

How the Social Security Administration can prevent fraud

Many people in Philadelphia likely heard about the huge number of arrests and subsequent indictments of retired police officers in New York for defrauding the Social Security disability program. The shocking news undoubtedly left many people wondering how they could get away with it? How could their applications have been accepted when they were clearly not disabled?

One administrative law judge offered his opinion on how to improve the disability program to prevent fraud that ultimately harms those who truly need benefits. He says that the necessary improvements boil down to more time, more resources to ensure an applicant is deserving of benefits, and greater attorney presence on behalf of the government.

The problem with resources, the judge said, is that they're not allowed to use enough of them. Imagine that a person claims in an application to be so disabled he can't work, let alone get out of bed. That same person, however, doesn't think twice about posting pictures to Facebook of all of the physical activities he partakes in each weekend. This is exactly what happened in the New York fraud case, but judges are not allowed to look at an applicant's social media accounts.

Next, he says the government should have attorneys present at hearings. Many applicants have attorneys present, but the government does not. Having attorneys present, he believes, could help when a claim doesn't seem right. Case files are often hundreds of pages long. An attorney could help catch any signs of fraud before the wrong person is awarded benefits.

Finally, judges need more time to conduct a thorough review of each case they are presented with. Unfortunately, this judge says that the [Social Security Administration](#) is more concerned with quantity than quality.

There are many people in Philadelphia and across the country who truly need the resources that Social Security disability benefits can provide. Hopefully the SSA will find a way to ensure that they are the ones to benefit, not those hoping to make some extra money through fraud.

Source: The New York Times, "[Fixing Disability Courts](#)," D. Randall Frye, Jan. 19, 2014