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Disability Insurance
SSR 96-8p

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SSR 96-8p: POLICY INTERPRETATION RULING
TITLES II AND XVI: ASSESSING RESIDUAL
FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY IN INITIAL CLAIMS

PURPOSE: To state the Social Security Administration's policies and policy interpretations regarding the
assessment of residual functional capacity (RFC) in initial claims for disability benefits under titles II and XVI of
the Social Security Act (the Act). In particular, to emphasize that:

1. Ordinarily, RFC is an assessment of an individual's ability to do sustained work-related physical and
   mental activities in a work setting on a regular and continuing basis. A "regular and continuing basis"
   means 8 hours a day, for 5 days a week, or an equivalent work schedule.

2. The RFC assessment considers only functional limitations and restrictions that result from an individual's
   medically determinable impairment or combination of impairments, including the impact of any related
   symptoms. Age and body habitus are not factors in assessing RFC. It is incorrect to find that an
   individual has limitations beyond those caused by his or her medically determinable impairment(s) and
   any related symptoms, due to such factors as age and natural body build, and the activities the individual
   was accustomed to doing in his or her previous work.

3. When there is no allegation of a physical or mental limitation or restriction of a specific functional
   capacity, and no information in the case record that there is such a limitation or restriction, the adjudicator
   must consider the individual to have no limitation or restriction with respect to that functional capacity.

4. The RFC assessment must first identify the individual's functional limitations or restrictions and assess
   his or her work-related abilities on a function-by-function basis, including the functions in paragraphs (b),
   (c), and (d) of 20 CFR 404.1545 and 416.945. Only after that may RFC be expressed in terms of the
   exertional levels of work, sedentary, light, medium, heavy, and very heavy.

5. RFC is not the least an individual can do despite his or her limitations or restrictions, but the most.

6. Medical impairments and symptoms, including pain, are not intrinsically exertional or nonexertional. It is
   the functional limitations or restrictions caused by medical impairments and their related symptoms that
   are categorized as exertional or nonexertional.

CITATIONS (AUTHORITY): Sections 223(d) and 1614(a) of the Social Security Act, as amended; Regulations
No. 4, subpart P, sections 404.1513, 404.1520, 404.1520a, 404.1545, 404.1546, 404.1560, 404.1561,
404.1569a, and appendix 2; and Regulations No. 16, subpart I, sections 416.913, 416.920, 416.920a, 416.945,
416.946, 416.960, 416.961, and 416.969a.

INTRODUCTION: In disability determinations and decisions made at steps 4 and 5 of the sequential evaluation