

Hearings And Appeals

[Home](#)

[About Hearings and Appeals](#)

[Office Alerts](#)

[Hearing Process](#) ▲

[Request a Hearing](#)

[Locate a Hearing Office](#)

[Video Hearing](#)

[File an Unfair Hearing Complaint](#)

[Appeals Process](#)

[Court Process](#)

[Representation](#) ▲

[Information for You](#)

[Information for Representatives](#)

[ERE for Experts](#)

[MEs and VEs](#)

[Publications](#)

[Program Information](#) ▼

[Social Security Disability Process Video Series](#)

[Frequently Asked](#)

Brief History and Current Information about the Appeals Council

The Appeals Council is headquartered in Falls Church, Virginia. As the last administrative decisional level, the Appeals Council issues the Social Security Administration's (SSA) final action for claims filed under Title II and Title XVI of the Social Security Act.

Created on March 1, 1940 as a three-member body, the Appeals Council was established to oversee the hearings and appeals process, promote national consistency in hearing decisions made by referees (now administrative law judges) and make sure that the Social Security Board's (now the Commissioner's) records were adequate for judicial review. The Appeals Council has grown over time due to growth in the increasingly complicated programs it reviews and the increased number of requests for review that it receives.

Currently, the Appeals Council is made up of approximately 58 Administrative Appeals Judges, 46 Appeals Officers, and several hundred support personnel. The Appeals Council is physically located in Falls Church, Virginia with additional offices in Crystal City, Virginia, and in Baltimore, Maryland. Cases originate in hearing offices throughout the country. The Appeals Council looks at each case in which a request for review is filed (processing approximately 156,000 in fiscal year 2018). The Appeals Council may grant, deny, or dismiss a request for review. If the Appeals Council grants the request for review, it will either decide the case or return ("remand") it to an administrative law judge for a new decision.

The Council also performs quality review, policy interpretations, and court-related functions. The Appeals Council is the core component of the Office of Appellate Operations (OAO), one part of SSA's Office of Analytics, Review, and Oversight (OARO). OAO provides professional and clerical support for the Appeals Council. OAO also maintains and controls files in cases decided adversely to claimants by administrative law judges and the Appeals Council, in case a further administrative or court appeal is filed. When a claimant brings a civil action against the Commissioner of Social Security, seeking judicial review of SSA's final decision, OAO staff prepare the record of the claim for filing with the court. This includes all



[Questions](#)

the documents and evidence SSA relied on in making the decision or determination.

[Employment](#) ▼

[Public Data Files](#)



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