



QUALIFICATIONS FOR SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY BENEFITS

PUBLIC COMMENT

Summary

The Trump administration is proposing changes to Social Security that could terminate disability payments to hundreds of thousands of Americans, including vestibular patients.

The new rule would change the methods by which the Social Security Administration determines whether a person continues to qualify for benefits. For a person too disabled to work, this is a daunting task. Making it more difficult is likely to discourage the fully qualified from even applying.

The proposal is open for public comment through January. Please help VeDA raise awareness about this threat to vestibular patients by sending a letter to your legislators.

Letter

Re: Opposition to Proposed Changes in Qualifications for Social Security Disability Benefits, Public comment period, January, 2020

Dear Representative,

I am joining the Vestibular Disorders Association (VeDA) to urge you to oppose the review criteria by which the Trump Administration seeks to make it more difficult for applicants to qualify for Disability Benefits under Social Security, as well as adding more reviews to continue benefits.

The current application process already can take years to qualify, reams of documents, multiple appearances before hearing officers and adjudications. For a person too disabled to work, this is a daunting task. Making it more difficult is likely to

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discourage the fully qualified from even applying, adding further financial and emotional burden on the applicant and their family, which can exacerbate their medical condition.

Three categories are proposed:

1. Medical Improvement Expected
2. Medical Improvement Possible
3. Medical Improvement Not Expected

It is the second category that is the most troubling. "Improvement" for those disabled enough to qualify for Social Security Disability does not follow a straight-forward path, such as healing after a single injury or illness. The level of wellness on a given day for the chronically ill can fluctuate, so determining the possibility of improvement can be highly subjective. In addition, many people with invisible illnesses, such as vestibular (inner ear and brain) disorders, which affect hearing, balance and cognition, don't look sick, and are therefore often put through additional hoops to prove their disability.

While it is prudent to support efficiency in government to save money, the cost of more frequent or more rigorous reviews in complex medical cases can cost as much as the rare undeserved benefit payment they might discover.

Please oppose this troubling proposal.

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