

Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Benefits: A Working Knowledge

Contacting Social Security

Call 1(800)772-1213 between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.

To request a verification of benefits statement, use the automated telephone menu. You must provide the name and Social Security number. The statement should arrive in one to two weeks at the mailing address on record. If there is a benefits payee, the statement will be mailed to the payee.

New applications for disability benefits can be initiated either over the telephone or through a scheduled appointment or drop-in visit to the local Social Security office. To arrange an appointment call the toll free number.

For problems with benefits, a visit to the nearest Social Security office may be the most effective method of contact. Monmouth County cases are covered by either the Neptune or Iselin offices. Directions to the offices are available from the automated telephone menu.

A Working Knowledge of Differences between SSI and SSDI

For both short and long term planning purposes it is important that Arc program participants and their families be aware of the differences between SSI and SSDI. This is of immediate and ongoing concern for participants in vocational programming. Program participants, their families, and Arc staff should have a basic working knowledge regarding SSI and SSDI benefits and how wages will affect those benefits. In respect to the benefits programs administered by Social Security Administration for persons with disabilities, there are significant differences to be aware of between SSI and all other Social Security Disability programs:

SSI (Supplemental Security Income) for the Disabled

(Note that SSI programs based on financial need are also available for the aged and the blind.)

SSDI (Social Security Disability)

- based on own earnings record
- disabled adult child benefits based on retired or disabled parent's earnings record
- disabled adult child survivor's benefits based on deceased parent's earnings record

It is possible to be eligible for either type of benefit or a combination of the two. Although both SSI and the various types of Social Security programs are administered by Social Security Administration, the rules and regulations for SSI are significantly different because it is a "needs based" (public assistance) program. Adults applying for disability benefits are generally assessed by Social Security for both programs simultaneously (2 separate applications are taken). Persons who are receiving only SSI may become eligible later for SSDI when a parent retires/becomes disabled/dies or when the recipient's own earnings record accrues enough work credits in the Social Security system. Depending on the dollar amount of SSDI awarded, the recipient may lose the SSI grant or continue to receive a reduced SSI benefit. Recipients may not refuse SSDI benefits in order to retain eligibility for SSI and Medicaid.

Following is a side by side comparison of differences to be aware of regarding the SSI and SSDI benefits programs:

SSI
(Supplemental Security Income for the Disabled)

ELIGIBILITY

- medically disabled from work
- needs based
- income under \$725.25/month for a single adult
- resources are assessed

CHILDHOOD SSI

- Rules for eligibility for children are different than the rules for adults. Children must have "marked and severe functional limitations of substantial duration."
- "Deeming" of parents' income and assets is used to determine financial eligibility.
- Children receiving SSI are re-assessed at age 18 under the rules for adults.

RECEIVING SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE

- Adult SSI recipients assessed by Social Security as receiving support and maintenance (usually from relative with whom recipient is living) are eligible for less cash assistance. To be assessed for the maximum amount of SSI benefits, the SSI recipient must inform Social Security that he or she is paying a reasonable fair share of household expenses.

HEALTH INSURANCE: MEDICAID

- Medicaid (starts with benefits; no cost for insurance; no deductible; always pays in full for eligible costs; covers prescription drugs*; acceptance by providers limited)

(* Dual eligibles who receive both Medicare and Medicaid must enroll in Medicare Part D to receive Medicaid drug benefits.)

EARNED INCOME

- \$20 a month of earned or unearned income is disregarded.
- The first \$65 of earned income is disregarded. After that \$1 for every \$2 of gross earnings is deducted.
- Gross earnings should not exceed the amount of the SSI grant, and cash resources must remain under \$2,000 to retain eligibility for SSI.
- Report earnings frequently in order to avoid large over or underpayment of benefits. If there is a payee for the benefits, the payee is responsible for reporting.
- If a recipient loses eligibility for SSI *because of earnings*, Medicaid should be continued under Title 1619b of the work incentives legislation. Title 1619b Medicaid is administered by SSA.

SSDI
(Social Security Disability)

ELIGIBILITY

- medically disabled from work
- contributions based
- income below \$1000/month (2010 non-blind SGA)
- resources are not assessed

TRANSITION FROM MINOR DEPENDENT STATUS

- Children who receive benefits on a deceased, retired, or disabled parent's work record as minor dependents are not assessed for disability. It is necessary for Social Security to medically assess a recipient as a disabled adult child in order to continue the benefits after age 18.

HEALTH INSURANCE: MEDICARE

- Medicare (starts 24 months after benefits eligibility; part A hospitalization free, must pay for Part B; Part B has \$135 annual deductible and 80% coverage of eligible costs; does not cover prescription drugs; accepted by many health care providers)
- SSDI recipients may apply for New Jersey Care Medicaid if total monthly income for a family of one is \$903/month or less and assets are \$4,000 or less (2009 & 2010 figures). NJ Care Medicaid and other adult Medicaid programs such as WorkAbility are administered by Monmouth County Division of Social Services.
- SSDI recipients who are not eligible for Medicaid may qualify for PAAD (Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled), a state administered prescription drug plan with a \$6 copay. PAAD applicants are also assessed for a state program which pays the Medicare Part B premium and can apply for Lifeline home energy assistance on the same form.

EARNED INCOME

- Earnings above the SGA (substantial gainful activity) limit of \$1000/month will be counted as trial work; however, the earnings are not deducted from the grant.
- If earnings exceed the SGA limit for a 9-month trial work period, the recipient may be assessed as no longer being disabled from work and lose eligibility for SSDI. Some benefits may continue to be paid during a grace period and a period of extended eligibility.
- Report earnings promptly to ensure that SSA correctly tracks months which qualify to be counted towards the trial work period.

ACRONYMNS:

PAAD	Pharmaceutical Assistance for the Aged and Disabled
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
SSDI	Social Security Disability
SGA	substantial gainful allowance
MCDSS	Monmouth County Division of Social Services
NJ WINS	New Jersey Work Incentive Network Support

URLS:

Social Security Administration website:	www.socialsecurity.gov
Social Security forms:	www.socialsecurity.gov/online
Social Security publications:	www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/englist.html
Enews subscription:	www.socialsecurity.gov/eneews

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Social Security Administration
1(800)772-1213

Linda Bieri, SSA Work Incentives Liaison
Neptune Social Security office
645 Neptune Boulevard
Neptune, NJ 07753
(732)774-9103

NJ WINS (benefits counseling for SSI or SSDI recipients who work or want to work):
(732)262-8020

PAAD: 1(800)792-9745

APPLICATION FOR ADULT MEDICAID:

Monmouth County Division of Social Services:
Human Services Building
Kozloski Road, Freehold
(732)431-6000

95 First Avenue
Atlantic Highlands
(732)683-8501 x3201

Seaview Square
2406 Route 66
Ocean Township
(732)683-8501 x5800

SOCIAL SECURITY DEFINITIONS OF "DISABILITY":

Adults: A physical or mental impairment that keeps a person from performing any "substantial" work and is expected to last 12 months or result in death.

Children: A physical or mental impairment that results in marked and severe functional limitations and is expected to last 12 months or result in death.