



SOCIAL SECURITY

Determining Disability - Alzheimer's

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Definition of and Process for Determining Adult Disability

The inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity (SGA) because of a medically determinable physical or mental impairment(s) that can be expected to result in death, or that has lasted or is expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months.

Adult five-step sequential evaluation process (SEP):

- Step 1 Engaging in SGA? (\$1,690 or more per month)
- Step 2 Impairment that is severe & meets duration? (12 months or death)
- Step 3 Meets or medically equals a listing? (screen-in step; claimants never denied)
- Step 4 Impairment(s) prevent past relevant work? (past 5 years)
- Step 5 Ability to adjust to other work? (any other job existing in substantial numbers)

For Alzheimer's Disease, we primarily focus on listing **12.02 Neurocognitive disorders**, but we also look at other mental and neurological listings.



Listing 12.02 - Neurocognitive disorders

There are multiple ways to meet Listing 12.02. After we review all evidence in the record, the most common way to meet 12.02 is to evaluate whether there is a significant cognitive decline from a prior level of functioning in one or more of these cognitive areas:

- (1) complex attention; (2) executive function; (3) learning and memory;
- (4) language; (5) perceptual-motor; or (6) social cognition

and an

Extreme limitation of one, or marked limitation of two, of the following areas of mental functioning:

- (1) understand, remember, or apply information; (2) interact with others;
- (3) concentrate, persist, or maintain pace; or (4) adapt or manage oneself.

If so, an individual will be found disabled.

Medical-Vocational Analysis

Failure to meet a listing does not mean an individual is not disabled. We move on to a medical-vocational analysis where we assess the most the claimant can still do in a work setting on a regular and continuing basis despite limitations.

We call this a person's residual functional capacity (RFC) and consider all medical impairments. We then ask, given the person's RFC:

Can the individual do past relevant work as he or she performed it or as generally performed in the national economy?

Can the individual make an adjustment to other work considering their age, education, and work experience?

If the answer to both questions is NO, the individual is found disabled. If either answer is YES, we find them not disabled.



Compassionate Allowances (CAL)

Compassionate Allowances (CAL) are a way to quickly identify diseases and other medical conditions that, by definition, meet Social Security's standards for disability benefits.

The CAL initiative helps us reduce waiting time to reach a disability determination by making expedited benefit decisions for individuals with the most serious disabilities, still utilizing the aforementioned SEP. Included in the CAL initiative are:

- **Early-Onset/Young-Onset Alzheimer's Disease**
- **Lewy Body Variant of Alzheimer's Disease**
- **Vascular Dementia Alzheimer's Disease**
- **Biparietal Alzheimer's Disease/Visual Variant of Alzheimer's Disease**



Collaboration & Outreach

We are constantly ensuring we have up-to-date policies related to medicine, healthcare, and disability adjudication, naturally supporting the National Alzheimer's Project Act.

- We are engaging with medical experts at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to explore whether they are well-positioned to provide information that may improve how we evaluate Alzheimer's Disease within our disability programs.
- We are engaged with Alzheimer's advocates who want us to ensure the information we provide adjudicators related to Young-Onset/Early-Onset Alzheimer's Disease is up-to-date and consistent with recent advances in medicine and care.

