

My father has been off from work for a couple of years due to cut backs at his last employer. However, he believes that he was let go due to physical limitations from a past and current injury. When he was laid off, he was able to collect unemployment and then disability since his injuries prevented him from returning to the workforce. His state disability was only active for one year. As the deadline approached he grew very anxious and uncertain of what the future would hold for himself and his family. My father has worked his entire life, provided for his children and grandchildren, is a homeowner, and active in his community. With the unknown approaching and with much hesitation, he contemplated selling his home and cashing out his retirement since he is unable to work. He had thought of applying for Social Security Disability but had heard awful stories of long wait times, confusing applications, attorneys, fees, and little support. At my place of employment, CommuniCare Health Centers, there is a program called SMART-Y. SMART-Y assists homeless or at risk of being homeless individuals who meet the program criteria with the entire application process.

Since my father is housed, we knew he wouldn't qualify for the SMART-Y program but may qualify for assistance/guidance from a SMART-Y advocate/employee without the perks of meeting with a DDS and SSA employee. We called Eliana (an employee of the SMART-Y program) and were able to get an appointment with her in Davis within one week. She advised us on what to bring, what to expect, and the documents needed. My father was still very untrusting and unsure if this appointment would even lead to anything. When we arrived for our appointment in Davis, we were greeted with a warm smile and a sense of understanding of what this struggle has been like for my father and our family. My father immediately felt at ease and not alone. She explained what the process looked like when filing the claim, what DDS and SSA looked for, and approximate time length for an approval or denial. Once she explained the process, she assisted us in filling out and submitting the online disability form. She then explained and wrote out instructions for what my dad needed to do next to complete the application.

Eliana was able to provide us with the 1:1 attention at no cost that we were unable to find elsewhere. We were given her cell number and informed to call her if we needed any further assistance. I called her on multiple occasions and was still greeted with same enthusiasm that we encountered on the first day. She always answered all of our questions and explained her answers in way that we understood. She checked in us periodically to see how his claim was progressing and continued to provide us with her expertise and knowledge.

My father filed his claim in February and was granted approval for his Social Security Disability claim in July. We are extremely grateful for the SMART-Y program and Elianas assistance. Because of the services provided by Eliana, my father had a clear understanding of what this process would like.

Thank you, The Ernst Family