

Social Security Applicants to “Sign” Authorization Electronically

Beginning in April, many people applying for Social Security disability benefits will be able to sign and submit the *Authorization to Disclose Information to Social Security* (Form SSA-827) form electronically, as the last part of the online process.

Social Security requests more than 15 million medical records each year on behalf of people applying for disability benefits, and a signed SSA-827 accompanies each request. Offering the option of electronically signing and submitting the form helps the agency provide better service, reducing our application processing time by up to nine days.

The *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act* (HIPAA) and other applicable laws permit the use of electronic signatures, and Social Security is encouraging medical providers to treat the new electronic signature the same as they would a “wet” signature on the SSA-827.

How it will work for the applicant

Adults applying for disability benefits will “click and sign” the SSA-827 as part of the online application process, immediately making the form part of Social Security’s electronic disability folder. This eliminates the need for the applicant to print, sign, mail, or deliver a paper copy to a Social Security office.

Social Security will continue to take the appropriate steps to verify the identity of the signer and to protect the information and records received. Applicants also receive a copy of the electronically signed and dated SSA-827 for their records.

How it will work for the provider

Medical providers will continue to receive a HIPAA-compliant SSA-827 with each of Social Security’s requests for records. The only change to the current form will be in the completed signature block, which will indicate that the applicant electronically signed using the new process. An electronically signed SSA-827 requires no change to existing procedures for processing authorization forms.

Accepting electronic SSA-827s will help speed the application process and can result in Social Security paying benefits to qualified patients more quickly, as well as providing Medicare and Medicaid coverage faster. The electronic SSA-827 will also decrease the number of uninsured and underinsured patients medical providers serve.

Initially, Social Security will offer this new process only to adults applying online for disability benefits on their own behalf, so there will continue to be wet-signed SSA-827s for other claims. The agency expects the use of this new signature process to expand over time as the number of online filers increases.

For more information about this process, go to <http://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/eAuthorization.htm>.