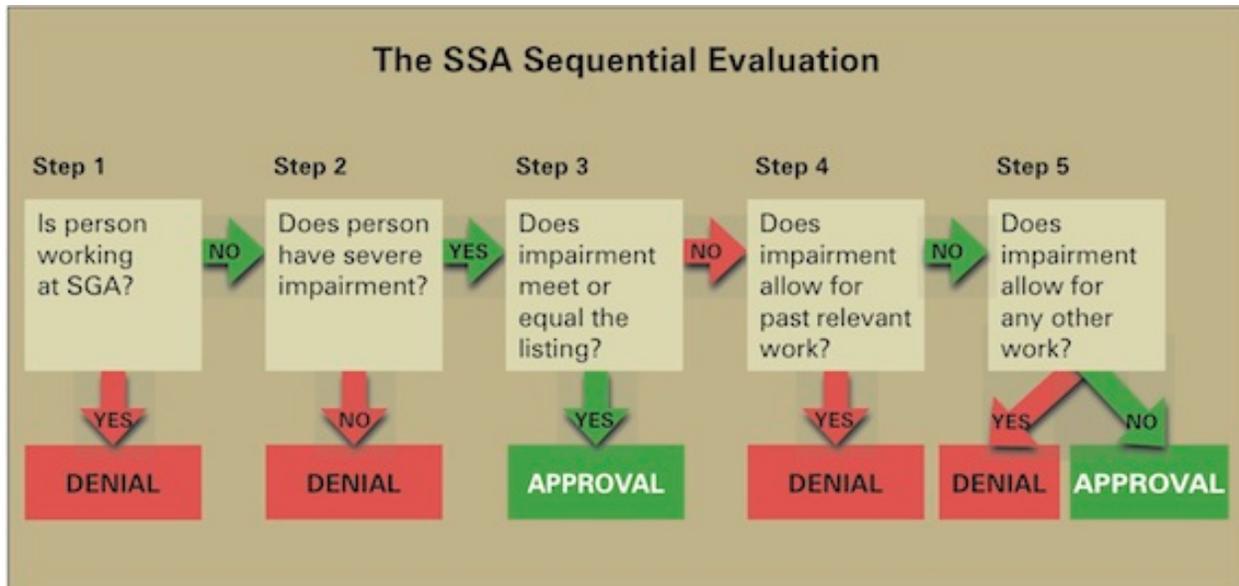


HOW SOCIAL SECURITY REVIEWS YOUR DISABILITY CLAIM THE SEQUENTIAL EVALUATION OF DISABILITY



INTRODUCTION

When the Social Security Administration evaluates your initial disability application, it uses a five step, sequential process. The diagram above shows SSA's approach. The goal is the accuracy of disability determinations. If your application fails any step in this process, the review will stop and the claim will be denied – **and you may be in a position to appeal.**

Step 1

“SGA” stands for Substantial Gainful Activity. Gainful work is work performed for pay or profit. In 2019, the SSA's *gross* monthly earnings amount considered to be SGA are \$1,220.00 per month. If you **are working** and earning \$1,220.00 per month or more, your claim will be denied. You will pass this step if you are not working, or working but not at the SGA level.

Step 2

SSA examines the severity and duration of your medically determinable impairments. An impairment is *severe* if it significantly limits your mental or physical ability to do your chosen work activities. If your impairment is considered severe by SSA, then your application will move to the next step.

Step 3

The SSA now examines the application against its published **Listing of Impairments** (<https://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/AdultListings.htm>). The listing is divided into 14

areas of the body. If the impairment meets the Listing criteria, you may be found disabled and begin receiving benefits. The body systems include:

1. Muscle and skeletal system
1. Senses and Speech
2. Breathing disorders
3. Heart
4. Digestion
5. Urinary
6. Blood
7. Skin
8. Glandular conditions
9. Genetic disorders
10. Brain/neurological disorders
11. Mental disorders
12. Cancer
13. Immune System

However, if the evidence does not clearly meet the criteria of one of the conditions in SSA's list, the analysis moves to Step 4.

Step 4

The first consideration here is what work you have done in the past, as well as your current functional abilities. If you **can do the work you've done before**, your application will be denied. If you cannot perform your past work, the analysis moves to Step 5.

Step 5

At Step 5 SSA asks if you can do any other work, taking into account your remaining functional abilities. At this step in the process, SSA can rely on vocational experts and/or Department of Labor and other agency data on job availability.

CONCLUSION

Step 3 is critical because a person can be approved *right there* if there is enough medical evidence and clear functional impairment. Steps 4 and 5 are more subjective and difficult to determine.

SOURCES

2. Soar Works - <https://soarworks.prainc.com/article/disability-determination-ssa-sequential-evaluation>
3. Social Security Administration Listing of Impairments - <https://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/AdultListings.htm>

Read other free, informative Spector and Lenz white papers at

www.spectorandlenz.com/resources

"The Patience Game"

"The Application Checklist"

"How to Create a *mySSA* Account"

"Social Security Fact Sheet"