

Representative Payee Program

The Representative Payee Program, as part of the AARP Foundation Money Management Program, recruits and trains AARP volunteers to help manage the financial affairs of persons incapable of handling their own finances.

The program serves low-income people who are most vulnerable to financial exploitation or neglect: those who are isolated, have mental or physical disabilities, and have limited income, usually from Social Security, SSI or other governmental benefits.

Representative payee services involve the complete financial management of a government benefit on behalf of a person determined incapable by a physician. A volunteer is appointed as a representative payee by a U.S. government agency (Social Security Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Personnel Management, or Railroad Retirement Board). The benefit check is usually deposited directly to the bank account from which the payee pays the client's bills. All representative payee/clients who are participating in this program have their payee bank accounts monitored to assure the volunteers are spending the clients' funds in the clients' best interests. AARP Foundation provides the program materials and insurance coverage of the client's funds.

In a survey of AARP representative

payee volunteers, the primary problems causing clients to need representative payee services were mental disability (59%), physical disability (28%), and exploitation by others (20%).

This Representative Payee Program has established that older volunteers are willing and able to provide quality money management services over a long period of time to the same clients. In providing these services, volunteers reduced the risk of the older person losing his or her independence and almost 80% when asked if they made a big difference in people's lives gave the program an 8 or higher on a scale of 1-10.

In 2003, the Representative Payee Program Volunteers served more than 1800 people, such as:

A neighbor referred Margaret, a 78 year old woman who was being victimized by a relative who kept her money after cashing her monthly Social Security checks. By arranging for Margaret to have a Representative Payee volunteer and to have her checks deposited directly to the bank, we were able to stop this financial abuse.

The Money Management Program is part of the AARP Foundation, AARP's affiliated charity.