



## SOCIAL SECURITY

The Commissioner

March 22, 2012

Dear Health Care Providers, Health Information Managers, and  
Medical Records Administrators:

We are improving our disability application process to make it easier for claimants to file for Social Security disability online. Under the current online application process, claimants must print, sign, and mail us the paper medical authorization form, Authorization to Disclose Information to the Social Security Administration (Form SSA-827). The SSA-827 gives us a claimant's authorization to obtain medical and other information we need to determine whether the individual is disabled.

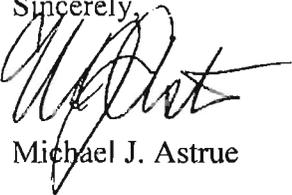
Starting April 21, 2012, we will allow adults who file their disability applications online to electronically sign and submit their SSA-827s. We have adopted a "click and sign" electronic signature process for completing the SSA-827 online. With this change, some of the SSA-827s you receive from us will have an electronic signature, rather than a pen-and-ink signature.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule allows electronic signatures on authorization forms. Our electronic signature process also satisfies both the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act and the model Uniform Electronic Transactions Act that many States have enacted. As always, our disability application process includes steps to verify each claimant's identity, and we will continue to protect all of the information we receive.

This improvement for our claimants will not change how we request records from you or the current HIPAA-compliant form that you already accept. You will continue to receive a signed SSA-827 with each request for records. Adults who apply online for disability benefits will have the option to electronically sign and submit their SSA-827s. However, you will continue to see pen-and-ink signatures on SSA-827s when claimants file for benefits at a local Social Security field office or over the telephone.

This improvement will allow our claimants to complete their online disability applications in one streamlined online session, which will make a stressful process easier and faster for the people we serve. I encourage your acceptance of the electronically-signed form and your continued cooperation with us and the State disability determination services that act on our behalf.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

Sincerely,  
  
Michael J. Astrue

cc:

Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services  
General Eric K. Shinseki, USA (Retired), Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs  
Jonathan Woodson, M.D., Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs  
Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, Director, Indian Health Service  
Nicholas Meyers, Director of Government Relations, American Psychiatric Association  
Carol D. Goodheart, EdD, President, American Psychological Association  
Richard Umbdenstock, President, American Hospital Association  
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