

It is vitally important that any SSDI or SSI applicant provide proof that they meet or equal the criteria of a disability listing.

If you are suffering from a debilitating medical condition, you know the huge impact can have on your life. You may find it impossible to perform household tasks, take care of your children and handle personal grooming. You may no longer be able to shop for your own groceries or drive a car. You might not even be able to perform the essential functions of your job because of the effects of your condition.

The federal government recognizes that there are many physical and mental conditions that prevent people from making a living; that is one of the main reasons behind the Social Security Administration's disability benefits program. The program is there to help people just like you: those suffering the impact of a long-term, disabling medical issue and can no longer work. Those benefit funds - available from either the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) program or the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program - are not just yours "for the taking," however. You must submit a thorough, well-documented application proving that you are entitled to them.

This must be done by showing, through both anecdotal and medical evidence, that your condition either meets or equals an impairment (or group of impairments) recognized by the SSA as a disability. In some instances, this is easier than in others. For example, there are some conditions - known in legal terms as "compassionate allowances" - that the SSA recognizes are so inherently debilitating that applications seeking benefits for those conditions (including many types of malignant cancer or cardiovascular disease, among others) are typically fast-tracked and require less-extensive medical documentation.

Of course, even if you don't have one of the "compassionate allowance" conditions, you can still seek SSDI or SSI benefits for such issues as serious mental illness, inflammatory bowel disease (like Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis), epilepsy and other seizure disorders, paraplegia/quadriplegia, cancer, severe cardiovascular disease and chronic musculoskeletal system conditions. You will need to prove that you have been diagnosed with a disabling condition, and that your symptoms meet those listed in the impairment criteria set forth by the SSA.

EQUALING A LISTING

Should you be unable to "meet" a disability listing, however, all hope is not lost. You still have the opportunity to prove that your condition "equals" the impairment of a particular disability listing or group of listings, even if you don't have all the exact effects provided in a disability definition.

For example, someone trying to equal the impairment definition for Crohn's disease might not display some of the symptoms typically associated with the disorder as required in the listing, but he or she might have significant "functional limitations" directly related to Crohn's, including issues like extreme weight loss, persistent diarrhea, intestinal stenosis, anemia, recurring kidney stones, inflammatory arthritis or edema. These ancillary conditions can, if presented in a compelling way and backed up by medical evidence, often make the case that a claimant's condition effectively "equals" the impairment listing, thus providing a way to secure much-needed disability benefits.

Statistics have proven over the years that having an attorney by your side as you work through the disability benefits application process gives you a greater chance of a successful claim. This is never more true than in the case of trying to get benefits by proving that your impairment equals a disability listing. To learn more about the disability process, and how a skilled attorney can help you, contact the Denver law office of Sullivan, Sullivan and McGuire online or by calling them toll-free at **866-662-9674**.