

OREGON LAW PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

Opening Social Security TIFF Records

To obtain the medical information used to make a decision on a [Social Security claim](#), the claimant or claimant's lawyer must [request](#) a copy of the claimant's medical file. [These records](#) are maintained electronically and provided to the claimant or her lawyer on a CD in [TIFF](#) format. Once received, the next challenge becomes accessing the CD.

If you attempt to open the [TIFF](#) files directly in a photo viewer, you will receive an error message. Instead, insert the CD in your [CD-ROM](#) drive, locate the application file loaded on the CD, and double-click the application to run it. The application will display a dialog box with fields for "Account" and "Password." Follow these non-intuitive steps to access the [TIFF](#) files:

1. The lawyer or claimant's name will appear in the "Account" field. Delete it completely.
2. In the "Account" field, which is now blank, type "ssa" (lowercase, no quotation marks or spaces.)
3. In the "Password" field, enter the first four characters of the claimant's first name, then the # sign, followed by the last four digits of the claimant's social security number. (No spaces.)

Here is an example. Assume the claimant's name is Beverly Michaelis and the last four digits of Beverly's social security number are 1234, the "Account" and "Password" fields would be completed as follows:

Account	ssa
Password	Beve#1234

When the list of [TIFF](#) files appear, you will note they are numbered with file size identified. All files will have the same date – the date the CD was prepared. File are not otherwise labeled and don't appear to follow any particular format (chronological, type (chart note, report, earnings report). You will need to open each file to see what it contains.

Some parting tips:

- Once a [TIFF](#) file is opened, you may not be able to open it again – at least this has been my experience. Option 1: If you want a copy of the file, make a copy and save it to a local or network drive *while you are viewing the record*. Option 2: print it immediately.
- Be sure to open [TIFF](#) files one at a time – as we were forewarned by our local SSA office. The file format and application tend to give your computer's memory a run for the money.
- If you forget to copy or print a file while viewing it, you can always go back to the list of files on the CD, select the desired file with your mouse, then use the "Copy" command in the menu. (When viewing the list of files, using the keyboard shortcut <ctrl A> will select everything. You can then save a complete copy of all files on the CD to your local or network drive.)
- Once the [TIFF](#) files are saved out of the password-protected CD onto your local drive or network, you can view them with any photo viewing program.

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