**SYMPTOMS AS EVIDENCE**

**Disability is as a physical or mental condition that limits a person’s movements, senses, or activities.** Social Security’s definition of disability is any physical or mental condition that keeps you from working for at least one year and the decision to award disability payments must be based on evidence.

Evidence is any testimony, writing or material object offered in proof of an alleged fact or proposition. Whether the claimant is disabled or has a severe impairment is a decision reserved to the Commissioner of Social Security POMDI24503.040 <https://secure.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lnx/0424503040>. The disability determination should be based on all evidence, the complete record including claimant’s testimony. Symptoms and signs are often discussed together in decisions, yet they are distinct, different manifestation of disease and should be evaluated and treated differently in Social Security proceedings.

**Medical diagnosis is based on symptoms, signs, and tests.** A symptom is physical or mental problem a person experiences that may indicate a disease. It is a subjective manifestation of departure from the normal, a sensation experienced by the patient, never perceptible by others. A sign is an objective physical response, helps to notice and diagnose the disease. Pathognomonicsymptoms and signs are so characteristic of a disease that they can be used to make a diagnosis. Ideally, symptoms will alert, signs direct and tests confirm the diagnosis. Many medical problems are far from this ideal, either symptoms or signs may be missing and/or no laboratory proof found. Diagnosis may be based solely on pattern recognition, the characteristic recurrence of symptoms or signs.

Unless the disability is proved under the Listings (described previously), an RFC (Residual Functional Capacity), what the claimant still can do despite his disability, has to be established.

[SSR 96-8p: Policy Interpretation Ruling: Titles II and XVI https://www.ssa.gov › rulings › SSR96-08-di-01](SSR%2096-8p%3A%20Policy%20Interpretation%20Ruling%3A%20Titles%20II%20and%20XVI%20https%3A//www.ssa.gov%C2%A0%E2%80%BA%20rulings%20%E2%80%BA%20SSR96-08-di-01)

This Ruling directs the decisionmaker to carefully consider any evidence about symptoms because subjective description may indicate more severe limitations or restrictions that can be shown by medical evidence alone.

**In conclusion, evidence of subjective symptoms may be crucial for establishing disability.** Claimant’s testimony either during a hearing or as recorded by his/her medical providers should always be obtained.