

Remember, you have been through years of work and of disability – you are asking the judge to understand your complex life in the span of a short hearing. Your lawyer will help you to tell your story so that you have enough time to make your strongest points to win the judge’s understanding and compassion.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE HEARING?

Sometimes the judge will let you know his decision at the end of your hearing. More often, you will have to wait for the judge’s decision in writing.

Because there is no lawyer opposing your case, when you receive your favorable decision, you do not have to worry about there being any appeal – your favorable decision will be final.

The Social Security Administration will send you a second letter after your favorable decision. This letter will detail the benefits that you have been awarded. After you receive that letter, the Administration will begin to send your benefit checks.

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YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY HEARING

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WHAT IS A SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY HEARING?

Ideally, you will win your benefits with your initial application. However, if the Social Security Administration finds that you are not totally disabled, you have the right to request a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. At the hearing, the judge will have a record of all the medical and vocational evidence that your lawyer has submitted. To help him evaluate that evidence, he will want to hear from you how your disability affects your daily life.

WHAT HAPPENS AT MY SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY HEARING?

Your hearing will take place at a Social Security Administration hearing point closest to where you live. When you first arrive, you will check in with the law clerk. You will then wait with other disabled individuals who have hearings that day. Your lawyer will meet with you briefly to review the most important parts of your testimony. Your hearing will be held in a private hearing room. Everything that is said is recorded, in case you wish to appeal the judge's decision to a higher level.

Before the judge questions you, he might hear an opening statement from your lawyer. Sometimes, the judge will hear the testimony of an

administration doctor or a vocational witness.

When it is your turn to testify, you will simply tell the story of your life before and after your disability. You will not have to worry about using legal language or about knowing the rules of evidence. The judge wants to hear in your own words how your disability has changed your day-to-day life, and whether your education and job training allows you to be retrained for a new, less demanding job.

There is no opposing lawyer at a Social Security Disability hearing. It is just you, your lawyer, and the judge.

WILL I MEET WITH MY LAWYER BEFORE MY HEARING?

One of the most important things your social security disability lawyer can do is prepare you for your hearing. You will have a long meeting with your lawyer in her office. Together you will review your educational and work background, and your medical file. By now, your lawyer will know the name of your judge, and will prepare you for the sort of hearing your judge likes to run: for example, some judges ask many questions, some ask a few; some judges want long answers, some want short ones.