

Tips for Interacting with the Social Security Administration

By John Bishop, Accredited Disability Representative

List all impairments not just your main impairment. Often it is the combination of impairments, exertional (for example, limitations in the ability to push and pull, lift and stand) and non-exertional (for example, limitations in the ability to tolerate dust and fumes or remember and concentrate), that makes the difference.

Submit as much information as you can about all your treating sources (doctors, etc.). Telephone numbers are very important. Social security can make a more accurate determination if they get information from all your treating sources.

Be very accurate and write clearly when describing your past work. When I worked for the Disability Determination Services, I saw a case where the claimant was returned to his past work as a “bartender” (denial of benefits). Actually, the claimant had been a “bar bender” in a metal fabrication factory. I was able to quickly allow benefits to the claimant with just this one new fact. Vocational issues like these become very important after you attain age 50.

Submit “To Whom it May Concern” letters of support from people who can credibly comment on how your impairments limit your ability to function.

If you have been diagnosed with a learning disorder (like attention deficit hyperactive disorder, academic delay, speech and language delay), put that information on the application. Were you in Special Education?

Let Social Security know if your address and/or telephone number changes!

Use a lot of detail when responding to the Activity of Daily Living questionnaires. Sure you can take a shower, but does it take longer due to poor balance? Truthfully describe how each activity is limited. Use qualifying statements.

If your doctor supports your bid to obtain or keep disability benefits, get him or her to write a letter in support of your claim. Under certain conditions, Social Security must give “controlling weight” to your doctor’s opinion!

Keep good records of your medical treatment. Many impairments get worse over time, so if you can provide a longitudinal history of the disorder, it can help your claim.

Most importantly, always appeal each denial within the sixty day period!

If you are already getting benefits, check out the [Maximize SSI Disability Benefits](#) page.