

Social Security Disability Benefits for Children How Schools Can Help

The Social Security Administration through Supplemental Security Income (SSI) makes payments to disabled or blind children under the age of 18. These children must meet the low income and limited resources criteria *and* meet Social Security's definition of disability.

When the parent/guardian files an application for disability benefits on behalf of a child, they are asked for detailed information about the child's medical condition and how this affects their ability to **function** on a daily basis. Legal authority is then obtained to contact the child's doctors, teachers, therapists and other professionals for information regarding the child's condition. The Disability Determination Service (DDS) office will request copies of school records, IEP, IQ testing, SLP evaluations, etc. from your school and request that the teacher who is most familiar with the child, complete a detailed questionnaire about the child's function in the school setting.

Childhood disability claims require an assessment of the child's ability to function in the home and school setting, under six specific domains. They are:

- Attending and completing tasks
- Moving about and manipulating objects
- Caring for self
- Health and physical well-being
- Acquiring & using information
- Interacting and relating with others

Each of our school requests will include a Teacher Questionnaire. (Please see attached **Sample**) It is *really important* that the questionnaire be completed by the teacher who is most familiar with the child. If the request is received at the beginning of the school year and the child has a new teacher, it is appropriate for the form to be completed by last year's teacher. Once this valuable information has been received from your school, the DDS medical doctor and/or psychologist will determine if the child meets the Social Security criteria for disability benefits.

How can you help?

- Please let your colleagues know how important DDS requests are for childhood disability determination
- Please spread the word to expedite requests for copies of school records
- Please encourage the appropriate teacher to complete the Questionnaire and return it to the DDS as soon as possible
- Your school information is critical to making an accurate disability determination and your assistance in completing our requests is **greatly appreciated**.

Of note: School records may be requested from a child's earliest years in day care through adulthood. Once a child has been found to be disabled under SSA criteria, periodic disability reviews are mandated and a review must occur when the child reaches age 18. Once a child reaches the age of majority, his/her claim must be re-evaluated under SSA's Adult criteria for disability determination.

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