

DISABILITY SYSTEM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Excerpt from the 2006 Report of the Social Security Advisory Board

...by the time an individual applies for disability benefits and, even more so, by the time he or she is actually placed on the benefit rolls . . .

the best opportunity for restoring or retaining the capacity for self-support has already been lost.

In the absence of a disability system designed to manage toward self-sufficiency, the realistic possibilities of someone with a work limitation remaining productive begin to fade.

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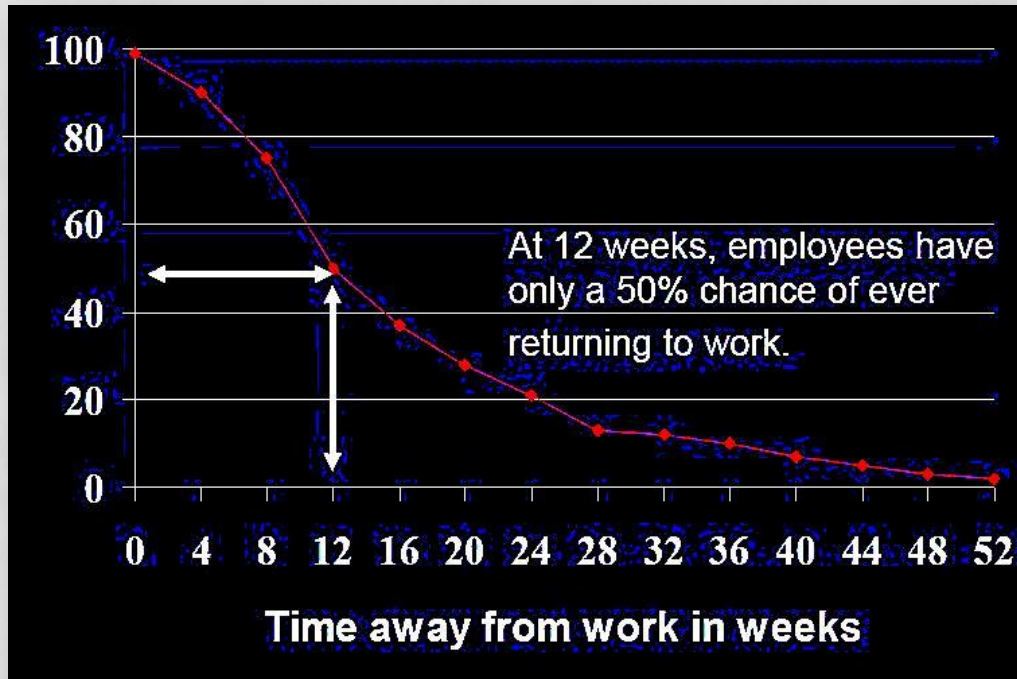
2006 Report of the Social Security Advisory Board

This process itself tends to make an individual who might have been able to work at an earlier point in time, less capable of doing so.

- Attachment to an employer
- Maintenance and improvement of skills
- Sense of belonging to the workforce
- Mindset that work is possible

Result: the transformation of a person from “impaired individual with potential” to an individual who is “unable to work.”

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE



Indicates the percent of individuals who will EVER return to work

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DISABILITY GRID IS OUTDATED

SSA requires use of a disability “grid” to evaluate functional and vocational issues for claims that cannot be analyzed on medical considerations alone.

- **If** – the individual has a medically determinable physical or mental impairment; and
- **If** – the impairment prevents the individual from performing previous type of work;
- **Then** – the grid addressing age, education and work history is used to determine disability status.

GRID HAS OBSOLETE PERSPECTIVE ON AGE AND EMPLOYMENT

The analysis of age used in the disability grid does not recognize today's realities of life expectancy and the typical extended working age prior to retirement.

- Anyone age 55+ is considered to be of advanced age. This means that Social Security considers these individuals essentially incapable of making adjustments in terms of work tools, work processing, work settings or industry.
- Anyone age 50 to 54 is considered to be approaching advanced age. This means they are considered to be significantly limited in vocational adaptability.

GRID DOES NOT CONSIDER ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY

The economy and job market have changed since the grid was established.

- Use of technology levels the playing field for many people with disabilities empowering them to perform many job tasks with the assistance of computerized, electronic or robotic devices.
- Use of technology is more common place through personal devices and mainstream products, making it easier for individuals to adapt to the use of technology in the workplace.

IMPACT OF THE GRID

- Anyone over the age of 50 who has done only manual labor or manufacturing jobs is considered “un-teachable,” and not likely to be able to perform sedentary work. Therefore, such individuals are determined “disabled. “
- Age 50 is too young to write people off as too old to change or transfer work skills.