



**Host Site:** Appalachian Research and Defense Fund of KY, Inc.

**Project:** Social Security/SSI Crisis Fellow

**Location:** Prestonburg, KY

**Description of Fellow Project:**

This Fellowship will primarily involve assisting the former clients of private attorney Eric C. Conn who are facing reviews of their Social Security Disability and/or SSI benefits. Since 2015, AppalReD Legal Aid has dealt with this Social Security Disability/SSI crisis in eastern Kentucky. For more information on the crisis, please see <https://www.kentucky.com/news/state/article198929079.html>.

At first, about 1,500 people had their Social Security Disability and/or SSI benefits reviewed because of fraud involving attorney Eric C. Conn, certain doctors, and an administrative law judge (ALJ). The claimants were not involved in the fraud. In 2018, AppalReD Legal Aid received word that 2,000 more people would have their Social Security Disability and/or SSI benefits reviewed as a result of the fraud. We believe even more claimants will have to face this review process. AppalReD Legal Aid attorneys are representing many of these claimants, and AppalReD Legal Aid has helped mobilize a huge pro bono effort to assist the claimants as well.

The Fellow will assist AppalReD Legal Aid attorneys in handling these cases at the ALJ and appeal levels. The work will involve interviewing clients, reviewing and summarizing medical records, performing legal research, drafting memoranda, and completing other tasks. If feasible, the fellow will represent one or more of these claimants at ALJ hearings under the supervision of an AppalReD Legal Aid attorney. The Fellow will also assist AppalReD Legal Aid's Prestonsburg office and AppalReD Legal Aid's director of advocacy with general practice including client interviewing and intake, legal research, drafting, outreach, and other tasks.

