

Lesson 3 – DSIP



In lessons one and two, we introduced you to the Social Security disability process from both an applicant and advocate perspective. Although superficial, our description of the process represents the traditional flow of a Social Security disability claim. You were told that there are essentially four adjudicative levels upon which an advocate can process a case. These adjudicative levels are:

[Initial Application](#)

[Reconsideration Appeal](#) - 1st appeal

[Administrative Law Judge Appeal](#) - 2nd appeal

[Appeal Counsel](#) - 3rd appeal level

Although the above four traditional adjudicative levels are descriptively obsolete, each still represents the current adjudicative process. In 2006, SSA began to implement pieces of the Disability Services Improvement Program (DSIP). The (DSIP) takes the four traditional adjudicative steps and internally changes who will perform certain duties within that level. Result: The four traditional levels still exist, but have internally changed.

DSI is the driving force behind Social Security's modernization program including the move to online case processing. The primary objective of the DSIP or DSI program is to speed up the disability process without sacrificing adjudicative standards. The result has been incremental changes in how SSA processes cases internally. Changes to SSA's internal processes affect who and what will be done within a given case level, but it does not eliminate the level.

The DSI program is a work in progress It has existed for many years and will continue for many more. Don't let these incremental changes in the disability process bother you. Simply adapt to whatever SSA instructs and your advocate service will do just fine.

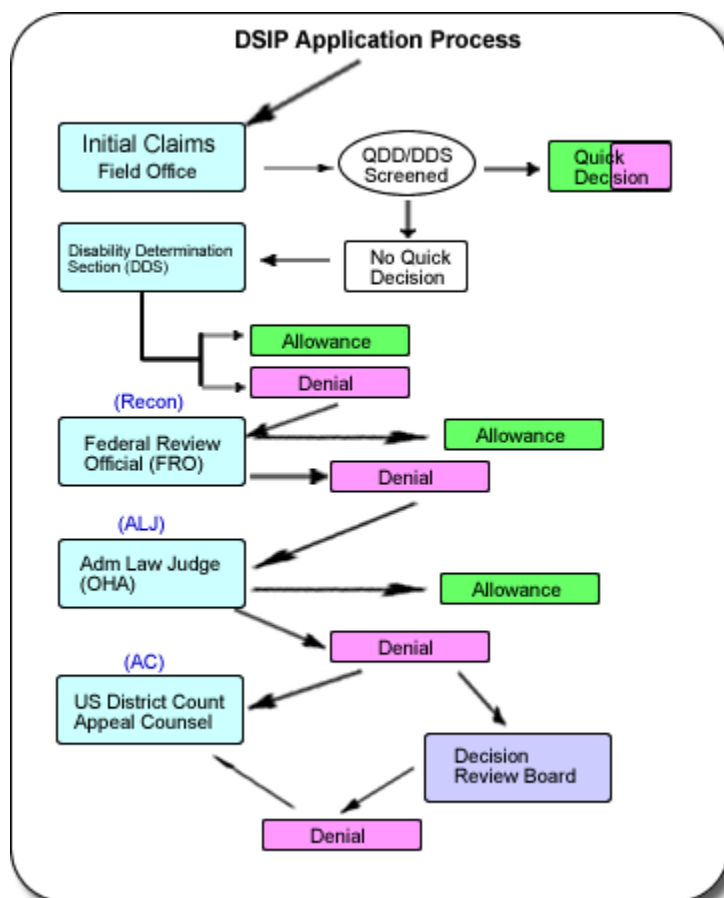
[The Application Process Under DSI](#)

Let's take another look at the four traditional adjudicative levels.

The initial case level is the first adjudicative level. Under DSI, cases on this level are divided into two categories. Those cases ready for immediate decision and those that will be sent on to the DDS for further development. Those ready for immediate decision are processed by a special DO based DDS group. This group is specially trained to process cases that either meet the medical listing or are technical denials.

A technical denial is based on an eligibility rule like income and resources. However, an immediate decision case can be processed based on medical issues. For our purposes, keep in mind that an immediate decision case is one that is an obvious **allowance** or **denial**.

See DSIP Chart:



Those cases not ready for an immediate decision are sent to the Disability Determination Section (DDS) for further development. A decision is made within the DDS. If the DDS decision is a denial, the claimant or his representative may

request an Federal Review Official (FRO) appeal (Recon).

If the FRO denies the case, the claimant or representative may request a **de novo** hearing and decision from an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ). A de novo ALJ hearing is a completely new hearing of all the facts in a case, without being bound by the findings or reasoning for any prior determinations such as by the State Agency (Disability Determination Services) or FRO.

If the ALJ denies the case, it is sent to the Decision Review Board. This board will review the ALJ's decision to determine the accuracy of the decision._ If the Board agrees with the ALJ denial decision, the case can be appealed to the US District Court.

As you can see, SSA never really got rid of the old Initial, Reconsideration, ALJ or Appeal Counsel levels. SSA is taking each case level and braking it down into more efficient components to derive at a faster decision. While this can be a temporary headache for claimants and advocates, improvements in the process are wonderful for the long-term survival of the SSA disability program.

Summation

In this lesson you have learned that Social Security is undergoing many changes under a policy called the Disability Service Improvement program. This program is driving many changes throughout the entire Social Security system. SSA is reviewing everything from digital records to online applications on all levels. Keep in mind that despite all the changes, case levels are really still the same. However, who performs certain functions within these levels has changed and will change again over time.

Assignment

Take the lesson 3 quiz.