

## If You Did Not Hire a Social Security Lawyer, Can You Still Get Copies of Your File Before a Hearing?

Q: How do you make sure you are prepared for a scheduled hearing for a social security disability claim?

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. There are several ways to make sure you are ready to face your scheduled hearing, regardless of whether you have legal representation. First, know when and where your hearing is scheduled. Map it out ahead of time, if you are unfamiliar with the location. Build in plenty of transportation time, so you will not be late. You do not want to be late for your own hearing and risk having your case rescheduled. You want a decision to be made on your claim. Always make sure you are dressed appropriately for a court appearance and are mindful of the decorum expected in a courtroom. 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. If you have a lawyer, you need not worry so much about this one since he or she will have your files and understand your case well. If you do not have a lawyer, however, it is extremely important to request a copy of your file well before your hearing date. It is your right to obtain a copy of your file to allow you to prepare. Do so as soon as your hearing has been scheduled, so you can be confident that you are prepared.

Q: If you do not have a social security lawyer, how do you get updates on a claim?

A: You can check the status of your claim even if you do not have a social security lawyer. The most direct line to checking the status of your claim is to contact the disability examiner for your particular case. If you do not have contact information for that examiner, contact the social security office where you filed your claim and ask for the number. 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: Can you file for social security disability online?

A: Yes, you can apply online. Go to [www.ssa.gov/onlineservices](http://www.ssa.gov/onlineservices) and follow the instructions. There are additional resources to help you know if you should apply and walk you through the necessary steps.

### About the Author

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