

LENNON, CAMAK & BERTICS

PROFESSIONAL LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

3622 HAWORTH DRIVE

RALEIGH, NC 27609-7246

TELEPHONE (919) 856-9000

www.ncdisability.com

Ten Mistakes to Avoid When Applying for

Social Security Disability

1. Forgetting to report a condition and/or symptom.

Social Security considers all of your conditions and symptoms if they negatively affect your ability to work. Sometimes, it is a combination of conditions and symptoms that results in winning your claim. You should also always mention any mental problems you may have even if you are embarrassed to mention it. This is because Social Security looks at you as a whole person, to include any combination of physical and mental problems from which you may be suffering.

2. Not reporting a medical source (medical provider).

Just like forgetting to mention a condition or symptom, you do not want to forget to name a medical provider that is treating you for your conditions and symptoms. Give Social Security all the information you can about your medical providers so they can collect records. The more information Social Security has about your condition(s), the more likely you are to get a correct decision on your claim.

3. Not reporting new medical sources.

As the claim progresses, many people change medical providers. If this happens, make sure Social Security has the contact information of any new medical providers so they can collect their records as well. This also goes for hospitalizations that occur after filing your initial application. New medical source information may show your condition has worsened and would give more support to your disability claim.

4. Not providing dates of treatment and next appointment date for medical sources.

Your disability caseworker must request all medical records related to your disability claim that cover the time from when you became disabled through the current treatment period. You want to make that process as easy as possible and avoid duplication of records in your

file. For this reason, make sure you provide dates of treatment and future appointment dates so the examiner knows what additional medical evidence still needs to be obtained.

5. Not reporting a change of address or phone number.

It is very important for you to stay in close contact with the disability examiner and your representative throughout your application process. Moreover, if you move far enough away, the claim will need to be transferred to the office closest to your new location. Those involved in handling your case may need to contact you for clarification of an issue related to your claim, may need to schedule special examinations or tests or for other reasons. Make sure they can reach you, to include giving them an alternate contact person's name and number if they have trouble contacting you.

6. Not talking with your medical providers about your claim.

Social Security already has a host of disability examiners and doctors reviewing your records to see if you are truly disabled from all competitive work. They may or may not be in favor of approving your claim. One thing they do is look to see if the treating medical provider believes your functional limitations preclude your ability to hold down a full-time job. BUT, if your providers have not said anything in their records about your ability or inability to work, they cannot assess their opinions on this topic.

7. Giving a poor description of your past work experience.

An accurate and detailed description of your prior work over the last fifteen years is important because Social Security factors in this information when deciding if you can work. They are looking to see if you have any skills learned in your past job that might transfer over to other kinds of work that are less physically and/or mentally demanding. For example, if you have never done office work, never supervised employees, never engaged with the public at large, or had one very specific and narrow set of skills you can no longer perform, these types of facts would tend to strengthen your claim.

8. Completing forms about how you are physical and/or mentally limited by your medical condition(s) that are not consistent with your medical records or statements of a third party (spouse).

Your disability caseworker relies on your description of how you are limited by your condition(s) and unable to work. So, your descriptions should be thorough and accurate, but not overly detailed. However, if your descriptions are largely inconsistent with your medical condition generally, or your medical providers' records, or a statement from a third party, red flags will negatively be raised by Social Security. Also, when responding to SSA questions about your ability to do certain activities, it is almost never a yes or no answer. Give context to your answers (ex., yes, I can fold laundry, but I need to rest afterwards).

9. Not returning forms on time or responding to calls or letters.

Those processing your case have a limited amount of time they can spend on any one case. They are often backlogged and working to catch up. To help move your case along, and if ok with your representative, if you have one, always return forms and calls from them as soon as possible. Outright ignoring their calls and letters will almost certainly result in a denied claim for failure to cooperate.

10. Not appealing decisions that deny your case (aka, giving up).

70+% of all initial claims are denied. 90+% of all appealed denials are again denied. It is not until you reach the third level of review with an administrative law judge hearing that you have at least a 50% chance of winning your claim, and perhaps much higher with representation. The lesson is to keep appealing and hire counsel. It is often too late to help if counsel is hired after the administrative law judge hearing for various reasons and there is usually no fee unless you win the claim. Call us today to see if we can help. Our number is (919) 856-9000 or find us on the web at www.ncdisability.com