

Health Care for the Homeless Mobilizer

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council

P.O. Box 60427
Nashville, TN 37206-0427

E-mail: council@nhchc.org
Website: www.nhchc.org

Telephone 615/226-2292
Fax 615/226-1656

Vol. XI No. 8

7/11/06

Don't Give Up HOPE – Improve Access to SSI/SSDI Call Senators on Appropriations Subcommittee before July 18!

Appropriations for the Social Security Administration (SSA) included earmarked funds for the **Homeless Outreach Projects and Evaluation (HOPE) grant program** in fiscal years 2003-05 totaling \$24 million to conduct outreach to homeless and other under-served populations and to assist eligible persons in applying for federal disability benefits (SSI/SSDI).

In 2004, SSA awarded HOPE grants to 41 service providers in 20 States and the District of Columbia that currently provide outreach services to the homeless population. As of January 2006, HOPE grantees had assisted 6,709 homeless individuals with their applications for SSI, and 1,635 of those individuals had been awarded SSI benefits based on disability. (2006 Annual Report of the SSI Program: www.ssa.gov/OACT/SSIR/SSI06/Bibliography.html)

The HOPE program was funded at \$8 million per year for three years (2003-2005), but no further funding for the program was included in the 2006 Appropriations Act. Continuation of this small but important program depends on its inclusion in the “reports” of the Congressional committees that fund the Social Security Administration, which direct SSA to fund particular activities. Legislative staff have indicated that the Senate may include language in their Appropriations Committee report supporting renewed funding for the HOPE grants in FY 2007.

Senate markups for the Labor-Education-HHS appropriations are scheduled on **Tuesday, July 18th** (SSA Subcommittee) and **Thursday, July 20th** (full committee). Advocates have been actively working with committee staff to get \$10 million in new funding for new HOPE grantees included in the markup. They are hopeful that this may occur, but there is no guarantee. Help from the grassroots is urgently needed to get this issue higher on the policy agenda. HCH grantees are urged to communicate with their Senators, especially those who serve on the SSA Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, by Tuesday, July 18, and encourage them to support a \$10 million annual SSA appropriation for the Homeless Outreach Projects and Evaluation (HOPE) grant program.

ACTION:

- **Before Tuesday, July 18:** Contact all Senators from your state, especially those who serve on the SSA Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee (listed below). **Urge**

them to support a \$10 million earmark in the SSA appropriation for new Homeless Outreach Projects and Evaluation (HOPE) grantees.

- Ask Republican Senators to communicate their support for the HOPE earmark to staffer **Mark Laisch (202/224-6595)**. Democratic Senators should communicate their support to staffer **Ellen Murray (202/ 224-7288)**.
- If your agency is a current HOPE grantee, talk about your project's successes. If your agency is not a HOPE grantee, tell why the services this grant would support are needed in your community — e.g., *“We desperately need services supported by the HOPE program to expedite SSI/SSDI benefits for eligible homeless persons in _____ [insert state or city here]. Please fund this program so we can apply for funding.”*

Members of the SSA Subcommittee:

Senator Arlen Specter (Chairman) (PA)	Senator Tom Harkin (Ranking Member) (IA)
Senator Thad Cochran (MS)	Senator Daniel Inouye (HI)
Senator Judd Gregg (NH)	Senator Harry Reid (NV)
Senator Larry Craig (ID)	Senator Herb Kohl (WI)
Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (TX)	Senator Patty Murray (WA)
Senator Ted Stevens (AK)	Senator Mary Landrieu (LA)
Senator Mike DeWine (OH)	Senator Richard Durbin (IL)
Senator Richard Shelby (AL)	

Talking points:

- HOPE grants are a key part of federal, state, and local efforts to end long-term homelessness by helping eligible persons obtain federal disability benefits under SSI or SSDI. Persons who qualify for SSI/SSDI also qualify for health benefits under Medicaid or Medicare and are more likely than others to obtain available low-cost housing.
- HOPE grants are benefiting the Social Security Administration. By making quicker and more accurate decisions, case processing times are reduced, freeing up SSA resources to devote to other cases.
- The need for HOPE grants far exceeds the current availability of funds. Due to insufficient funding, there have been only 40 grantees out of 330 total applications received. Providing additional support would begin to address this unmet need.
- The HOPE grants are spurring other federal agencies to commit resources to help disabled homeless persons receive the benefits to which they are entitled.

Members of the Senate can be reached at <http://www.senate.gov> or through the Capitol switchboard at 202/224-3121. For more information, please contact Pat Post (ppost@nhchc.org).

SUBSCRIBE TO THE HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS MOBILIZER

\$15 per year by fax, free by e-mail.

Please pass this on to your colleagues, clients, and Board of Directors.