



# News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

## **Social Security Holds Compassionate Allowances Hearing on Autoimmune Diseases**

Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security, today hosted the agency's seventh public hearing on Compassionate Allowances. Commissioner Astrue joined Robert H. Carter, Deputy Director, National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, National Institutes of Health, and other Social Security officials in hearing testimony from some of the nation's leading experts on autoimmune diseases about the possible methods of identifying and implementing Compassionate Allowances for adults and children with autoimmune diseases.

"Over 20 million Americans suffer from autoimmune conditions, which particularly affect women and children," Commissioner Astrue said. "The social and financial burdens imposed by these chronic, debilitating diseases can be devastating for individuals and their families. With this hearing, we are searching for objective medical evidence and decision rules that we can use to expedite cases for those with the most severe conditions and quickly provide them with some measure of financial security."

Social Security implemented Compassionate Allowances in October 2008 to expedite the processing of disability claims for applicants with medical conditions so severe that their conditions by definition meet Social Security's standards. Currently, 88 specific diseases and conditions qualify as a Compassionate Allowance. To learn more and to view a web cast of this hearing, go to [www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances).

"Last year, the Compassionate Allowances initiative, along with our Quick Disability Determination process, allowed us to quickly approve over 100,000 disability applications for the most severely disabled Americans," said Commissioner Astrue. "This year we expect to increase the number of fast-tracked cases to about 150,000. We also plan to expand our list of Compassionate Allowance conditions later this year, bringing it to about 100 conditions."

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