

## **What is the definition of disability?**

Disability under Social Security is based on your inability to work. The Social Security Administration considers you disabled under Social Security rules if:

- You cannot do work that you did before;
- We decide that you cannot adjust to other work because of your medical condition(s); and
- Your disability has lasted or is expected to last for at least one year or to result in death.

This is a strict definition of disability.

Social Security pays only for total disability. No benefits are payable for partial disability or short-term disability.

## **What is Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)?**

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) disability benefits are payable to blind or disabled workers, their children, widow(er)s, and adults disabled since childhood. The monthly disability benefit is based on the Social Security earnings record of the insured worker. The worker will get Medicare coverage automatically after receiving disability benefits for two years. This program is financed with Social Security taxes paid by workers, employers, and self-employed person.

## **What is Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?**

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program provides monthly income to people 65 or older, blind or disabled who have limited income and financial resources. To receive SSI, your financial resources (savings and assets you own) cannot exceed \$2,000 or \$3,000 if you are married. The monthly payment varies up to the maximum federal benefit rate, which may be supplemented by the state. In most states, beneficiaries will automatically be eligible for Medicaid. This program is financed through general revenues from taxes, meaning benefits are not based on your prior work history.

## **What is the Compassionate Allowances Initiative?**

The Compassionate Allowances (CAL) initiative is a way to expedite the processing of SSDI and SSI disability claims for applicants whose medical conditions are so severe that their conditions obviously meet Social Security's definition of disability.

Compassionate Allowances permit Social Security to quickly target the most obviously disabled individuals for approval based on objective medical information that they can obtain quickly.

In 2008, the Social Security Administration (SSA) implemented the Compassionate Allowances initiative with 50 conditions. Currently, there are 113 conditions with 52 more conditions scheduled to be added on August 13, 2012.

## **Which conditions are expedited under the Compassionate Allowance Initiative?**

For a list of these conditions, please visit the [Compassionate Allowances](#) page.

## **How are conditions added to the list of Compassionate Allowances?**

CAL conditions are developed as a result of information received at public outreach hearings, comments received from the Social Security and Disability Determination Service communities, counsel of medical and scientific experts, and research with the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Also, the Social Security Administration considers which conditions are most likely to meet the current definition of disability.

## **How does a person with a Compassionate Allowances apply for disability?**

There is no special application or form that is unique to the CAL initiative. Individuals with a CAL condition apply for benefits using the standard SSA process for filing for benefits. SSA will expedite the applications of those with a CAL condition. Applications may be filed [online](#), in the local [field office](#), or by calling our toll-free number 1-800-772-1213. To learn how to apply for disability benefits please click [How You Apply](#).

## **Is Multiple Sclerosis an approved condition under the Compassionate Allowances Initiative?**

Yes, in December 2011, Social Security added an advanced form of MS, Malignant MS, to the list of CAL conditions. This condition includes individuals who live with advanced MS, aggressive MS, Fulminant MS, or Marburg's Variant MS.

Each CAL condition has an associated impairment summary that provides the adjudicator with the types of medical evidence needed to expedite the processing of

CAL cases. To see SSA's impairment summary for malignant MS, click [here](#). Please contact The National Multiple Sclerosis Society at 1.800.344.4867 for more information.

### **Why is Malignant Multiple Sclerosis the only form of MS on the list of Compassionate Allowances?**

Although multiple sclerosis is a very serious medical condition, the way that it affects each individual differs. Some people may experience symptoms for short periods and afterwards may remain symptom free, in some cases for months or years. Malignant multiple sclerosis is an aggressive and rare form of MS that causes a rapid decline in functioning. Because of the variable manner in which other types of multiple sclerosis affects the lives of people living with this disorder, Social Security must evaluate each case individually.

### **Is it possible for the Social Security Administration to consider other forms of MS to add to the list of CAL conditions?**

Yes, SSA and the Society maintain open dialogue to update information about malignant multiple sclerosis and to consider other forms of MS for future CAL list expansions.

### **How long does it take SSA to make a decision on a claim for individuals with Compassionate Allowances conditions?**

Individuals with CAL conditions may receive a decision on their claim in a matter of weeks instead of months or years. For more information about the application process, SSA has a disability planner available at [www.socialsecurity.gov/dibplan](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/dibplan).

For additional information on Social Security Disability applications please refer to the National MS Society's website: <http://www.nationalmssociety.org/government-affairs-and-advocacy/government-programs/social-security-disability/index.aspx>