

WHAT IF I CANNOT AFFORD AN ATTORNEY?

CLRP does not charge up front for legal representation in Social Security Disability benefit cases. Instead, we work with our clients on what is called a "contingency fee" basis. This means that you do not owe us any money unless we win your case. If we represent you and you are denied benefits, you do not have to pay us anything. Our fee, if you do win, is typically 25% of any past-due benefits the SSA decides you are owed, and must be approved by the SSA.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

If you are interested in having CLRP represent you in your claim for benefits, the first step is to contact our office to complete an intake. During the intake process, one of our screeners will ask you a series of questions. An attorney will make a decision based on your answers as to whether we are able to accept your case.

TO COMPLETE AN INTAKE, PLEASE CONTACT OUR OFFICE AT:

- **860-262-5030 OR
1-877-402-2299**
- **The intake line is open
Monday through Friday
from 10 AM to 12 PM
and 1 PM to 3 PM**

*The information in this flyer is effective as of
August 2016*

Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc. is a statewide non-profit agency which provides legal services to low income adults with mental health conditions who reside in hospitals or the community, on matters related to their treatment, recovery, and civil rights.

**For more assistance contact
Connecticut Legal Rights
Project, Inc.
Toll Free 1-877-402-2299
TTY 860-262-5066**

www.clrp.org



CONNECTICUT
LEGAL
RIGHTS
PROJECT, INC.

SOCIAL SECURITY



**LEGAL REPRESENTATION FOR PEOPLE
WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS**

WHAT IS SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY?

Social security disability is a monthly cash benefit payment made by the Social Security Administration ("SSA") to people who are unable to work for a year or more due to physical, mental, and/ or developmental disability.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I QUALIFY FOR BENEFITS?

The SSA considers five different questions in determining whether you qualify for benefits.

1) Are you currently working?

If the answer is "yes," and if your earnings meet or exceed a certain amount, then the SSA will find that you are not disabled. If your earnings do not meet or exceed the set amount, or if you are not working, the SSA moves on to the next question.

2) Is your medical condition "severe"?

Severe means that your medical condition significantly limits your ability to do basic work activities- such as concentrating, remembering, getting along with co-workers and customers, accepting and following directions, and regularly showing up to work on time and when scheduled- for at least 12 months. If the answer is "yes," move on to the next question.

3) Does your impairment meet or medically equal a listing?

The disability conditions which qualify an applicant for benefits are called "listings." These are contained in a long and complex

publication which is accessible online through the SSA's website. There are far too many to mention in this short brochure, but some common examples of conditions which might meet the SSA's listings are Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, Major Depressive Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Anxiety and Panic Disorders. If the answer is "yes," you qualify. If not, move on to the next question.

4) Can you do the work you did before?

If you have ever been able to work in the past, the SSA will examine whether you are still capable of doing that work, given the limitations of your present condition. If the answer is "yes," the SSA will find that you are not disabled. If not, or if you have never worked before, then move on to the next question.

5) Can you do any other type of work?

If the answer is "yes," you will likely not qualify for benefits.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR BENEFITS?

There are three ways to apply for benefits: online, by phone, or in person, by making an appointment with a representative at your local Social Security office. A list of the local offices and the contact information for each is available online. You may not be able to apply online, depending on your work history.

WHAT CAN I DO TO IMPROVE THE ODDS OF WINNING MY CASE?

The single most important thing that an applicant for disability benefits can do to help his or her case is get regular treatment from a doctor for any medical conditions. In addition, it is important that your doctor is supportive of your claim. If your doctor does not agree that you are disabled, or is not available for regular appointments, you might want to consider finding a new treatment provider. Other sources of treatment, such as regular visits with case managers, social workers, and therapists, are also helpful. Medical records are not REQUIRED to win a case, but approval without medical evidence is very rare.

WHAT CAN CLRP DO TO HELP ME WIN MY CASE?

Although having an attorney will not guarantee that your claim is successful, it can increase your odds of winning, since attorneys are able to understand complex regulations and can take charge of collecting and submitting your medical evidence and communicating with SSA staff who might have questions or need additional information.

CLRP can also answer your questions along the way, and guide you through the process, which can take up to two years from the time when you first apply. Deadlines for filing appeals are also important. A lawyer can make sure that you meet those deadlines so that you do not have to start the process all over again.