My name is Brandy Novicka I’m a 37 year old self-advocate. I have lived in Las Vegas Nevada for 13 years. I have been living a nightmare here being neglected and getting the proper financial assistance to not become homeless.

I also am a single mother who my daughter just turned 10. Im going to go back to the beginning and explain just exactly how i have been mistreated here in Nevada.

in 2006 i applied for Social Security Disability after i had been fired from my job after 4 months for no good reason. See it all started with having severe Scoliosis and i had my first spinal fusion in 1993. I have a double curve, better known as a “S” curve. the top curve was only fused because at the time my bottom curve wasn’t as bad. Now after going through puberty i was facing another diagnosis, Kyphosis. This means that my lower curve not only became worse but the spine started to twist. At the age of 23 i had to have the rods taken out due to the complications of my spine twisting. At this job in 2005 my back scars were visible with the uniform. I had 2, one straight down the middle of the back and one on my right hip where they had to do a bone graft: twice.

I was having a hard time finding suitable work here for myself. i was successfully denied for being disabled in 2006.

In 2008 a new MRI would find i also had Spondylolthesis and also Spondylolysis. In other words the lowest part of my spine had shifted and was deteriorating on it own. One month after I became pregnant. I was told that the baby may not survive because my spine is so badly twisted that the baby may suffocate because all my organs are smushed together. I knew i would have to have a c-section and was a high risk pregnancy. I was working up until 5 1/2 months when i was put on bed rest. I didn’t have insurance and applied for wellfare. My daughters due date was in the beginning of December 2008. On October 31,2008 i was denied welfare with it stating i had no proof of pregnancy. Which i did have proof, i absolutely followed all the requested evidence. When i went to welfare to address these issues in person, the women at the front desk told me “Go back where you came from”

Wow!

So after being turned down i finally was able to get approved for WIC.

I was forced back into working because i needed the insurance and the money to support us.

I again filed for Disability in 2012, with having more MRI reports backing my diagnosis and adding in newer diagnosis. All spine related.

I also had been diagnosed with Spina Bifida. Now not all Spina Diagnosis is the same and there is absolutely no cure. I was born this way, now back in the 80’s we didn’t have the medical equipment like we do today. And i still had functioning legs, but not great. I have always had a dragging leg. And always have had such severe pain. I have tried everything possible, pain medications, cortisone injections, nerve blocks, massages, physical therapy.

In 2013 i lost my job and again applied for assistance with welfare and social services. I knew what i had been through before so i made sure to do everything possible to get me and my daughter the help we needed. I jumped through every hoop, attended every class welfare told me to, and was denied assistance AGAIN!

So no job, single mom, Spinal Bifida and i was denied SNAP and medicaid and rental assistance.

Three years ago my health declined and i was working but only working 20 hours a week because of my health. I was scared because the pain radiation down my legs into my feet were unbearable and i knew something was even more wrong. In January of 2018 i was sent in for another MRI and a CT scan. The results were devastating. I was losing my legs and the Spina Bifida was taking over and to top it all off my spine was actually broken; this is called Pars Defect.

A huge part of my spine was missing, i also had lost 1 inch of height from my spine shifting and also diagnosed with Degenerative Disk Disease. One full disk had also completely worn down.

Now i have been with my spine doctor here for 11 years. He unfortunately knew it was just a matter of time when this was going to happen. Im now 37, with the diagnosis of Spina Bifida, Severe Scoliosis, Kyphosis, Spondylolthesis, Spondylolysis, Pars Defect, Degenerative Disk Disease, Arthritis and Depression.

I was given with the only option being my 3rd spinal fusion. Date was set for June 30 2018. In preparation to surgery i for the 3rd time needed to apply for SSD. I also got representation for this time around. I started my SSD app in April of 2018. My spine Doctor also completely was backing my claim.

Now knowing what i have been through here all these years i was mentally preparing myself for the mess of applying to welfare, social services here.

Now prior to surgery i knew for 6-8 weeks i would not be able to drive myself anywhere. I applied for SNAP 3 weeks prior to surgery and also provided them a note from my spine surgeon explaining that i will not be working and wouldn’t be able to go anywhere to get assistance.

I was denied because i made $49.00 too much

In August 23,2018 i was able to drive to welfare to re apply for help. Wow i was actually approved for SNAP and medicaid. I was also informed that SSD denied my claim August 20 2018. When i received the denied letter it stated that my diagnosis wasn’t Severe ENOUGH.

HOW MANY SPINE FUSIONS DO I HAVE TO GO THROUGH BEFORE ITS SERIOUS ENOUGH??

my lawyer was absolutely stunned that i was denied, my doctors as well.

Spina Bifida is a listed blue book disability.

September 7 2018. I woke up to the worst news possible, my brother in law of 23 years had committed suicide.

Now knowing I’m out of money and can’t work because the surgery alone is a 1 year recovery, lets add this to my list. And definitely my family can’t support me, even more so after a suicide, leaving my sister and 2 teenage kids without a father.

I had to go to Social Services that following weeks to apply for rental assistance. I provided every document they needed with one being my bank statement.

When the worker was looking over everything she seen that i went out of town and made a few transactions, she made a horrible comment assuming she knew why i left and then said i should ask my family to help me. I had to hold back my tears and anger.

I went out of town because i went to a funeral. And family bought my ticket there.

Social services flat out laughed at me and treated me like another number. She also laughed at me when i asked about section 8 “ oh sweetie thats a 2-3 year wait list, good luck with that!”

Is this how Federal Employees are trained? To laugh and belittle people?

I was told that because of my SSD claim is in Appeal they couldn’t assist me.

Now its almost October 2018 and I’m so angry about the system here. I have been pawned off to someone else more times than i can keep up with. I started contacting news stations and every single politician here. How can a single disabled mother not get any assistance to keep a roof over our head?

I have been given the “Royal pages” about 10 times and let me tell you all of those resources are a complete joke. Either they say that they have zero funds available or its not a working number or simply they can’t help me.

What is going on here?

Im not getting any real guidance or solutions. Just being pawned off to someone else who doesn’t know how to help me.

I went to Independent living after i met them at a disability event October 17 2018, mind you none told me about this event i found it on social media.

I was chosen November 17 2018 to apply for section 8 because i am a disabled single mom. We were told the vouchers would go out by December 10 2018.

Great! i could possibly relocate and stop stressing about money that i don’t have to pay rent.

Now it took 5 months and after many calls and emails i was finally assigned a social worker. Social workers from my understanding help people, well like me?

right?

My Social worker has no clue how to help me.

Instead of healing my spine i have taken on a job of a social worker. I do more than what these people get paid for.

wow

Please tell me why a paid social worker has no clue how to assist me?

We are in February 2019. Where is my section 8 voucher?

Independent Living, cant answer that question either.

On January 21 2019 i went to the National Disability Conference in Henderson. I summed up this story in 3 minutes. There was another person who runs a Disability Advocate Center also stating that these section 8 vouchers are missing.

Where are the vouchers?

Also i was approached by a few on the panel stating that i shouldn’t of been denied because Spina Bifida is a named Disability. Also it was said that these rules should apply nationwide and not state to state, but it seems that Nevada has their own rules.

So after spending my 7 months of recovering having to go in person to these agencies that can take hours of my day away and also cause me much pain because sitting up hurts me so bad, I’m still not knowing how me and my daughter will survive.

If government agencies help poor, disabled people why am i not getting help?

There are some serious issues here and i believe drastic measures need to be taken

1. these government workers need to be better trained

2. Investigations should be put in to play to see where funds and section 8 vouchers are going

3. if a person who has listed disabilities shouldn’t be denied, let alone 3 times.

4. While people who are waiting for disability i have been told it takes 2-3 years. There must be some sort of bridge to make sure these disabled people do not became homeless.

When you are in pain you already deal with a lot, it shouldn’t take people so many months and so many hoops to go through to get assistance.

I would like to receive the proper help i have paid into for 21 years.

My spine will never be fixed you can’t replace it.

I would like to see these government agencies be better informed and trained to truly help disabled people. We are people. Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope we can resolve these issues. I also have a paper trail of everything i have stated and have names of every single person i have came in contact with.

Thank you,

Brandy Novicka