

HEALTH WATCH

Clinical Center at Mount Sinai

Social Worker Profile: Jocelyn Pletz

Finding inspiration in WTC responders

Helping 9/11 responders file Workers' Compensation cases is a large part of the job for Jocelyn Pletz, MSW, a benefits counselor at the WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program. She makes sure forms are filled out properly and sent to the right places. She talks to her patients' lawyers to check that everything is in order.

Workers' Compensation benefits

are essential to sick and injured 9/11 responders. One of the things that Ms. Pletz finds fulfilling is that she gets to help her patients' cases move forward. And she can empower them to speak up for themselves.

"When they go to court, they can get lost in the system," Ms. Pletz said. "The system is not personal. But they can ask the judge questions, they have rights. They can ask their lawyers to



Jocelyn Pletz, MSW, left, assists Shayla Rivera with Workers' Compensation documents.

explain things to them. They're capable of doing a lot of things for themselves. They just need guidance."

The guidance can be descriptions of what to expect during a Workers' Compensation hearing, or explanations of proposed settlements. Ms. Pletz wants her patients to make educated decisions about what lies ahead.

Listening to her patients

In addition to assisting and advocating for patients, Ms. Pletz, along with the other counselors at the program, provides emotional support that can be as crucial to patients as contacting the Workers' Compensation Board to check on the status of their claims.

The filing process is long and complicated, and cases can go on for years before patients see any benefits. As a result, most 9/11 responders who await benefits now are facing a new and difficult ordeal. They had been healthy, working people who have suddenly become unable to do their jobs. These

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Benefits Counseling Services for WTC Responders

Participants who come in for their monitoring exams can request to see a benefits counselor during their visit. The doctor, nurse, or another clinician may also refer patients if they see a need. Once with a counselor, patients can explain their needs and ask questions. The benefits staff, experienced in educating and advocating for WTC responders, is also thoroughly knowledgeable about other benefits available to their patients. These include health insurance programs, Social Security, union benefits, public benefits, financial assistance and help with housing.

Services are available in English, Spanish and Polish. Other languages available upon request.

Participants can receive assistance with:

- Workers' Compensation
- Social Security Disability
- Crime Victims Board
- Finding health insurance coverage
- Referrals for mental health
- Referrals for housing and immigration court advocacy
- Income replacement
- Vocational retraining
- Emergency assistance for utilities, eviction, food

To make a monitoring exam appointment, call 888-702-0630.

For a benefits counseling appointment between exams, call 212-241-7304.

Preserve your right to file WTC-related Workers' Compensation claims for the rest of your life. Register for WTC-12. Legal help is available.

– details on page 2

Workers' Compensation Filing Date Extended for WTC Responders

REGISTER NOW!

All WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program participants are encouraged to register to protect their right to file for future Workers' Compensation benefits.



Whether or not you have already filed a claim, whether you are sick or well, everyone is encouraged to file in case you get sick in the future.

Come to one of our FREE Walk-in Legal Clinics for assistance in filling out the WTC-12 form.

To protect your rights, you must register with the New York State Workers' Compensation Board by August 14, 2007.

Walk-in Legal Clinics

All sessions will provide assistance in English/Spanish. See below for Polish assistance.

Thursday, July 5th	12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Thursday, July 12th	12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Thursday, July 19th	12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Polish is also available)
Thursday, July 26th	12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Thursday, August 2nd	12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Thursday, August 9th	12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Location: WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program Clinical Center at Mount Sinai — 10 East 101st Street, Room 130

You do not need to sign up in advance, but for more information, please call 212-241-6307.

WTC WELLNESS GROUP

A group for adults who wish to incorporate more healthful practices into their lives and to manage stress and promote feelings of well-being.

Problems may include:

- Difficulty controlling worry
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Avoiding situations or tasks due to anxiety
- Dealing with the stress of serious medical conditions
- Panic attacks — Participants will learn how to:
- Change thinking patterns that create anxiety
- Manage the uncomfortable physical sensations of anxiety
- Effectively confront feared situations and events
- Enjoy life without being restricted by anxiety and fear

June 27, 2007—*Nutrition and Movement
How to get your body going again?*

July 11, 2007—*Meditation and Spirituality*

July 25, 2007—*Review and Practice Session*

Location: 1160 5th Avenue, Room E, New York, NY
Time: 11:00 a.m.

More dates will be added. If you need further information, please feel free to call Tricia Stephens at 212-241-5705.

Jocelyn Pletz

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construction workers, emergency and law enforcement personnel and many others who can no longer work are in the midst of a painful transition.

Ms. Pletz believes she helps her patients through this transition by listening to them talk about what they are going through.

"The social work services here give them a chance to know their story is heard," explained Ms. Pletz, "and a place where they feel safe to come to deal with these things. My

job is to guide them through the waiting time."

Besides Workers' Compensation, the benefits counseling staff also provide assistance in obtaining health insurance coverage and other benefits (see box on page 1 for full description of available services). Patients can confront unexpected difficulties, such as a sister who suffers from breast cancer, or a child who needs a scholarship.

"A lot of what I do is crisis intervention. You look at the folder and it will talk about Workers' Comp, but the patient comes with an eviction

notice. When you're working with a person, you try to be sensitive to what each patient is dealing with — even though things don't look like they're WTC-related."

Ms. Pletz joined the benefits counseling team in 2006, and since then she has seen hundreds of 9/11 responders. What she finds most fulfilling about her work is seeing how her patients cope with what is sometimes the most difficult time in their lives.

"How they've been able to adapt and survive is incredible, how resilient they are in the face of all these obstacles — I find that inspiring," she said.