

**SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION****Region IX Honolulu District Advisory Council; Public Meeting**

The U. S. Small Business Administration Region IX Advisory Council, located in the geographical area of Honolulu, Hawaii, will hold a public meeting on Thursday, August 14, 1997, at 10:00 a.m., at the Bank of America FSB, 1099 Alakea Street Alii Place, 24th Floor, Honolulu, HI, to discuss such matters as may be presented by members, staff of the U. S. Small Business Administration, or others present.

For further information, write or call Andrew K. Poepoe, District Director, U. S. Small Business Administration, 300 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 3214, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96850, telephone number (808) 541-2965

Dated: July 30, 1997.

**Eugene Carlson,**

*Associate Administrator, Office of Communication and Public Liaison.*

[FR Doc. 97-20956 Filed 8-7-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8025-01-P

**SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION****Region I Providence District Advisory Council Meeting; Public Meeting**

The U.S. Small Business Administration Region I Advisory Council, located in the geographical area of Providence, Rhode Island will hold a public meeting on Tuesday, August 26, 1997, at 4:00 p.m. at the Newport Harbor Hotel, Newport, Rhode Island.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss such matters as may be presented by members, staff of the U.S. Small Business Administration, or other parties.

For further information, write or call the office of the District Director, Providence District Office, U.S. Small Business Administration, 380 Westminster Street, Rhode Island 02903, (401) 528-4561.

Dated: July 30, 1997.

**Eugene Carlson,**

*Associate Administrator, Office of Communications and Public Liaison.*

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**SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION****Social Security Ruling, SSR 97-2p; Title II and Title XVI: Prehearing Case Review by Disability Determination Services**

**AGENCY:** Social Security Administration.  
**ACTION:** Notice of Social Security ruling.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with 20 CFR 402.35(b)(1), the Acting Commissioner of Social Security gives notice of Social Security Ruling (SSR) 97-2p. This Ruling states the Social Security Administration's (SSA) policy on returning claims pending at the hearing level from the Office of Hearings and Appeals to the Disability Determination Services for a prehearing case review when new medical evidence is submitted. This Ruling was developed as part of SSA's effort to further ensure consistency in the way disability claims are adjudicated at all levels of the administrative review process.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** August 8, 1997.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Joanne K. Castello, Division of Regulations and Rulings, Social Security Administration, 6401 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, MD 21235, (410) 965-1711.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Although we are not required to do so pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552 (a)(1) and (a)(2), we are publishing this Social Security Ruling in accordance with 20 CFR 402.35(b)(1).

Social Security Rulings make available to the public precedential decisions relating to the Federal old-age, survivors, disability, supplemental security income, and black lung benefits programs. Social Security Rulings may be based on case decisions made at all administrative levels of adjudication, Federal court decisions, Commissioner's decisions, opinions of the Office of the General Counsel, and other interpretations of the law and regulations.

Although Social Security Rulings do not have the same force and effect as the statute or regulations, they are binding on all components of the Social Security Administration, in accordance with 20 CFR 402.35(b)(1), and are to be relied upon as precedents in adjudicating cases.

If this Social Security Ruling is later superseded, modified, or rescinded, we will publish a notice in the **Federal Register** to that effect.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance, Programs 96.001 Social Security—Disability Insurance; 96.002 Social Security—Retirement Insurance; 96.004 Social Security—Survivors Insurance; 96.005

Special Benefits for Disabled Coal Miners; 96.006 Supplemental Security Income.)

Dated: July 31, 1997.

**John J. Callahan,**

*Acting Commissioner of Social Security.*

**Policy Interpretation Ruling**

**Title II and Title XVI: Prehearing Case Review by Disability Determination Services**

**Purpose:** To state the Social Security Administration's (SSA) policy on returning claims pending a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) from SSA's Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) to the Disability Determination Services (DDS) for a prehearing case review when new medical evidence is submitted.

**Citations (Authority):** Regulations No. 4, sections 404.941, 404.944, and 404.1527(f); and Regulations No. 16, sections 416.1441, 416.1444, and 416.927(f).

**Background:** 20 CFR 404.941 and 416.1441 provide that after a hearing before an ALJ is requested but before it is held, SSA may, for the purposes of a prehearing case review, forward a case to the component of SSA (including a State agency) that issued the determination being reviewed. That component will decide whether the determination may be revised. These regulations provide that SSA may conduct a prehearing case review if:

1. Additional evidence is submitted;
2. There is an indication that additional evidence is available;
3. There is a change in the law or regulation; or
4. There is an error in the file or some other indication that the prior determination may be revised.

Under these rules, SSA has the authority to conduct a prehearing case review in a wide range of circumstances. However, SSA has generally used its authority to conduct a prehearing case review in limited circumstances, keeping most cases in the hearing process even when a prehearing case review would be permissible under these rules. Now, under an initiative approved by the Commissioner of Social Security in July 1996 as part of SSA's overall goal of process unification, SSA has decided to use its existing regulatory authority to reexamine selected disability claims after a hearing is requested but before it is held. This Ruling explains the policy SSA will apply in these cases.

The goal of process unification is to achieve correct, similar results in similar cases at all stages of the administrative review process. SSA's studies indicate that additional