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## The Advantages of Having a Lawyer Represent You at the Hearing

When you appear at a disability hearing without legal representation, there is the risk of being unprepared for the proceedings. An experienced Social Security disability lawyer can significantly improve your chances of getting approved for benefits. Before the hearing, your lawyer will:

1. Find out why your claim was denied and focus on a legal strategy that will maximize your chances of winning an appeal.
2. Collect relevant medical information for the detailed brief that will be presented to the judge.
3. Practice with you in answering questions the judge will likely ask during the hearing, highlighting the severity of your medical condition and the specific ways it limits your physical and/or mental capabilities. Communicating your story effectively can greatly influence whether you are granted disability benefits.

During the hearing, your lawyer also possesses the skills needed to effectively cross-examine medical experts and vocational experts who will testify.



## Your Treating Doctor's Role in Your Disability Claim

The Social Security Administration reviews medical documents in a disability claim in order to verify your impairments and determine if they impede your ability to work. When accurate records from licensed physicians and other credible medical sources are presented in a timely manner, it can reduce the amount of time it takes for the Social Security Administration to make a decision.

A treating doctor's opinion is crucial because it can provide insight into your condition that may not be at first evident, such as:

1. Your diagnosis
2. Your functional limitations
3. Your prognosis



The treating doctor's written statements are given special consideration if he treated you consistently for an extended period of time; specializes in diagnosing and treating your particular condition; and has an opinion that is supported by clinical test results and laboratory findings.

## What are Acceptable Reasons for Filing a Late Appeal?

Since the majority of disability applications submitted to the Social Security Administration are denied, most claimants need to file an appeal in order to obtain disability benefits. Generally, an appeal needs to be filed within 10 days or 60 days after you are notified of the decision. If the appeal isn't submitted timely, the claim will be rejected unless there is a valid reason for missing the deadline.



According to Social Security regulations, the time limit for filing an appeal can be extended for a good cause. Such valid reasons include:

1. Having an illness, being hospitalized or enduring other circumstances that prevented you pursuing the claim.
2. Linguistic, educational, physical or mental limitations that kept you from understanding that an appeal needed to be filed within a specific timeframe.
3. Being misled by the actions of a Social Security representative.

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Your case is important to us. If we can't help you, we'll do our best to refer you to someone who can.

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