

Position Information – Social Insurance Specialist (Claims Representative), GS-0105-5/7

This is the keystone position in the Social Security Administration through which the major operating objective of bringing direct personal service to the public is achieved. At the full performance level, the incumbent is expected to perform the full range of duties show below. ***If hired below the full performance level, the incumbent will perform in a trainee capacity, with assignments leading to being able to perform the full range of duties.***

Duties:

- Conducts interviews to obtain, clarify, and verify information about individual applicants' initial and continuing eligibility for retirement, survivors, disability, black lung, health insurance benefits, and eligibility for supplemental security income payments, including State supplements where required;
- Examines evidence to evaluate its validity and acceptability in establishing entitlement to benefits, and, when necessary, takes the required developmental action to insure that all available relevant evidence has been obtained. Assists the applicant in securing evidence, and prepares special determinations of fact to resolve evidentiary discrepancies;
- Finally adjudicates and finally authorizes for payment, without subsequent review, claims for benefits and eligibility to all programs administered by SSA and finally disallows, without subsequent review, a full range of all types of SSI claims, RSDHI claims lacking in insured status, RSDHI claims previously denied, disabled widow's benefits claims not meeting the prescribed period;
- Makes final reconsideration decisions on disability insurance and disabled widows cases involving reaffirmations of initial or subsequent denials of benefits not involving medical issues;
- Conducts interviews, develops, investigates, and resolves post-entitlement actions, including SSI redeterminations, which may involve suspension, resumption, or termination of eligibility or payments;
- Provides technical guidance to other employees involved in the claims process;
- Assists individuals in filing for administrative appeals in matters concerning entitlement to benefits or coverage under the various programs;
- Conducts case reviews, informal and formal conferences to reconsider initial decisions and post-eligibility decisions affecting an individual's eligibility, continuing eligibility, or amount of payment under the supplemental security income program and makes final decisions on nonmedical issues in SSI reconsiderations;
- Determines finally if applicants for or recipients of disability insurance benefits and disability payments under the SSI program are engaging in substantial gainful activity;
- Recognizes the need for and approves the selection of representative payees for individuals unable to handle their own benefits;
- Protects the integrity of SSA programs through identification, investigation, and resolution of potential program abuse situations;
- Provides referral services to individuals needing the services of other programs or organizations;
- Participates in training sessions both as student and instructor;
- Authorizes advance SSI payments and requests one time payments as necessary;
- As assigned and as necessary contributes to the office information public relations programs by making public speeches and assists in public information projects; informs superiors of trends in public reaction to social security programs;
- Protects the rights of individuals by assuring that claimants and/or their personal representative understand the claimants' legal rights and obligations under the Act and its relationship to other social welfare and benefit programs;
- Develops, investigates, and resolves discrepancies in earnings and determines amounts to be posted or deleted from individual records;
- Determines whether income is wages or self employment income and whether it is covered income under the Social Security Act;

- Screens disability applications that contain impairments which may be included in the Early Decision List (EDL) or Presumptive Disability (PD) List. Obtain medical concurrence when the claim is fully favorable.
- Makes medical allowance determinations on claims with selected disability impairments.
- Makes presumptive disability determinations on Title XVI claims based on the analysis of medical and other evidence.
- Reviews medical information and identifies claims which may require Consultative Examinations.
- Requests medical evidence from treating sources.
- Evaluates medical reports and re-contacts source(s) for clarification or additional information as necessary.
- Determines the need for special (consultative) medical examinations and coordinates the scheduling of these examinations with Disability Determination Services.
- Makes presumptive disability (PD) determinations on a variety of title XVI claims and effectuates those decisions.
- Recommends disability decisions on selected impairments.
- Develops and maintains an effective working relationship with third parties and the state DDS.
- Receives and directs the processing of food stamp applications per current procedures and policies; and
- Performs other duties as assigned and assumes new responsibilities dictated by legislative or policy changes.

Complexity:

- Subjects and issues covered in interviewing work include a complete range of substantive issues and procedural matters of the various social insurance programs and the black lung and supplemental security income programs. The development and adjudicative functions involve quasi legal matters which must be related to the individual circumstances of each applicant.
- The incumbent must carefully evaluate all facets of the claims being finally authorized.
- Informal and formal conference interviews in SSI reconsideration cases may be extremely sensitive. Due to the legal tenor of the conference interview, the incumbent must be able to deal with all issues with a high level of expertise.
- The guidelines consist, principally, of the legal regulations and procedural requirements of the various social insurance, black lung, and supplemental security income programs. These guides are numerous, extensive, and complex. Their application to distinctive cases and circumstances requires judgment and insight in applying the requirements to the needs of the individuals concerned. Work is performed under the general supervision of a district manager, assistant district manager, branch manager, or operations supervisor.

Responsibility:

- The work performed is a vital part of the functions through which the organization directly informs members of the general public about the concerned programs and extends benefits of these programs to them.
- The communicative functions are normally not subject to review. The technical adequacy of information provided is assured through occasional spot checks or observations made by the supervisor, through complaints made by claimants as to the service provided, or through a review of applications, records, letters, or other documents originated by the representative on an intermittent basis. Neither the interviews conducted nor the claims adjudicated and authorized are segregated as to type or level of difficulty.
- The representative is expected to resolve, without benefit of supervisory consultation, all but the most unusual problems; such as, those which may be precedent setting, of a delicate public relations nature, or unresolved policy issues. Technical assistance is available from the supervisor, however, it is normally expected to be requested only where precedent decisions or policy are not available.
- Claims that are finally authorized are not subject to a subsequent review. A sample of cases may be evaluated through the SSA quality appraisal system either during processing or at the end of line after payment is effectuated. SSI reconsideration decisions are subject to review only through the SSA appeals process.

Personal Contacts & Relationships:

- Personal contacts and relationships are important in that much of the work consists of conducting interviews. Coverage of the programs is so general that all segments of the general public will be encountered as potential

applicants, beneficiaries, claimants, legal representatives, employers, and sources of information. In the interviews, the purpose of contacts includes eliciting specific items of information, explaining substantive and procedural requirements, and interpreting program concepts. Interviews must be conducted in a tactful and courteous manner.

Physical Demands & Work Environment:

- The incumbents' official duty station may be a district office, branch office, or other established field facility. Duties assigned may also be performed in contact stations, other temporary locations, or in institutions, hospitals, or other locations as designated by supervisors.