



Hypoparathyroidism Conference

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Office of Disability Programs

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Associate Commissioner



SSA's Two Disability Programs

- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)





Social Security Disability Insurance

- Paid for by Social Security taxes
- Based on a record of earnings for work you performed under Social Security
- 5-month waiting period after disability benefits are awarded
- Monthly disability benefit is based on your average lifetime earnings
- Eligible for Medicare after two years





Supplemental Security Income

- Means-tested program
- Eligible for Medicaid
- Makes monthly payments to:



- **Adults** who have limited income and financial resources and are age 65 or older, blind, or disabled

- **Disabled children** from birth to age 18





Social Security's Definition of Disability

- The inability to engage in any **substantial gainful activity**
- By reason of any **medically determinable impairment(s)** (physical or mental)
- Which can be expected to result in **death** or
- Which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than **12 months**

SSA does not pay partial or short-term disability benefits



Medically Determinable Impairment(s)

- A physical or mental impairment
- Resulting from anatomical, physiological, or psychological abnormalities
- Which can be shown by medically acceptable clinical and laboratory diagnostic techniques
- And must be established by medical evidence consisting of signs, symptoms, and laboratory findings





Applying for Disability Benefits

The claimant can:

- **Apply online** at www.socialsecurity.gov



OR

- **Schedule an appointment** by calling SSA's national 800 number (1-800-772-1213) or contacting the local Social Security Office





The Disability Interview

During the interview, the Claims Representative (CR) explains to the claimant:

- SSA's definition of disability
- The disability process
- Program requirements



The CR also obtains the required applications and forms, including release slip.



Daily Activities

Some helpful hints



The Electronic Claim

After the interview, the CR forwards the electronic claim from the **SSA Field Office** to the **Disability Determination Services (DDS)** office usually in the state where the claimant lives.





The Disability Determination Service (DDS)

- The DDS is a State agency responsible for developing medical evidence and rendering the initial determination on whether a claimant is disabled or blind under the Social Security Act.

- DDSs are fully funded by the Federal Government.



The Disability Examiner (DE)

The DDS DE reviews the electronic claim for:

- Disability reports
- Medical release authorization and claimant-supplied medical records
- Vocational information:
 - Age
 - Education
 - Past work information





The Disability Examiner (cont.)

The DDS DE:

- Verifies that there is sufficient medical evidence to make a determination
- Verifies that all medical documentation is complete
- Requests additional evidence (if needed)
- Resolves conflicts in the evidence:
 - MER
 - CE

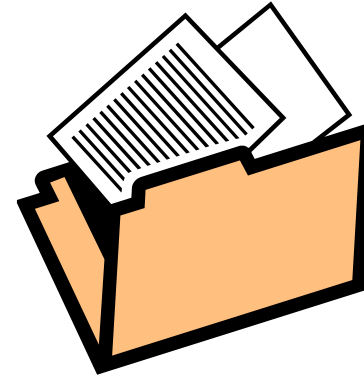




Case Development Process

Types of evidence include:

- Medical records
- Vocational information
- Activities of daily living and pain questionnaire
- Third-party information (for example, a teacher questionnaire in the case of a disabled child claim)

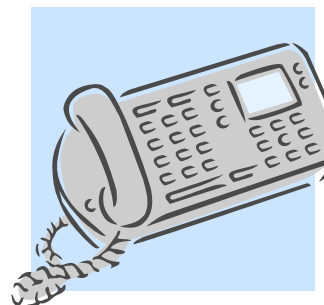




Transmittal of Evidence

The DDS receives evidence via:

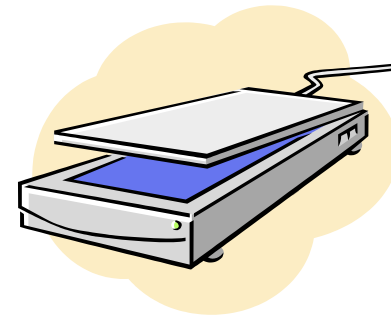
- Mail
- Telephone
- Fax
- Electronic Records Express (ERE)
- Health Infometrics





Scanning

- Most evidence is routed directly to a national scanning contractor that scans documents for SSA and DDS offices.
- Paper documents received by the DDS are scanned onsite and added to the electronic folder.
- In an electronic folder environment, the DE must work entirely with electronic data.





Developmental Milestone

Is the evidence **sufficient** to make a disability determination OR is the evidence **insufficient**?





The Medical Consultant (MC)

The MC works with the DE to make disability determinations in a DDS.





MC Review

- The MC reviews all the medical evidence.
- Assists the Disability Examiner in:
 - Case Analysis
 - Physical Residual Functional Capacity Assessment
 - Mental Residual Functional Capacity Assessment





Evidence is Sufficient

- The **DE** and **MC** work in partnership to make a disability determination.
- The DE and MC must consider **all** the evidence.





Sequential Evaluation

The disability determination follows a **sequential evaluation** process:

- 1. Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)?** – The 2011 SGA amount is \$1,000.
- 2. Severe impairment(s)?** – The impairment(s) must significantly limit the person's ability to perform one or more basic work activities.
- 3. Meets or medically equals a listing?** – The listings describe impairments for 14 body systems.



Sequential Evaluation (cont.)

4. **Prevents past relevant work?** – Compare the claimant’s Residual Functional Capacity (RFC) with the claimant’s past relevant work as the claimant described it or as generally performed in the national economy.
5. **Prevents other work?** – Compare the claimant’s RFC and vocational factors (age, education, and work experience) to the Medical-Vocational Rules.





The Determination

- If the determination is **favorable**, the Field Office is automatically alerted that the case is complete.
- If the determination is **unfavorable**, the Field Office is alerted, and a personal denial notice is prepared and sent to the claimant.
- Of all people awarded disability benefits, over **70%** are awarded their benefits **at the initial level** by the DDS.



Reconsideration

The claimant can appeal an unfavorable determination.

- In some states, case is returned to the DDS for reconsideration by staff who were not involved in the initial determination.
- Additional evidence (if any) or a CE (if necessary) is requested.
- A new determination is made.





Appeals

Request for an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) and Appeals Council (AC) review:



- The claimant has 60 days from the day of a reconsideration-level determination to request a hearing before an ALJ.
- The claimant has 60 days from the date of a hearings-level decision to request an AC review.



Overview of SSA's Hearings Process

One of the largest administrative judicial systems in the world:

- Over 1,275 Federal administrative law judges
- Over 140 Hearing Offices throughout the Country
- Over 500,000 decisions per year





Appeal Process

- Claimant files a hearing request.
- Pre-hearing case development is done (if needed).
- Case is assigned to an ALJ, and a hearing is held.
- Post-hearing development is done (if needed).
- ALJ renders a decision, at which point the 60-day period to appeal to the AC begins.



The Hearing

- Non-adversarial proceeding to determine if claimant is disabled
- Claimant appears before an ALJ in person or via video-conference
- Testimony taken under oath or affirmation
- Verbatim recording made by hearing reporter





The Hearing (cont.)

Who may testify:

- Claimant
- Child's parent or guardian
- Claimant's witnesses
- Vocational expert
- Medical expert



The claimant, the claimant's representative/attorney, and/or the ALJ may ask the witnesses questions.



Hypoparathyroidism

SSA evaluates **hypoparathyroidism** by evaluating its effects on various parts of the body and by considering the listings in the following body systems.

For example:

- Bones and muscles – musculoskeletal
- Lenticular cataracts – special senses



Hypoparathyroidism (cont.)

- Arrhythmia and heart block – cardiovascular
- Kidney dysfunction – genitourinary
- Tetany and convulsions – neurological
- Confusion, memory, loss and depression – mental
- Fatigue in ability to sustain work – Residual Functional Capacity



Hypoparathyroidism (cont.)

SSA considers:

- All the medical evidence
- Your statements about the intensity and persistence of pain or other symptoms
- The impact of all medical signs and symptoms on your functioning



If your impairment does not meet or medically equal a listing (a Step 3 determination), SSA will evaluate its effects under Step 4, and under Step 5 (if necessary) of the Sequential Evaluation process.