

Social Security: Time Required to Approve and Pay Attorney Fees Can Be Reduced: Hrd-89-7



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U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO)

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Reviews

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(Morris Schultz)

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BiblioGov. Paperback. Book Condition: New. This item is printed on demand. Paperback. 40 pages. Dimensions: 9.7in. x 7.4in. x 0.1in. Pursuant to a legislative requirement and a congressional request, GAO reviewed the Social Security Administrations (SSA) fee payment procedures for attorneys representing claimants denied social security disability benefits, to: (1) identify obstacles to the timely payment of the fees; (2) provide information on claimants access to attorneys; and (3) provide information on attorney fees and charges in state compensation programs. GAO found that: (1) the SSA attorney fee approval and payment process involved four steps after the formal disability decision; (2) the overall median time between the hearing date and fee payment was 211 days; (3) the median time from hearing date until a written decision was 73 days; (4) the median time between submission of fee petitions and fee approvals was 42 days; and (5) claimants had very little difficulty finding attorneys to represent them. GAO also found that: (1) attorneys generally charged 25 percent of a claimants past-due benefits, contingent upon a successful appeal; (2) although attorneys received an approved hourly rate of 89 for cases decided before an administrative law judge, the effective hourly rate was 50 for cases won or lost; (3) for fees up to 3,000, SSA generally approved 94 percent of the total amount requested; and (4) under state workers compensation programs, attorneys generally charged a percentage of total benefits to be awarded. GAO believes that SSA could shorten the time it needs to calculate benefit payments to significantly reduce fee processing time. This item ships from La Vergne, TN. Paperback.

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