



News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security and Department of Defense Implement New Process to Improve Efficiency for Wounded Warriors Applying for Disability Benefits

Electronic Medical Records Will Reduce Time for a Decision

The Social Security Administration and the Department of Defense (DoD) are working together to improve access to disability benefits for the nation's Wounded Warriors, service members, veterans, and their dependents. A new nationwide project enables Social Security disability case processing sites to receive military medical records from multiple DoD facilities with a single request to a centralized DoD site. As of today, this initiative is in its first phase of nationwide expansion.

“Receiving electronic medical records for our Wounded Warriors and other military personnel will significantly shorten the time it takes to make a disability decision,” said Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security. “This new process will improve the speed, accuracy, and efficiency of the disability program.”

Originally a pilot, the program included five states (Colorado, North Carolina, Oregon, Virginia, and Washington) and more than 60 military treatment facilities. These states are now receiving electronic medical records within 72 hours, a remarkable improvement over the previous average response time of five weeks for paper records from individual military treatment facilities.

The new DoD-Social Security collaboration consolidates requests for medical records from Social Security to a single location that has access to DoD records in a central electronic repository. This central location receives and responds to requests for medical records based on Social Security's Electronic Records Express (www.socialsecurity.gov/ere), another successful initiative that offers electronic options for submitting health records related to disability claims.

The benefits of the new process include:

- faster delivery of DoD medical records to Social Security,
- a more efficient system to obtain records,
- a reduction in the time it takes to make a medical decision on a disability claim, and
- a reduction in the number of consultative examinations (medical exams requested by Social Security when additional tests or medical records are needed.)

This is the first step towards the long-term goal of a fully automated solution of improving medical information sharing using health information technology and the Nationwide Health Information Network Exchange.

More information on Social Security's use of health IT is available at www.socialsecurity.gov/hit.

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