



MISSION

Social Security advocacy for people with disabilities who are homeless or low-income.

VISION

We envision our community-based services to (1) reach people facing barriers to legal advocacy; and (2) make lasting systematic change.

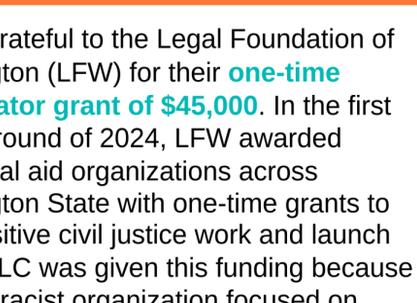
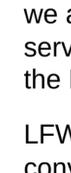
YOUR GENEROSITY

GiveBIG 2024

Earlier this month, BLC asked all of our long-time supporters and friends to participate in **GiveBIG** – Washington's largest statewide day of giving – with the goal of raising enough funding to renovate our new vehicle into our restored Justice Bus. And **YOU gave BIG to GO BIG helping us raise \$25,076!** As a result of your generosity, over the next couple of months, we will be converting the interior of our Bus into a confidential and caring meeting space for our knowledgeable benefits attorneys to meet with multicultural clients with disabilities who live in service deserts all across the Puget Sound. Thank you for allowing us to truly *meet clients where they are at!*

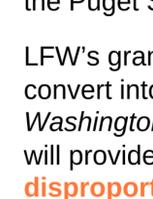
Thank you for **Giving BIG** to Restore our Justice Bus!

Together we raised \$25,076



FUNDER SPOTLIGHT

Legal Foundation of Washington



BLC is grateful to the Legal Foundation of Washington (LFW) for their **one-time Accelerator grant of \$45,000.** In the first funding round of 2024, LFW awarded eight legal aid organizations across Washington State with one-time grants to accelerate time-sensitive civil justice work and launch impactful projects. BLC was given this funding because we are a strong anti-racist organization focused on serving historically excluded communities throughout the Puget Sound.

LFW's grant allowed us to purchase a new vehicle to convert into our highly effective Justice Bus – *Washington's only mobile legal unit.* Via our Bus, we will provide free legal services directly to **hundreds of disproportionately under-resourced communities** in need at times and places where legal services are not offered – most particularly to Native/Indigenous people and formerly incarcerated individuals exiting prisons. Stay tuned for updates as **our Bus hits the road this summer!**

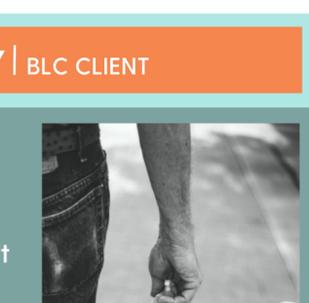
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SSA UPDATES

Changes to In-Kind Support Rules

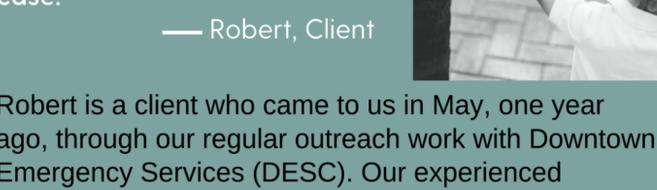
The Social Security Administration (SSA) recently announced that on September 30, 2024, it will be taking a new step in the right direction by **changing the way it calculates its in-kind support and maintenance calculations** — a rule titled “Omitting Food from In-Kind Support and Maintenance (ISM) Calculations”. This rule is designed to help recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) which is comprised of seniors age 65+, adults with children who have disabilities, and those that are homeless. About 7 million Americans receive monthly benefits through SSI; more than 137,000 Washington residents collect SSI benefits; and **50% of our homeless and aging clients** benefit from SSI income.

Historically, SSI recipients have struggled to pay for basic necessities like rent and groceries when relying on their thin, monthly SSI check alone (maximum benefit of \$943 per month for 2024). Rather than having to choose between paying their rent, or affording groceries or medicine, **under this new rule, SSI recipients will be able to receive assistance** from a third-party for these items. Third parties include foodbanks, pre-cooked meal services, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, aka SNAP.



To learn more about this new rule, [Click Here.](#)

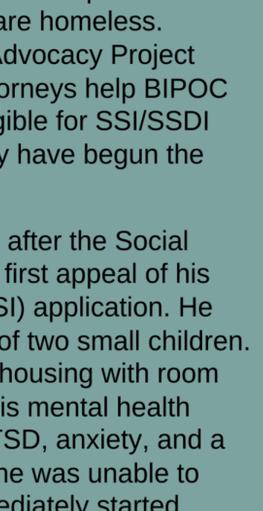
STATISTICS FOR FIRST QUARTER 2024:



ROBERT'S STORY | BLC CLIENT

“It has been such a relief to get my backpay and monthly SSI check. Thank you and to the staff who helped me with my case.”

— Robert, Client



Robert is a client who came to us in May, one year ago, through our regular outreach work with Downtown Emergency Services (DESC). Our experienced benefits attorney, Hillary, performs outreach and assistance at DESC's office in Pioneer Square to people living with disabilities who are homeless. Through our Disabled Homeless Advocacy Project (DHAP), launched in 2006, our attorneys help BIPOC clients like Robert who may be eligible for SSI/SSDI benefits, both before and after they have begun the application process.

Robert started working with Hillary after the Social Security Administration denied his first appeal of his Supplemental Security Income (SSI) application. He was in his 40s and a single father of two small children. DESC helped him find subsidized housing with room for his children. However, due to his mental health challenges – including extreme PTSD, anxiety, and a stress induced speech disorder – he was unable to maintain employment. Hillary immediately started working with Robert and his DESC clinic and case management team to compile supporting evaluations, letters of support, and other evidence to bolster his disability claim at a Social Security Administrative (SSA) hearing, a process that took nine long months.

SSA finally scheduled Robert's hearing in April of this year, and things started looking up quickly from there. Within a week, the judge returned a fully favorable decision determining that Robert qualified as “disabled” under SSA's regulations. Robert then had a meeting with the local SSA field office who awarded him monthly checks of \$934 in benefits (the maximum that an individual is eligible for in SSI), as well as backpay for nearly three years equating to approximately \$30,000. Robert's experience is an example of just how brave and patient our clients are to reach a positive outcome – **he did not give up** and persisted with his appeal for nearly three years, all while managing his disabling conditions and parenting two small children. This story also highlights just how important our community outreach is with other services providers across the Puget Sound.

SPONSORSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Douglas, Drachler, McKee & Gilbrough, LLP

BLC is honored to be a long-time recipient of sponsorship support from renowned law group, **Douglas Drachler, McKee & Gilbrough, LLP (DDMG).** We are also grateful to work closely in a partnership that operates as a safety net for individuals with disabilities across the Puget Sound. Together, our attorneys break down barriers in the complex Social Security system to retain and/or gain Social Security benefits, which leads to housing and economic stability for people in poverty.

Over a decade ago, Amy Gilbrough – now a Partner at DDMG – became familiar with BLC's Social Security advocacy through her friend and law partner who, at the time, was a law student working with BLC. Amy's knowledge and support for BLC only grew as she learned more about our aligned missions to provide accessible and affordable legal advocacy to people living with physical and mental disabilities so they may obtain the resources necessary to gain financial and medical stability. **For 41 years, DDMG attorneys have focused on helping clients establish that they are disabled and ensuring that they receive the appropriate public benefits.** When a former client encounters a post-entitlement issue – like a continuing disability review or resource issue – DDMG provides advice, guidance, and representation.

Unable to support all the underrepresented clients that come knocking, Amy and other DDMG attorneys refer them to BLC's experienced Social Security lawyers. In return, DDMG's attorneys have accepted referrals from BLC in federal court cases, which BLC does not have the capacity to take on. It has been a mutually beneficial partnership that led to DDMG's financial investment of our services ten years ago – in the form of a sponsorship funding – that carries us through today.

To bring credit and awareness to our accessible legal services, Amy recently said: *“BLC's work is vital. The Social Security bar is small and is unable to shoulder the post-entitlement work BLC takes on because there is only so much pro bono work we can do. While we focus on obtaining benefits for our clients, BLC's work in assisting and helping people with disabilities to keep their benefits ensures that the community-wide safety net remains intact for a very vulnerable population. Thank you for the work you do!”*

We want to send a resounding **THANK YOU to Amy and the DDMG team!** Their ongoing contributions make a difference in the lives of people in our community that need it the most.



Learn more about DDMG by [Clicking Here.](#)

LOL

COMEDY for a CAUSE

SAVE THE DATE

SEPT 14 2024

Drinks | Dinner | Raffle