

What Can You Do to Prepare for a Hearing, If You Do Not Have a Social Security Lawyer?

Q: If you have filed an appeal to have your disability case heard before an administrative judge, what things should you do to prepare yourself?

A: What can be a long process for some disability claims culminates in a scheduled hearing, which gives the claimant a final chance to thoroughly present the aspects of his case. It is important, therefore, to be ready for your hearing. Having an advocate like a social security lawyer on your side during the process can be extremely beneficial. The majority of claims that receive approval after the hearing process are represented by a social security lawyer. Although your attorney will help assure you are prepared, there are some things you can do to feel confident going into your hearing. First, know when and where your hearing is scheduled. Know which route you are going to take and where to park. Build in plenty of transportation time, so you will not be late. Being tardy to your scheduled appointment will likely mean your claim cannot be heard, which will result in long delays due to rescheduling. It is in your best interest to have your case heard as soon as possible. Once in the hearing room, be respectful of the etiquette required in legal proceedings and wear suitable attire. Another helpful item to assure that you are ready for your scheduled hearing is confirming that the court office has received the most recent medical records for your claim. A judge will not be able to fairly make a decision on your case without the most current and comprehensive information. Your social security lawyer will handle this for you, if you have one. The last helpful hint is simply to understand your own case. Again, this is less crucial for those represented by an attorney, since he or she will have a copy of your file and be well versed on its contents. For those who will not be represented by an attorney, requesting a copy and reviewing the files in advance of the scheduled hearing is crucial. It is your right to obtain a copy of your file to allow you to prepare. It is best to make that request as soon as you file your appeal, so you can begin to familiarize yourself with the contents well before your court appearance.

Q: Can a claimant check in on where a disability case is in the process, or can only a [social security lawyer](#) do that?

A: A social security lawyer will keep tabs on where your case is in the process, but if you do not have one, it is smart to do it yourself. It is usually easiest to touch base with the examiner assigned to your claim, rather than the office where you filed your claim. You will need to call your local office, if you need the specific details for the disability examiner assigned to your case. Make sure to tell them that you are calling regarding the status of your claim. Alternatively, the official government web site for Social Security allows you to obtain your claim status.

Q: Are you allowed to submit a disability application with Social Security via the internet?

A: Yes, you can apply online. Go to www.ssa.gov/onlineservices and follow the instructions. The site also has some tools to help you determine if you qualify for benefits and estimate payments.

About the Author

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