



# What You Should Know Before You Apply for Social Security Disability Benefits



We sent you this disability starter kit because you requested an appointment to file for disability benefits. The enclosed letter has the date, time, and location of your appointment.

The following are answers to questions most people ask about when applying for disability benefits. Knowing the answers to these questions will help you understand the process.

## ★ What can I expect during the appointment?

A Social Security representative will interview you and complete an application for disability benefits and an Adult Disability Report. The interview will take place either in your local Social Security office or by telephone. It will take at least 1 hour.

## ★ What can I do to speed up the process?

You can cut your interview time in half by starting the process online. You can complete online, BOTH the **application for benefits** and the **disability report** by going to:

*[www.socialsecurity.gov/applyfordisability](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/applyfordisability)*.

You still need to **keep your scheduled appointment** with the local Social Security office, so a representative can review your information.

If you cannot do business with us online, you can complete the enclosed Medical and Job Worksheet and have it ready for your appointment.

You can also speed things up by bringing to your office appointment the information listed on the enclosed checklist. If you have an appointment by telephone, the representative may ask you to provide any required checklist items.

## ★ How does Social Security decide if I am disabled?

By law, Social Security has a very strict definition of disability. To be found disabled:

- You must be unable to do any substantial work because of your medical condition(s);  
**and**
- Your medical condition(s) must have lasted, or be expected to last, at least 1 year, or be expected to result in your death.

## ★ My doctor says I am disabled. Is that enough to qualify me for disability benefits?

No. You cannot get disability benefits solely because your doctor says you are disabled.

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## ★ I am getting disability payments from my job or another agency. Can I automatically get Social Security disability benefits?

No. Social Security disability laws are different from most other programs. For example, Social Security does not pay benefits for partial disability.

## ★ How long does it take to make a decision?

Generally, it takes about 3 to 5 months to get a decision. However, the exact time depends on how long it takes to get your medical records and any other evidence needed to make a decision.

## ★ How does Social Security make the decision?

We send your application to a state agency that makes disability decisions. The state has medical and vocational experts who will contact your doctors and other places where you received treatment to get your medical records.

The state agency may send you forms to complete or ask you to have an examination or medical test. If the state does request an examination, **make sure you keep the appointment.** You will not have to pay for any examination or test you are sent for, by the state agency.

## ★ If Social Security decides that I am disabled, what types of benefits can I receive?

Social Security pays disability benefits under two programs:

- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for insured workers, their disabled surviving spouses, and children (disabled before age 22) of disabled, retired, or deceased workers.
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for people with little or no income and resources.

## ★ Will my personal information be kept safe?

Yes. Social Security protects the privacy of each individual we serve. As a Federal agency, we are required by the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 522a) to protect the information we get from you.

## ★ What if I am more comfortable speaking in a language other than English?

You are encouraged to bring a friend or relative to translate for you. We provide free interpreter services to help you conduct your Social Security business. However, we need advanced notice to make arrangements with the translator.

## ★ Where can I get more information?

You can visit our website at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov), ask the interviewer during your appointment, or call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call TTY 1-800-325-0778).

# Checklist – Adult Disability Interview

We encourage you to begin the application process online.

Visit [www.socialsecurity.gov/applyfordisability](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/applyfordisability) to get started!

Use this **Checklist** to get ready for your appointment or when filing online. We need your personal and income information to complete the interview to determine if you are eligible for disability benefits. Keep your appointment even if you do not have all of the information. We will help you get any missing information.

**Check off the applicable items below as you get them together for your interview.**

- Medical records already in your possession.** (We will help you get the rest of your medical records. Please bring whatever medical records you have to the interview).
- Workers' compensation information, including the settlement agreement, date of injury, claim number, and proof of other disability awarded payment amounts.
- Names and dates of birth of your minor children and your spouse.
- Dates of marriages and divorces.
- Checking or savings account number, including the bank's 9-digit routing number, if you want Direct Deposit for your benefit checks.
- Name, address, and phone number of a person we can contact if we are unable to get in touch with you.
- If a medical release Form SSA-827 (Authorization to Disclose Information to the Social Security Administration) was included with this package, please **complete** (sign and date with witness signature) **and** return it as directed.
- If unable to file online, **complete** the "Medical and Job Worksheet – Adult" and **bring** to your interview.

Bring the Checklist items and information to your appointment or have them with you if your appointment is by telephone.

**Do not delay filing your application, even if you do not have all of the information.**



### E. Medicines

Please list any medicines you take and why you take them. If prescribed, please provide the doctor's name.

NAME OF MEDICINE	WHY YOU TAKE IT	PRESCRIBED BY

### F. Medical Tests

Please list any medical tests you had or are going to have in the future.

NAME OF TEST	PROVIDER WHO SENT YOU	DATE(S)

### G. Job History

List the jobs (up to 5) that you have had in the 15 years before you became unable to work because of your physical or mental conditions. List your most recent job first.

JOB TITLE <i>(e.g., cook)</i>	TYPE OF BUSINESS <i>(e.g., restaurant)</i>	DATES WORKED		HOURS PER DAY	DAYS PER WEEK	RATE OF PAY	
		FROM Mo/Yr	TO Mo/Yr			Amount	Frequency

Bring this worksheet to your appointment or have it with you if your appointment is by telephone. Do not delay filing your application, even if you do not have all of the information. We will help you get any missing information.