSMA Vice President from September 2017 through August 2018, as President of the Denver Region Social Security Management Association (DRSSMA) from 2015-2017, and as DRSSMA Vice President the two years prior. Murphy also served as the Chair of the NCSSMA Title 2 Committee from 2015-2017. During her term as DRSSMA President, Murphy focused on improving support for management as they navigated the relationship with the largest union at SSA. Murphy also cultivated and strengthened relationships with the regional executives. As DRSSMA President, Murphy pursued biannual meetings with regional executives to ensure that managers were included as part of the executive team as a valued resource. Murphy has been the Level 1 District Manager of the Great Falls, Montana, SSA Field Office since 2010. Murphy previously held management positions in Aurora, Colorado, and was also a Team Leader in the Center for Program Support and a Deputy Regional Communications Director in the Denver Region. Murphy was the Lead for Tribal Outreach in the Denver Region for several years, working directly with then deputy commissioner, Nancy Berryhill. Murphy has a Bachelor of Science degree in sociology and counseling and has an MBA from Troy State University.

Alan Polonsky, JD, is Partner at Polonsky & Polonsky and President of the National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives (NOSSCR). Polonsky's law practice focuses on Social Security disability and has represented over 10,000 individuals before Social Security. Polonsky has taught numerous New Jersey Institute of Continuing Legal Education classes in basic and advanced topics of Social Security law and practice. Polonsky began with SSA writing decisions as a Staff Attorney for Administrative Law Judges in 1978, ultimately drafting over 4,000 decisions over ten years. Polonsky earned his JD from Widener Law School in 1975 and an LLM from Temple Law School in taxation in 1983.

Samara Richardson is Acting Deputy Associate Commissioner in SSA's Office of Public Service and Operations Support in the Office of Operations.

Susan Robertson, PhD, is a Senior Staff Occupational Therapist and a Mental Health Specialist in Occupational Therapy at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Clinical Center. Robertson earned her bachelor's degree in psychology and anthropology from Pitzer College in Claremont, CA, a master's degree and certificate in occupational therapy from San Jose State University, and a PhD in human development from the University of Maryland. Robertson has contributed to clinical practice and research with the National Institute of Mental Health, Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Human Genome Research Institute, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, National Cancer Institute, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, and the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases. Robertson's line of qualitative inquiry in occupational therapy centers on self-management of chronic conditions in support of life's meaning and purpose. Robertson's professional publications and presentations have targeted research outcomes, leadership development, and intervention to foster wellness. As a Fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association, Robertson was honored for her professional contributions in clinical care, research, education, and professional development.

Leon A. Scales is the Next President of the National Council on Disability Determination Directors (NCDDD) and the Virginia Disability Determination Service (DDS) Director. Scales has held the position of DDS Director for approximately nine years; Scales was previously the VA DDS Director of Operations. All of Scales' 22 years of work experience has been with the VA DDS, in multiple capacities. Scales has a well-rounded organizational background with experience as a Disability Examiner, Lead Worker, Office/Operations Manager, Local Area Network Coordinator, Budget/Administrative Manager, Business Process Specialist, Director of Operations, and currently Division Director. Scales received a BA in history and MPA in public administration from Virginia Tech and is a graduate of the Commonwealth of Virginia Executive Institute. Scales has earned recognition and many awards for contributions to the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services and the Social Security disability program. Honors include multiple SSA Regional and SSA Associate Commissioners Citations, SSA Deputy Commissioner Operations Leadership Award, and the VA DDS was the 2016 recipient of the SSA Associate

Commissioner Phoenix Award. Scales is currently the Philadelphia Region Administrator Representative for the National Disability Interest Group and a Member of National Association of Disability Examiners (NADE).

Henry Shoemaker is Team Leader in the Office of Disability Determinations in SSA's Office of Operations. Shoemaker serves on the Policy, eCAT, and Training Team in the Division of Disability Determination Services Automation Support.

Kristi Sjöholm-Sierchio is a current beneficiary, and is accompanied by **Yolanda Darby-Richardson**, a Senior Attorney at Disability Support Services, Inc.

Megan Stanley is the Executive Director of the Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations. Stanley joined in 2018 with over ten years of progressive experience in social policy, working specifically with vulnerable populations. Prior to working for the City of Pittsburgh, Stanley was a Research Analyst and Consultant for the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in Washington, DC, focusing on program design, executive functioning, and technical assistance to human service agencies. Stanley also completed research on the usability of disability application forms as a grantee of the SSA Disability Determination Project through Policy Research, Inc. Stanley holds a master's degree in public policy and public administration from Northwestern University.

Dinah Tysinger is Team Leader in the Office of Public Services and Operations Support in SSA's Office of Operations. Tysinger serves in the Division of Analysis and Program Support.