

Social Security brings new service to reservation

By Dave McMechan
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Tribal members no longer have to travel to Bend in order to speak face-to-face with a representative of the Social Security Administration.

The administration last week presented its new video service center, located in conference room 2 in the BIA area of the tribal administration building. The service is available on Thursdays from 1 to 4 p.m.

The video service center is one of only two in the Seattle region of the Social Security Administration (SSA), the other one being in Kenai, Alaska.

The SSA video center in Warm Springs is the first one to be located on an Indian reservation. There are only 36 total in the U.S.

The video service center will be very helpful for tribal members who receive SSA services.

The problem the center addresses is that of having to travel to Bend each time a tribal member wishes to speak face-to-face with an SSA representative.

Now, a person can sit in front of the video service monitor, and see and speak with the SSA person in Bend. The SSA person can also see the person in Warm Springs.

This allows for face-to-face conversations regarding any Social Security question or issue that a tribal member may have.

The system is very easy to use, and requires no computer skills, said Carol Maartense, administration district manager.

"Anyone can do it," she said. "You simply sit down and talk. This will save long trips and sometimes long waits in our Bend office."

Theresa Quade, manager of the Bend Social Security office, said, "The use of the video service equipment provides another option the public can use to access Social Security personnel who can assist them in filing



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Councilwoman Bernice Mitchell uses the new video system in the tribal administration building to talk with a Social Security representative in Bend.

a claim, reporting changes or answering questions."

The system was presented last Thursday, May 7. On hand were Tribal Council and man-

agement; and SSA representatives from Bend, Eugene and Seattle. The following are some questions and answers that help explain the new SSA

video center:

Question: What is Social Security's new video conferencing system in Warm

Springs?

Answer: Social Security is introducing a free, video-on-demand service option that allows Warm Springs residents to interact face to face with an agency representative.

Conversations take place through a secure line, but are not recorded. In addition to Internet and toll-free telephone service, this new technology offers another way that people can conduct business with Social Security.

Question: Who can use this new system?

Answer: Anyone can easily use this video system. Simply sit down in front of the monitor and talk directly with the representative. No computer knowledge is required, and there are no buttons to push.

A room is set aside for you to have a private, confidential interview. A contact person will meet you and direct you to this area.

Once that person turns on the screen, you may conduct your interview without needing to do anything else. If you wish, family members or social workers may also accompany you to the interview.

Question: What are the benefits of using this technology?

Answer: The greatest benefit is savings. By visiting the video conferencing location in Warm Springs, you will not only save money on travel expenses to the nearest field office, but you'll also save time traveling and waiting in line. It's that convenience that makes this exciting new service option so appealing. In just a few minutes, you can be speaking directly with a representative, as if you were right across the desk.

Question: What kinds of business can be conducted using this system?

Answer: Many key services are offered. You can file for re-

irement, spouse's or even disability benefits; apply for extra help with Medicare prescription drug costs; request proof of income letter or Social Security statement; and change your address or phone number.

Although requests for new or replacement Social Security number cards can be made, certain proofs must be sent to the Social Security office for verification.

A list of acceptable identity and other documents can be found on the website: www.Socialsecurity.gov.

If you are considering disability benefits, you may prefer to apply online by completing the "Adult Disability and Work History" report. You can do this at: www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityreport.

Question: Can a person make an appointment to file for benefits at the Warm Springs site?

Answer: Yes! Call us toll free at 1-800-772-1213 to schedule. A confirmation letter will be mailed indicating the time and location of the appointment. It will describe what to do when you arrive. This notice may also ask that you bring certain documents with you that are needed to process your benefit application.

Question: What happens if the documents are needed?

Answer: Documents can be held up to the camera so that the Social Security representative may view them. However, they may also need to be sent to the office for verification.

Question: When and where is this new service option available?

Answer: Service is available on Thursdays from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Bureau of Indian Affairs/Warm Springs Agency, located at 1233 Veterans Street. The service is also available on line at www.socialsecurity.gov; or by calling 1-800-772-1213.

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