



News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

Commissioner Astrue Extends Social Security's Quick Disability Determination Nationwide

Final Rule Will Accelerate Benefits to Those Deemed Clearly Disabled

Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security, today announced that Social Security has issued a final regulation to extend the quick disability determination (QDD) process to all State disability determination services. Under QDD, a predictive model analyzes specific elements of data within the electronic claims file to identify claims where there is a high potential that the claimant is disabled and where evidence of the person's allegations can be quickly and easily obtained.

"The quick disability determination has been very successful and efficient so far in New England and I am happy to say it will help people filing for disability benefits anywhere in the United States. This is a very important step we are taking at Social Security to improve our disability programs," Commissioner Astrue said. "I also am proud of our improvements with pending disability cases that have reached 1,000 days waiting for an appeal hearing. We have aggressively worked on these cases and now have fewer than 600 pending, down from more than 63,000 cases in October of last year."

Social Security currently receives more than 2.5 million new Social Security disability cases and more than 2.3 million Supplemental Security Income cases each year. In New England, where QDD began on a test basis, cases constituted slightly less than 3 percent of all new cases. Of those, 97 percent of the cases identified have been decided within 21 days and the average decision time is 11 days. Since the model does not yet incorporate as many diseases as it can, Commissioner Astrue has committed to expanding the number of cases that can be identified while maintaining the same level of accuracy.

"The length of time many people wait for a disability decision is unacceptable," Commissioner Astrue said. "I am committed to a process that is as fair and speedy as possible. While there is no single magic bullet, with better systems, better business processes and better ways of fast-tracking targeted cases, we can greatly improve the service we provide this vulnerable population."

The final regulation is effective as of September 5, 2007, and will be gradually implemented over the next several months. For more information about Social Security's disability programs, go to www.socialsecurity.gov.

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