

Navigating the Social Security Administration: Common Scenarios

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Kate Lang, Director of Federal Income Security, Justice in Aging

Stacy Cloyd, Senior Staff Attorney, Public Benefits Unit, Legal Aid DC

Stephen Pozgay, Constituent Services Representative, Office of U.S. Senator Ron Wyden, Oregon

Eve Rutzick, Public Benefits Lead, Change Well Project

Katie Savin, Assistant Professor, California State University Sacramento

The following is a list of different scenarios an advocate may encounter when representing claimants or beneficiaries at SSA, along with various resources or contacts to assist in escalating the case when there are delays or other problems.

1. Case Stuck in Field Office

- Ask for a technical expert, Area Work Incentives Coordinator, or District Manager/Assistant District Manager
- Request a “critical case flag” be added in the following cases:
 - » TERI cases (terminally ill claimants);
 - » VPAT (veterans with “permanent and total disability” per the VA);
 - » MCWW (military casualty or wounded warrior); SUIC (actively suicidal claimants);
 - » DIRE (claimants with dire financial need, such as those experiencing unsheltered homelessness - use sparingly)
- Have client call SSA's National Teleservice Center (or you can call together) at 1-800-772-1213 or TTY 1-800-325-0778, ask for an agent, and make an appointment to go to the field office together
- Congressional Inquiry
- [Regional Communications Director](#), then Office of External Affairs (External.Relations@ssa.gov)
- Media attention

2. Case Stuck at Disability Determination Services (DDS)

- Ask Field Office to contact them
- Ask to speak with DDS director

- Ask to speak with DDS Professional Relations coordinator about additional communications options (if you are a professional, rather than an individual claimant)
- Contact leadership of the state agency overseeing DDS
- Congressional inquiry
- State and federal legislators
- Media attention

3. Case Stuck at Payment Center

- Ask field office to do manager-to-manager communication
- [Representative Call Center](#), 877-626-6363
- Congressional inquiry (can work progressively up escalation chain, if appropriate)
- [Regional Communications Director](#), then Office of External Affairs (External.Relations@ssa.gov)
- Media attention

4. Case Stuck in Hearing Office

- Request a “critical case flag” be added in the following cases:
 - » TERI cases (terminally ill claimants);
 - » VPAT (veterans with “permanent and total disability” per the VA);
 - » MCWW (military casualty or wounded warrior); SUIC (actively suicidal claimants);
 - » DIRE (claimants with dire financial need, such as those experiencing unsheltered homelessness - use sparingly)
- Hearing Office Chief Administrative Law Judge (ALJ)
- Group Supervisor(s), then Hearing Office Director
- Head of [Hearing Hubs](#)
- Congressional inquiry (for administrative pieces)
- Media attention

5. Case Stuck at Appeals Council

- Claimant and Public Assistance Branch (CPAB) at (877) 670-2722
- Opposing counsel (if case has been remanded from federal court)
- File a motion if there’s still a federal court case
- Congressional inquiry
- [Regional Communications Director](#), then Office of External Affairs (External.Relations@ssa.gov)
- Media attention