



National Council on Disability

An independent federal agency making recommendations to the President and Congress to enhance the quality of life for all Americans with disabilities and their families.

August 22, 2012

The Honorable Michael J. Astrue
Commissioner of Social Security
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Woodlawn, MD 21207

Dear Commissioner Astrue:

I am writing on behalf of the National Council on Disability (NCD), an independent federal agency that advises the President, Congress, and other federal agencies on the policies and programs that affect Americans with disabilities.

GAO has now clarified the question that the Social Security Administration (SSA) is authorized to continue its financial support of the Work Incentives, Planning and Assistance (WIPA) counseling programs and its Protection and Advocacy for Social Security Beneficiaries (PABSS) counseling programs. NCD thus urges you to take steps necessary to assure the continuation of these critical services. Timing is essential to prevent many community organizations which provide these services from losing their capacity to do so. The individuals who provide these services are certified and highly trained. For over a decade, they have become a vital link to the success of thousands of persons with disabilities.

By continuing to fund these programs, many social security disability beneficiaries will be able to plan to go to work. For those individuals already working, they will have access to the correct federal and state rules and procedures for their unique work and benefits situations. Without these programs, disability beneficiaries will have little to no help with complicated return to work rules when they encounter social security/employment related problems.

NCD urges you to take expedient action to maintain these critical services so that persons with disabilities may contribute to our nation's economic recovery. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our General Counsel and Director of Policy, Joan Durocher, by email at jdurocher@ncd.gov or by phone at (202) 272-2004.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Clyde Terry".

Clyde Terry
Chair, Employment Committee