

## Applying for Social Security / Disability

Benefits is a process involving two steps:

1. Building strong case with **sufficient and recent medical evidence**
2. Filing the actual application

The initial application stage can easily take a minimum of 3-5 months. If your case is denied, the appeals process can take an **additional 12-18 months or more**. *\*The majority of cases are denied on the first decision and have to be appealed.*

**The following are things you can do to assist in preparing a strong case for your initial application:**

- Talk to your doctor, psychiatrist or prescriber about how they feel about your ability to work. Do they feel your medical condition would prohibit you from working for at least a year? Will they support documentation about your inability to work? Ask us about having your doctor sign a Med-9 Form.
- If you are in treatment or have had previous treatment for your medical condition(s) (especially within the last year), write down the names and contact information of the doctors, clinics, or hospitals where you have gone for treatment. You don't need to request copies of the records yourself but Social Security will need the information to send for your medical records.
- Make sure you have an **original** or certified copy of your birth certificate *or* proof of citizenship if you were born in another country. Our Navigation staff can assist you with information on how and where to do this.
- Write a list of the all of the jobs you have had and the dates you worked (*past 15 years*). Social Security will want you to document this information on your application.
- Make sure to continue any treatment that you are currently involved in and follow your providers' recommendations. Also remember to take any medications that are prescribed.
- Continue to talk to your treatment providers (therapists, case managers, prescribers) about symptoms and other problems you have, which you feel prevent you from working. It is important to have these documented in your record.

