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A: It is not required that you have an advocate like a social security attorney if you plan to move to the next phase with your claim. A fair number of people who wish to appeal their cases, however, obtain the services of an attorney at this point. Submitting an appeal to have your claim reconsidered is your next course of action. The majority of claimants are denied again after reconsideration. The next step would then be to file an appeal to have your claim heard before an administrative judge. A hearing is your last opportunity to present your case. That is the reason most claimants choose to hire a social security attorney once their initial claim is denied. To have your case heard before an administrative judge, it is not mandatory to be represented by a lawyer. The majority of cases that are awarded benefits after this stage, however, are represented by a legal advocate.

Q: How do you find a good social security attorney?

A: If you know someone who was happy with an attorney they hired for a disability case, this is the best place to start. Doing some research online can be helpful, if you do not have any word of mouth references. Once you find some attorneys, make a list of basic questions you plan to ask any candidates. First, find out what percentage of cases the lawyer handles are disability cases. Having a lawyer who deals with your type of cases a lot will be beneficial. Make sure you send your file and medical records ahead of time, so the lawyer can review them before your initial meeting. Discuss the steps that will be involved with a claim. Have the attorney provide details on the challenges of your claim and how he plans to overcome them. It is generally not helpful to ask how many cases an attorney has won. Every disability case is different. It is more helpful to hire a social security attorney that has a lot of disability expertise and who has taken the time to know your particular issues.

Q: If your initial claim was denied, should you apply again?

A: It is generally not a good idea to simply apply again after you were initially denied. Your next step is to file for reconsideration. The deadline to file for reconsideration is no later than sixty days after you received notification that your claim was not approved for benefits. If your case is not approved after reconsideration, you will then move on to the hearing phase. You will only add more time to your process, if you begin at square one again and submit a new application in lieu of filing for reconsideration.

## About the Author

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