


DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF DIRECTOR

ACTION REFERRAL

TO <i>Jacobs</i>	DATE <i>2-1-11</i>
---------------------	-----------------------

DIRECTOR'S USE ONLY	ACTION REQUESTED
1. LOG NUMBER <i>1011333</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare reply for the Director's signature DATE DUE _____
2. DATE SIGNED BY DIRECTOR <i>Cleared 2/9/11, letter attached</i> 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prepare reply for appropriate signature DATE DUE <i>2-10-11</i> <input type="checkbox"/> FOIA DATE DUE _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Necessary Action

APPROVALS (Only when prepared for director's signature)	APPROVE	* DISAPPROVE (Note reason for disapproval and return to preparer.)	COMMENT
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Alma Stevenson Fersner
1006 Stevenson Road ~ Cope, South Carolina 29038-8906
803-534-7414

January 29, 2011

RECEIVED

FEB 01 2011

Mr. Anthony E. Keck, Administrator
S. C. Department Health and Human Services
P.O. Box 8206
Columbia, S.C. 29202

Department of Health & Human Services
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Dear Mr. Keck,

I am a retired Citizen, Taxpayer, and Registered Voter, age 89. Having qualified for a Social Security Administration program to help senior citizens with prescription costs, the Social Security Administration informed the State of S.C. Department of Health and Human Services who sent me an application to file for reimbursement of Medicare Part B deductions for the year 2010. The application was duly made and accepted. I spoke with Mr. Timothy Cozine of DHHS in Columbia when the re-imbursement check did not come when it was anticipated. Mr. Cozine, always very professional and mannerly, informed me that some transmissions from SC DHHS had not been received by the Social Security Administration, and that this error had been discovered and fixed, and that I should receive the reimbursement check by January 1, 2011, and if not to call back.

I waited until the end of January, 2011, to call back when the reimbursement was not received. Mr. Cozine's office number, now under siege from claimants wanting information about this *current* year's program, is now being answered by a machine that advises one *not* to leave a message. I tried then the local office of the Social Security Administration and was assisted by an individual who had *no* idea what I was inquiring about, and less than no interest in discovering it.

Then, Mr. Keck, I did something that only a truly desperate claimant would do. I dialed the national toll-free Social Security consumer assistance number. It keeps you on hold indefinitely while an automated woman's voice asks innumerable questions, the answers which it rarely understands, and tries in every way imaginable to get the poor retired person off the line before they can speak to an individual. It constantly tells you that they can help you so *much* faster online. What they *do not* tell you is that it takes *15 days* to receive a code by post from their offices that allow you to use the online services.

That SSA consumer call system, in that it discourages calling, must be the envy of every large bureaucracy in the *world*. Twice, in two separate calls, the person to whom I spoke did not understand what I was asking and had no interest in helping me. Then I called again. You will find that I am very persistent. This time a man answered in Chicago at the Social Security call center. He wasn't very helpful either, at first, until I asked for his name, location, and identification number and explained that I was about to write a letter of complaint to all of my State and Federal representatives because the Social Security call center personnel were so unhelpful. He told me that his office only managed transferring the money to the recipient after it was approved by the State DHHS offices, and I was currently not indicated to receive it.

This person gave me the local Orangeburg DSS number who gave me the Columbia toll free number for DHHS where it was my good fortune to speak with a very helpful and professional

lady, Ms. Debbie Miller. Treasure her, Mr. Keck. Ms. Miller immediately sent my information to the person that was to process it (again), a Ms. Tabitha Williams. Ms. Williams was off that day, but when my nephew (who was kind enough to call for me because my long distance bill from these inquiries is already going to be *immense*), reached Ms. Williams the next morning she said that the information had been transmitted and it would be another 30 to 60 days before I received a check, and that was no way to confirm the transmission, and that there was nothing else she could do. What she did not say was that in fact it was going to be another 30 to 60 days before I *found out* whether or not I would receive a check.

Well, guess what, Mr. Keck. That is not acceptable. At All. Years before computers even fax machines would provide a receipt for transmissions. I am nearly 90 years old, having worked full time until I was 72. When I owe the State of South Carolina money, they want it right that minute. Do you know that when the state loses a form PT-100, the business property tax declaration, The State Department of Revenue does not send the poor small business person a note saying that they have no record of the form being received. They send to the County tax office in the jurisdiction that the taxpayer lives a grossly inflated property tax assessment *knowing* that it will take many months and much effort on the taxpayer's part to get the matter straightened out. That happened recently to my neighbor even after she sent a copy of her original timely filed return by *certified mail*; they still had no record of receiving it and it was months of aggravation getting the matter resolved. The idea that I am to wait indefinitely for the State of South Carolina to settle its debt to me is not consistent with the State's own policies concerning the immediate settlement which they expect.

In this instance, to be qualified, for the QI program, one must provide the most personal and specific information. And I have spent many hours and dollars trying to get this reimbursement for which I am qualified.

I know that you are new in this department, but before you it has had a paid director and has been fully staffed all along. Please get the matter of my QI program reimbursement check for the year 2010 straightened right away and the direct deposit in my account. If I do not hear from you directly, I really will have no choice but to start writing letters to every one from the Governor to the President and eventually to the newspapers and major networks to find out why not. It is a shame when a person my age has to endure these bureaucratic inadequacies for no good reason when so much tax money goes to fund these programs and the departments and individuals who supervise them. I am lucky to have assistance in dealing with this from my family, but it is harrowing to think of those persons my age who must fend for themselves in interacting with incompetent state and federal agencies and their representatives.

Very Sincerely Yours,



Alma S. Persner
(Mrs. Sidney O. Persner)

February 9, 2011

Ms. Alma Fersner
1006 Stevenson Road
Cope, South Carolina 29038

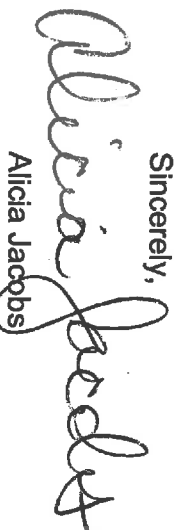
Dear Ms. Fersner:

Thank you for writing this agency regarding the Qualifying Individuals (QI) program and issues you have faced regarding the receipt of your reimbursement. We appreciate you bringing your concerns to our attention. We truly apologize for any stress or inconvenience this process may have caused you.

We were able to address the system issue that caused a delay in notifying the Social Security Administration (SSA) of your 2010 eligibility for the QI program. In addition, your QI application for calendar year 2011 was recently approved and the approval notice is enclosed for your records. I am pleased to inform you that you should receive reimbursement within 45 days for the Medicare Part B premiums deducted from your SSA check January 2010 to present. Your Medicare Part B premiums should no longer be deducted from your SSA check until your eligibility for the QI program ends effective December 31, 2011; prior to this date you may reapply for QI benefits for calendar year 2012.

Again, thank you for bringing your concerns to our attention. Input from beneficiaries like you help us identify problems and improve processes within the agency. If you have additional questions or need further assistance, please contact Jenny Lynch in Constituent Services at (803) 898-3965. I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,



Alicia Jacobs
Deputy Director

AJ/jgl
Enclosure