

CLIENT INSTRUCTIONS

To avoid any misunderstandings between you and our office, we want you to know what to expect and what you can do to help your Case. To avoid problems and pitfalls, please make every effort to follow these instructions.

Letters from Social Security

When you receive letters from Social Security, wait two or three days to allow us time to get our copy. Be sure to contact our office every time you receive a denial notice. The state agency who sends the denial notice often neglects to send a copy of the denial notice to our office. We must be aware of the denial in order to file your appeal within the specified time. Failure to notify us of a denial notice could cause your Case to be closed and would require you to start all over.

Direct Contact with Social Security

Do not call or write or visit any Social Security office unless you check with us first. If you are contacted by Social Security personnel seeking to ask questions regarding your case, please refer them to us as your representatives of record. Should you receive any questionnaire forms, please contact our office before answering the questions. We want you to be truthful in your answers; however, we want to monitor the manner in which you answer your questions because your answers can sometimes be damaging to your case.

Office Hours

Our office hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. We are open Monday through Friday and observe normal holidays.

Telephone Calls

We represent many people at the same time. After your first appointment, a paralegal will be assigned to manage your file until you go to a hearing. If your paralegal is unavailable, you may either leave a message with whomever answers the phone or leave a voice mail message. It is very important to tell us the purpose of your call. This allows us to look into your problem before we call you back. We cannot accept collect calls. If the paralegal cannot assist you or if you feel that you need to speak to Mr. Hardy, tell her you want to speak to Mr. Hardy. Because he travels most of the time, it may take 2-3 days but he will return your call.

Contact with the Office

Never go more than 75 days without contacting our office (either by phone or mail) and giving us a brief update on your condition. However, more frequent calls to "check on the status of your case" will not serve any useful purpose!

Processing Time for Claims

An initial Case will take one to six months to process. Then a reconsideration appeal is filed. Reconsideration decisions usually take one to two months unless you are scheduled for an examination with a Social Security doctor. Next, a request for hearing is filed. Usually, a hearing is scheduled six to twelve months from the date a hearing is requested. The waiting period for a decision from a Judge is usually one to three months. Please note these times are all estimates.

Change in Work Status

If you return to any type of work, contact our office immediately to provide the details.

Change of Address

IT IS URGENT THAT WE ALWAYS KNOW HOW TO CONTACT YOU! If you move to a new address or change your telephone number, call and let us know. Also, you need to notify Social Security of your address change. If your telephone is disconnected, please provide a telephone number of a relative or friend where a message may be left for you.

Change in Medical Condition

If you are hospitalized or treated in the emergency room for anything serious, develop new problems, get worse or have any additional accident or injury, contact our office immediately.

Referrals by Treating Physician

Contact our office immediately if your treating doctor refers you out to another doctor, to have further medical testing, to be provided with further treatment or to be fitted with any medical appliance or assistive device. If your physician states that you need a cane, crutches or walker to help you walk, have your doctor provide you with a prescription for the device. Please make a copy of the prescription prior to getting your device and provide it to our office. This is very important evidence.

Keep Records

Keep a notebook/journal or calendar of the dates you visit the doctor or physical therapist, and any change in medication. Diary your problems when you have difficulties and what brought them on. If your medical problems are such that you are subject to seizures, sudden falls, blackouts, chest pains or days in bed, please keep a calendar of these events. This will help us to prepare for your testimony at the hearing. Please send this calendar/notebook/journal to our office once you are notified a hearing has been scheduled. Always keep your medical appointments and make sure to tell your doctor any problems you are having.

Consultative Examinations—[IMPORTANT]

Social Security may schedule you for a consultative examination. If you are sent for an exam, please note the time that you spend in the waiting room, the number of people that go in to see the doctor during that waiting time, the time that you actually spend in the doctor's presence and what the exam consisted of. As soon as you are home, please write down all of these details and mail your notes to our office.

Preparation for the Hearing

We will notify you prior to the scheduling of the hearing. At this time we will ask that you provide us with any new medical sources, dates of last doctor visits and a list of your medications. We will send you a questionnaire for your doctor to complete. This questionnaire is very important because your doctor's opinion of your condition is a key issue in the case. Please make every effort to convince your doctor to complete the form and return it to our office as soon as possible as many doctors ignore our requests to fill out forms.

Notice of Hearing

When your case is set for hearing, we will contact you and explain the type of questions the Judge is going to ask you, explain some rules for answering questions, explain the format of the hearing, identify witnesses and other information relevant to your case. The hearing will be before an Administrative Law Judge. There is no need to panic when your case is set for hearing, as your case will be thoroughly prepared and you will be prepared to testify. If you receive a Notice of Hearing and our office has not been in recent contact with you, call our office immediately.

Attorney's Fees

Under the law, if you are awarded Social Security Disability Benefits based on your past earnings, the Government may withhold part of your past-due benefits for an attorney fee.

Loans

Although we are sympathetic to your financial circumstances, it is illegal and unethical for us to make loans, co-sign notes or give advances in anticipation of your benefit award.

Legal Advice

Do not get legal advice from your neighbors, friends, your doctor or anyone else. Do not discuss your case or compare it with others. Their advice can be confusing, unreliable or even wrong. We are professionals who specialize in these cases and we suggest you rely on our advice.

Complaints

If at any time you become disappointed with the way our office is handling your case, please contact Bob Hardy by phone, or in writing, so that he can resolve your concerns. It is our commitment to treat you as a person, not just another case!