

FIVE FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY ATTORNEY

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After you have decided that you need help with your Social Security Disability claim, you need to find the best lawyer for you. Your decision does not have to be based solely on the amount of the attorney's fee because attorney fees are regulated by the Social Security Administration. The Social Security Administration must approve any fee paid. Attorneys practicing in this area normally charge the same 25% contingency fee, so when you select an attorney, fees should not be the most important factor. .

Here are five factors that are important when selecting a social security disability lawyer for your case:

- ***Hire a Real Attorney***

Many claimants do not realize that you do not have to be an attorney to represent someone seeking Social Security Disability from the Social Security Administration. A claimant's representative does not have to have any credentials or experience; however non-attorney representatives charge the same fee as a lawyer would and often use the same contingency fee agreement. Many claimants may assume that they have hired an attorney when they have not. Experience shows that attorneys generally have several years more education and training than a non-attorney. Additionally many attorneys have represented individuals in all types of court proceedings, before many different judges and have vast experience in helping individuals prepare their case and present their case, including testifying in court. This education, training and experience make a big difference and makes attorneys highly qualified to help individuals successfully prosecute claims for Social Security Disability.

- ***Hire an experienced and highly qualified attorney***

Social Security is a surprisingly complicated area of law. It has rules and procedures that are unique to the Social Security Administration. Your lawyer must follow these rules & procedures to prove that you are disabled & entitled to

Social Security Disability. You want to hire an attorney who devotes a substantial portion of his legal practice to Social Security Disability. Because Social Security law is unique, look for a lawyer who devotes substantial time and resources to Social Security Disability. Experience can make an important difference. Look for someone who has conducted hundreds of hearings before an Administrative Law Judge seeking Social Security Disability for individuals.

- ***Hire someone who is in your state or practices law close to your location***

Because a Social Security disability claim is a federal administrative proceeding, representation does not have state boundaries. A lawyer or non-lawyer from any state can legally represent you in your case. By choosing an attorney in your state or at attorney who practices close to your location, you will be able to meet with the attorney much earlier in the claims process and well ahead of the hearing. If you hire an attorney out of state, your first meeting with him may not be until he flies in to attend your hearing.

We interact frequently with the staff at the local Social Security offices and maintain a good relationship with all the staff members. We also work with many of the doctors and counselors in our region. We get to know many of the local doctors and their staff. These relationships help our clients get better results and help our clients get medical opinions from the treating doctors that can make the difference between winning or losing the case.

A lawyer from your state or location will have experience in conducting hearings before most of the local Administrative Law Judges. One of these judges will decide your case. Each Judge decides a disability claim differently. Conducting a hearing tailored to the Judge in your case makes a difference. We know what to expect from the Judges in our area, and they know what to expect from us.

- ***Your lawyer should be readily available to you***

We are able to be reached by phone, email, or in person. There are times we may have to call you back. We make office visits by appointment. It is important for your lawyer and his staff to be accessible to you. At our office, you will meet with a lawyer the first time you come to the office. We will explain the Social Security Disability procedure, what we must prove to win your case and give you a good judgment about how long your case should take. We will also go over the attorney fees and put in writing the attorney fee we charge so that you know up front, in writing, what the fee will be. Beware of the case manager or a staff person that handles your case until right before the hearing when your file is handed off to the attorney conducting your hearing. I am the case manager for your case. My assistant makes appointments, helps to obtain records and other information from your doctors and the Social Security Administration, but we work together extensively on your case, and I manage your claim from the beginning.

- *Please get a lawyer involved early*

You should consider hiring a lawyer sooner rather than later. There is no cost up front, and an attorney will guide you through this difficult process.