

Success Story around the U.P.

We would like to provide a story of an individual who benefited from many SAIL services in the past. Our SAIL SOAR Practitioner received a call from an individual in the springtime. The individual applied for disability benefits on their own the previous year and was not sure why there was a delay. Along with our staff, the individual called the Social Security Administration (SSA) and learned that they had an Administrative Law Judge Hearing scheduled for early summer. After reviewing their records, the SAIL SOAR Practitioner learned that some critical forms had not been completed. Together they completed documents and submitted them to Disability Determination Services.

At the time, this individual was alternating between sleeping in cars and couch surfing. Through support by SAIL staff and hard work by the individual, they found a church in the local area of Houghton that supported him with food and shelter via a hotel for six days.

During the six-day window, the SAIL staff communicated with Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and was alerted to an available 1-bedroom Project-Based Voucher for an apartment in Marquette. Since the individual did not own a car and transportation was limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic, SAIL was able to provide him transportation through their CARES program. Once in Marquette, there was a short window to wait before the apartment was ready. Therefore, SAIL staff connected the individual to local resources and temporary shelter through Room at the Inn and the Janzen House. In addition, the individual and their SAIL advocate worked with the Community Action Alger Marquette (CAAM) organization to support him with food while he waited for the apartment. Through our CARES Act Funding, we were also able to get him a 3-month gym membership to help improve his mental health as well as provided him with a tablet and Wi-Fi hotspot so he could keep in contact with his children and attend medical appointments virtually.

By the fall, this individual received notice that they had been approved for disability benefits and would be getting back pay as well! One month later, they moved into the new apartment. This was a great success as this individual is now securely housed and has enough income while he continues to search for more options. Once the SOAR Practitioner became involved in the application process this success occurred very quickly. When a SOAR Practitioner is involved from the beginning the time to the determination is typically much shorter than in this case.

Over the course of five months, through teamwork between SAIL staff and the individual, independent living has been achieved. SAIL provided services through SOAR, housing advocacy, CARES Act funding, general individual advocacy, food assistance, social opportunities, and assistive technology. Finally, we would like to highlight again how important relationships and connections are in our communities because this story was successful because of multiple local organizations including a church across two counties.

For more information or to inquire if SAIL can assist you or a family member living with a disability, please contact SAIL at 906-228-5744 or visit our website at www.upsail.org.