

SSA looks for answers to the following questions in the medical evidence you and your doctors submit (paraphrased from the SSA definition of "disability"):

1. Does the patient have one or more medically determinable impairments?
2. Does the impairment (or combination of impairments) significantly limit the physical or mental ability to perform substantial gainful work?
3. Has the impairment lasted, or can it be expected to last, for a continuous period of not less than 12 months, or result in death?

To provide perspective for your doctors you should provide them copies of your completed Worksheet 1 (list of impairments) and Worksheet 5 (daily activities).

You are not asking the doctors to award you disability benefits. Rather, you are asking the doctors to provide trustworthy medical information and expert opinion. Doctors can't "prescribe" disability benefits.

Follow up with your doctors in a couple of weeks to see if their reports are ready.

#### **4. Apply In Person at a Social Security Office**



Applying on the Internet is an alternative for people who have access to a computer, but going in person to an SSA office is the safest way to apply. Applying in person also offers an opportunity to have your papers checked, ask questions and receive expert advice from an SSA claims representative. A trained claims representative will help you with the financial aspects of your application, as well as the medical aspects, and assure that you file for all benefits to which you or your dependents may be entitled.

Importantly, a claims representative has access to computerized medical directories (not available to you) that can quickly verify the correct addresses of your health care providers. See our feelings about the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet in Part VI, page 39, and some suggestions we make for Internet users.

You may apply at any SSA office for SSDI benefits (or Supplemental Security Income disability benefits). To locate an SSA office near you, you may call SSA's toll-free number, 1-800-772-1213, or use the office locator at <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp>

Finally, when you fill out and file SSA's Adult Disability Report (whether on paper or online) remember to write in the Medical section of the form every diagnosis of a condition that causes or contributes to your disability. This could cause your claim to be placed on a faster track.