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Comment from Advocacy and Training Center

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General Comment

I am submitting these comments as the founder of SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery), a non-attorney social worker representative, and someone who has worked on SSA benefits with adults who are unhoused and who have diagnoses of serious mental illness and/or co-occurring disorders for over 32 years. It is this population for whom I write about: 1. Burden related to Continuing Disability Report: It is extremely important to allow for time frames that take into account the entire population SSA serves. People who are unhoused often need a place to go to complete any documentation. Those who have diagnoses of serious mental illness have cognitive impairments that affect their ability to understand and complete forms. The 10-day time frame needs to be extended to at least 30 days for these forms to be completed accurately and submitted.

2. The implementation of a need for a SAP continues to affect disproportionately those with mental illness who are unhoused, those who live miles away in rural areas with limited internet connectivity, those who are not tech savvy (more than SSA believes), and those are simply intimidated by the technology. People are afraid to do anything incorrectly when it comes to their life-sustaining SSA benefits. For many talking with a live person is essential. The technology push is great for those it serves; devastating for those it doesn't. I am grateful SSA withdrew its plan to eliminated paper checks. Thank you. 3. The electronic scheduling has the same problems articulated above regarding the use of technology. Individuals in rural areas rely on transportation when they can get it. It's not always possible to meet a schedule. This is also true of those who are unhoused and have serious mental illness. They need to walk in when they can. I will close by saying that I believe SSA needs to analyze its beneficiary/recipient population to ensure that any changes take into account those who might be unable to meet them. Thank you.