



SSA Disability Benefit Application Process

Application Initiated

The SSI/SSDI application process starts when an individual, or their duly authorized representative, first contacts the Social Security Administration (SSA) to request benefits.

- Individual contacts SSA in person via phone, fax, mail, or online submission, establishing the protective filing date.
- Once the protective filing date is set, the application must be submitted within 60 days.

SSA Determines Non-Medical Eligibility

An SSA claims representative assembles and reviews the non-medical information.

SSA Transfers Claim to DDS

If the application meets non-medical eligibility requirements, SSA sends it to the state's Disability Determination Services (DDS), which is under contract to SSA.

DDS Determines Medical Eligibility

DDS assigns a disability examiner (a.k.a. "disability adjudicator"), who sends requests for medical records to all listed treatment providers.

- Medical, functional, work, and other information is assembled and reviewed.

DDS Returns Record to SSA

DDS returns applicant's electronic record to initiating SSA office with a decision on medical eligibility.

SSA Notifies Applicant

SSA notifies the applicant of the determination decision by letter. If approved, the applicant may need to confirm information or establish a representative payee at the SSA office.