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Social Security announces more conditions for compassionate allowances

The Center for Budget and Policies recently released a report stating that Social Security keeps 21 million Americans out of poverty. (See www.cbpp.org/research/?fa=topic&id=38 for the full report). While the results listed in this report are not surprising, especially to those who receive Social Security benefits, what most people do not realize is that nearly one third of Social Security beneficiaries are under 65 years of age, including 1.1 million children. However, for people with disabilities, obtaining Social Security benefits can be a long and difficult process. The Social Security Administration has announced new compassionate allowances conditions that will make the application process easier for some beneficiaries and their families.

“Compassionate allowance conditions” are part of an expedited process that helps Americans with the most serious disabilities to receive benefit decisions in days instead of months or years. This is a fast track process that allows Social Security to identify certain disorders as so severe that Social Security need not fully develop the beneficiary’s work history to make a decision to approve benefits. Therefore, this part of the application process is eliminated for persons with conditions approved as compassionate allowances. The Commissioner of the Social Security Administration, Michael J. Astrue, in a press release, stated that “Nearly 200,000 people with severe disabilities nationwide have been quickly approved, usually in less than two weeks, through the program since it began in October, 2008.” This announcement of 35 additional approved conditions raises the total of compassionate allowance conditions to 200. See www.ssa.gov/compassionateallowances/ for more information.

Seven public hearings were held by Social Security; they also worked with experts to develop the list of compassionate allowance conditions. Additionally, the hearings served to help the agency improve the disability application process for those with identified conditions as meeting the criteria of compassionate allowance conditions. Primarily the criteria affect those with certain cancers, adult brain disorders, and children afflicted by rare disorders.

The latest compassionate allowance conditions include, adult Non-Hodgkin lymphoma, adult onset Huntington disease, Allan-Herndon-Dudley syndrome, alveolar soft part sarcoma, aplastic anemia, beta Thalessemia Major, bilateral optic atrophy-infantile, caudal regression syndrome-types III and IV, child T-Cell lymphoblastic lymphoma, congenital lymphedema, DeSanctis Cacchione syndrome, Dravet syndrome, endometrial stromal sarcoma, Erdheim Chester disease, fatal familial insomnia, Fryns syndrome, fulminant giant cell myocarditis, hepatopulmonary syndrome, hepatorenal syndrome, Jervell and Lange-Neilsen syndrome, leiomyosarcoma, malignant gastrointestinal stromal tumor, malignant germ cell tumor, MECP 2 duplication syndrome, Menkes disease-classic or infantile onset form, NFU-1 mitochondrial disease, non-ketotic hyperglycinemia, peritoneal mucinous carcinomatosis, Phelan-McDermid syndrome, retinopathy of prematurity-stage V, Roberts syndrome, severe combined immunodeficiency-childhood, sinonasal cancer, transplant coronary artery vasculopathy, and Usher syndrome-Type 1.

This information is extremely important for those who are severely ill and experiencing loss of income, as well as for families struggling with medical bills for disabled ill children. Consulting an attorney who is familiar with Social Security Disability matters may prove very helpful.