Why Medical Source Statements Are Important

The Disability Determination Section (DDS) of the Tennessee Department of Human Services is the agency that makes Social Security Disability decisions at the initial and reconsideration levels. They are asking members of the Tennessee Primary Care Association to complete Medical Source Statements so that they can get more input from treating doctors.

Medical Source Statements (attached) are forms used by Social Security to obtain a doctor’s opinion with respect to work-related functional limitations. For physical impairments, this involves an assessment of limitations with respect to walking, standing, sitting and lifting. For mental impairments this involves an assessment of the ability to understand, remember, maintain regular attendance, concentrate and get along with co-workers and supervisors.

Federal law requires that the opinions of treating doctors be given greater weight.

Tennessee has the second lowest Social Security Disability initial allowance rate in the nation.

Administrative Law Judges reverse over two-thirds of the denial decisions they review. It takes over a year to get a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge.

Attorneys representing disability claimants at the Administrative Law Judge level often obtain for the first time Medical Source Statements from treating doctors.
Social Security Disability Benefits Change Lives

Persons who qualify for Social Security Disability benefits can receive from $674 per month to in excess of $2,000 per month for as long as they remain disabled.

They get TennCare, Medicare or both.

Completing a Medical Source Statement Also Benefits the Medical Provider

DDS will pay $52.47 for the completed Medical Source Statement, plus an additional $20 for the patient’s medical records.

Persons who qualify for Social Security Disability benefits will have TennCare or Medicare coverage to pay for their treatment.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why should I fill out this form? I can’t determine how long a person can walk or stand or how much they can lift.

These determinations are made based upon the patient’s reported limitations, the patient’s credibility, and whether there are underlying medical impairments that could reasonably cause the limitations reported. If treating doctors do not complete the form, the determinations will be made solely by DDS examiners and doctors who have never seen or spoken to the patient.

Why should I fill out this form? I don’t believe this person is disabled.

Disability determinations take into account not only the person’s medical condition but also their age, education, and work history. Social Security does not seek, and gives no weight to the opinion of a treating medical provider with respect to
disability. Instead, Social Security gives great weight to the opinion of a treating doctor with respect to the person’s physical and mental work related limitations. Even a moderate limitation with respect to walking, standing, or lifting may be enough to justify a finding of disability when considered in combination with a developmental disability or mental impairment.

Why should I fill out this form? Although my patient has a medical condition which imposes significant limitations, I believe there is some work this person can do.

Social Security allows persons who have been found disabled to engage in trial work periods without losing their disability benefits. Special support and counseling services are available for persons on disability who want to attempt to work.

Why should I fill out this form? It won’t do any good.

DDS has voluntarily decided to ask TPCA members to complete these forms because they want more information from treating doctors with respect to functional limitations. Administrative Law Judges regard Medical Source Statements as very important evidence.

Why should I fill out this form? I just don’t have time.

Taking the time to complete this statement can affect the quality of a patient’s life. Patients who are no longer able to work may obtain a steady source of income to support not only themselves, but also their children. Patients with no medical insurance may obtain TennCare or Medicare health insurance.