



Contacts:

Rebecca Ray
Corporate Communications Manager
800.854.1418 x5065

or

Dan Allsup Inc.
Director of Communications
800.854.1418 x5760

Press release

IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

Obtaining SSDI is a difficult and complex process. Two out of every three applicants initially is denied. Andrea Porter, a former 911 operator, now is one of more than 94,000 beneficiaries in Maryland. She shares her story here.

** Permission is granted to re-use in its entirety. For more information, please contact Rebecca Ray at (800) 854-1418 x5065.*

Emergency Operator Wins SSDI Benefits, But Still Struggling

Middle River, Md. (11/26/07): For Andrea Porter the feel-good ending would be that, after years of battling the bureaucracy for her [Social Security Disability Insurance](#) (SSDI), she is finally living a secure life in her long-time home.

In reality, she won [SSDI benefits](#) but paid a heavy price. Instead of her own residence, at age 53 she now lives in a camper in her mother's yard in Middle River from where she looks after her ailing mom's needs.

The former Baltimore County 911 operator who has battled for years against [chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder](#), severe asthma, poorly controlled [diabetes](#) and [degenerative disc disorder](#) had been [denied twice](#) for SSDI benefits. Her third try turned out to be the charm, thanks to the help of [Allsup Inc.](#), the nation's leading SSDI representation company.

Ms. Porter's saga highlights the difficulty of navigating the complicated SSDI process, even with a myriad of illnesses, as well as a [growing nationwide backlog](#) of people awaiting SSDI decisions that includes thousands of people in Maryland.

A key reason for this backlog growth is the shrinking [Social Security Administration](#) (SSA) field staff, largely due to retirement and budget deficiencies. SSA was 30 percent smaller in 2002 than 20 years before. From August 2005 to January 2007, about 2,000 field office employees left SSA without being replaced. Meanwhile, since 1990, the number of disabled workers drawing SSDI benefits has more than doubled, from 3 million to 6.8 million, as the aging baby boom generation begins to put far greater demands on the agency's resources.

"The disability backlog challenge is so immense that it will take an all-hands-on-deck approach to resolve," said Allsup CEO and founder [Jim Allsup](#). He started his company in 1984, after working for the SSA, to help people just like Andrea Porter [collect their entitled SSDI benefits](#). "Government and industry must work together to meet the demands of the disabled today and in the future," he said. "We see the impact of the problem every day as we work with tens of thousands of disabled individuals and their families.

"There is no question the Social Security Administration needs more resources to meet this challenge," Mr. Allsup said. "Companies like Allsup contribute by providing solutions in the marketplace -- helping disabled Americans navigate -- and reduce the time spent in -- the SSDI process. It is important that citizens with disabilities know they have options available to assist them in their time of need."

Two years ago, SSDI problems meant nothing to Andrea Porter. She just knew she was sick, not likely to get better and could not work any more. She had worked 26 years for Baltimore County, the last 18 as a 911 operator. In 1977, she contracted rheumatic fever that left her asthmatic. "I got worse year by year by year," she said.

Ms. Porter hit a new low in June 2005 when she had trouble breathing, and her sister took her to the doctor. "The doctors couldn't believe I walked in under my own power," she said. Her arterial oxygen saturation was 73; a reading of 88 is considered minimum. Her doctors started her on oxygen therapy on which she has remained since then.

"Once I was put on oxygen, I couldn't take it off because I can't breathe without it," she said. She took a leave of absence and applied on her own for SSDI in July 2005. "I was denied," she said, "because they said my breathing wasn't bad enough." At the time, Ms. Porter lived in a trailer park. Her home, complete with newly remodeled bathroom, was paid for. She still had to pay ground rent to keep the structure's place in the park.

Having no other income, Ms. Porter started to cash in her 401(k) savings and borrow money from friends and family. Clinical depression set in, and her psychiatrists "said I deserved disability because of the mental illness," she said, "but that never worked." By mid-2006, she was denied disability benefits a second time.

While awaiting the results of her appeal, one of Ms. Porter's co-workers gave her the name and [phone number of Allsup Inc.](#) In the field of SSDI claims, Ms. Porter learned, Allsup's success rate is a staggering 97 percent. The company is so highly regarded that, in October 2006, the [Better Business Bureau presented Allsup its Torch Award](#) for

excellence in customer service. Since 1984, the disability advocacy company has helped tens of thousands of people obtain about \$1.5 billion in SSDI and Medicare benefits.

Allsup's record is even more impressive with the nationwide backlog of SSDI applicants growing longer every day. According to the SSA, the average processing time at the hearing level for disability cases has increased from 308 days in 2001 to 524 days in 2007.

"Allsup was a great big help," Ms. Porter said. "Everything worked fine. They sent me the questionnaire to fill out, and they kept me informed. I didn't talk with the same person each time I called, but my entire file was in a computer where anyone could look up my case and see where I was in the process."

After her two earlier denials, Allsup professionals stepped in and prepared Ms. Porter's case for a hearing before an administrative law judge. The decision would depend heavily on medical questionnaires submitted by Ms. Porter's doctors.

"The questionnaires really made the difference," said Cameron Harris, Ms. Porter's Allsup representative. "The process took longer than normal because one of the doctors took a long time getting the questionnaire back, but Andrea helped us get what we needed to support her claim."

After reviewing Ms. Harris' thoroughly prepared evidence, and based on the severity of the claimant's condition, the court agreed to award Ms. Porter SSDI benefits on the record. As a result, she was not required to appear before an administrative law judge at an oral hearing. "If the judge had not agreed to that," Ms. Harris said, "Andrea might still be waiting for her hearing."

Ms. Porter admitted that she "wasn't looking forward to going into the courthouse." As it turned out, she had nothing to fear. Allsup submitted her appeal in writing to the judge on March 1, and the judge decided in her favor April 19, awarding her SSDI benefits and a lump-sum cash payment retroactive to Nov. 1, 2005, five months after her last date of employment. In addition, Ms. Porter will start to receive Medicare coverage in November.

With Allsup's help, Ms. Porter had won her case, although it was a mixed blessing. "I was very much relieved, but also very much disappointed," she said. With her cash award she paid off all her debts, including money borrowed from friends and family. "Now, I don't owe anything," she said.

She also doesn't have anything. The money she received in April was too late to save her home in March. Having fallen behind on her ground rent, the trailer park owners bulldozed the structure, new bathroom and all. Trailers lose their value and are hard to sell, Ms. Porter explained, so trailer park operators find it more economical simply to eliminate old structures and open the space for new tenants.

“I’ve got to save to get a new home,” Ms. Porter said from the camper in her mother’s yard. “She has congestive heart failure, and I need to stay close to her. At least I’m still able to do that.”

Who is Allsup Inc.? - Allsup Inc. is the nation’s first nationwide private Social Security disability claims services company. Founded in 1984, we have helped tens of thousands of Americans nationwide receive their entitled benefits. We make the Social Security disability process less confusing, less intimidating and more convenient for people with disabilities. Allsup Inc. has a 97 percent award rate. For more information visit www.allsupinc.com .

If you do not wish to receive any further commercial messages from us, please respond to this e-mail with “unsubscribe” in the subject line.

[Privacy Policy](#)

The services described in this advertisement are provided by Allsup Inc. Allsup is the nation’s premier Social Security disability benefits claim services company. We have helped tens of thousands of Americans nationwide obtain their Social Security disability benefits.

Our national headquarters is located at 300 Allsup Place, Belleville, IL 62223.

-30-