

## WHAT IS THE BEST SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY LAW FIRM FOR ME?

By David F. Chermol, Esquire

This is a decision only you can make, but here are some of the things you want to consider. I believe that the most important thing to consider is whether the firm you are hiring does federal court litigation. What does that mean and why is it important?

As we noted in prior articles, the Social Security disability adjudicative system in Pennsylvania is an administrative process involving an initial stage, a hearing level, and the Appeals Council. If you lose before the Appeals Council, then your only choice is to file a law suit in federal court against the Social Security Administration. Most Social Security disability law firms don't do any federal court litigation at all or do very little. That means if you lose your claim at the administrative level, in all likelihood your attorney is going to drop your case. At that point you are in a bad situation. You will have to scramble in a very short time period to find a lawyer who might take your case. You may have great difficulty finding one. So, in the end, you could be seriously out of luck.

If instead you had hired a Social Security disability law firm, like our office, which does pursue federal court litigation, then you would be in a much better situation. We have a two part strategy in all of our cases. First and foremost, we are working to win the case at some point during the administrative process.

But at the same time, we are always preparing the case for an appeal to federal court if we do not prevail during the administrative process. This is critically important. The best appeals are those which were already being created while the case was pending before the agency. So if you had hired a firm like ours, which pursues federal court litigation, you would be in a really good position to potentially bring a lawsuit against the Social Security Administration in federal court. You don't have a desperate scramble, you already have the lawyer you need.

Another critically important aspect of choosing the right law firm to represent you is whether they handle cases at all levels.

Some offices will represent you only if you are already at the hearing level. In other words, they won't help you file an application and complete the mountain of paperwork that you need to submit at the beginning of the application process. By contrast other firms, like ours, will help you no matter what stage of the process you are at currently. That is what you want: a full-service Social Security disability law firm.

One final thing to consider which I think is important: personal contact. Far too many Social Security disability law firms have

elaborate phone systems designed to make it impossible for you to ever speak to a human being. I don't know about you, but I hate that. We always have staff answering our phones (including me).

If you get our voice-mail, that means the lines were busy or we are temporarily out of the office. Nevertheless, you will get a personal return phone call from our office. While our time is extremely valuable, we believe in personal contact as much as possible and not machines.

With this information, I think you can make an educated choice about who you want to represent in your Social Security disability or SSI claim.