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Here's some important news if you're applying for Social Security disability benefits for yourself or a loved one. There are 100 conditions which qualify for an expedited process known as Compassionate Allowances.

Compassionate Allowances, which began in December 2007, are a way to quickly identify diseases and other medical conditions that, by definition, meet Social Security's standards for disability benefits.

"We have an obligation to award benefits quickly to people whose medical conditions are so serious they clearly meet our disability standards," said Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security. "We are now able to do precisely that for 100 severe conditions."

The Compassionate Allowances conditions are developed from information received at public outreach hearings, and from the Social Security and Disability Determination Service communities, medical and scientific experts, and the National Institutes of Health. We also consider which conditions are most likely to meet our definition of disability.

"By definition, these illnesses are so severe that we don't need to fully develop the applicant's work history to make a decision," said Commissioner Astrue. "As a result, Social Security has eliminated this part of the application process for people who have a condition on the list, and we can award benefits much more quickly."

The Compassionate Allowances initiative is one of two parts of the agency's fast-track system for certain disability claims. When combined with the Quick Disability Determination (QDD) process, Social Security last year approved the claims of more than 100,000 people, usually in less than two weeks.

This year, the agency expects to fast-track nearly 150,000 cases. Under QDD, a predictive model analyzes specific elements of data within the electronic claims file to identify claims where there is a high potential the claimant is disabled and where evidence of the person's allegations can be quickly and easily obtained.

For more information on Compassionate Allowances, including a list of all 100 conditions, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances.