

The SSDI and SSI Disability Process

Facts and Figures

3,160,000

DISABILITY APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED
(SSDI and SSI)

65%

GO TO THE INITIAL
MEDICAL ANALYSIS

35%

GIVEN INITIAL
TECHNICAL DENIAL

COMMON REASONS FOR A TECHNICAL DENIAL

- 1 You are working and making more than the "substantial gainful activity" (SGA) limit set by the SSA.
- 2 You applied for SSDI and haven't earned enough recent Social Security work credits to be eligible for benefits.
- 3 You applied for SSI and you have too many assets or too much household income.
- 4 The SSA is unable to contact you.

5-STEP EVALUATION METHOD

(AS APPLIED BY THE DISABILITY DETERMINATION EXAMINER)

- 1 Are you working and, if so, how much?
- 2 Is at least one of your conditions medically determinable and severe?
- 3 Does your impairment match the requirements of one of the SSA's impairment listing?
- 4 If not, can you return to one of your prior jobs?
- 5 If not, can you switch to a less physically or mentally demanding type of work?

38%

AWARDED BENEFITS

62%

APPLICATIONS DENIED

40%

OF THOSE DENIED
GO ON TO APPEAL

APPEAL PROCESS

1 RECONSIDERATION

Reconsideration happens at the state Disability Determination Services (DDS) agency. You can submit new evidence of your disability with your Request for Reconsideration, and a different claims examiner will review your application.

15%

OF PEOPLE
APPROVED

85%

OF PEOPLE
DENIED

66%

CONTINUE ON
WITH THE
APPEAL PROCESS

★ DID YOU KNOW? ★

States with the highest rate of people receiving SSDI benefits (6% or more) are Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, West Virginia, and Maine.

States with the lowest percentages (less than 3%) are Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Texas, Utah, and D.C.

★ DID YOU KNOW? ★

The average age of a Social Security disability recipient is 55.6 years old.

The largest group of recipients is between 60 and 64 years old.

2 HEARING BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE

An administrative law judge (ALJ) at your hearing will review your medical records and work history. The council will decide if the ALJ committed any legal or procedural errors and considered the evidence properly. The Appeals Council can award you benefits, deny your request for review and take no action on your case, or return the case to the ALJ for a new decision.

51%

OF PEOPLE
APPROVED

49%

OF PEOPLE
DENIED OR
DISMISSED

IF DENIED, MAY APPEAL FURTHER

3 REVIEW AT THE APPEALS COUNCIL

The Appeals Council reviews the judge's decision and certain additional evidence you submit. The council will decide if the ALJ committed any legal or procedural errors and considered the evidence properly. The Appeals Council can award you benefits, deny your request for review and take no action on your case, or return the case to the ALJ for a new decision.

1%

OF PEOPLE
APPROVED

12%

OF PEOPLE
SENT BACK
TO HEARING

87%

OF PEOPLE
DENIED OR
DISMISSED

IF DENIED, MAY APPEAL FURTHER

4 REVIEW IN FEDERAL COURT

A federal judge will hold a hearing and can decide to award you benefits, send your case back to Social Security for another hearing, or dismiss or deny your claim.

1%

OF PEOPLE
APPROVED

58%

OF PEOPLE
SENT BACK
TO HEARING

41%

OF PEOPLE
DENIED OR
DISMISSED

★★ DID YOU KNOW? ★★

The average monthly SSDI benefit for a disabled worker is \$1,537.

The average SSDI benefit for a disabled worker, spouse, and children is \$2,720.

The average SSI benefit for a disabled or blind adult is \$674.