

Supplemental Security Income

What is Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?

SSI is a government program that pays disability benefits to children and adults who are disabled and have low income and few resources. Adults, 65 and over, without disabilities are also eligible if they meet the financial requirements.

Is my child with a disability eligible for SSI?

There are two basic requirements for eligibility:

1. Your child has to meet social security's definition of "disability." This means your child must have a physical or mental condition or both, that results in "marked and severe functional limitations." The condition(s) must last for at least 12 months and must seriously limit your child's activities.
2. There are specific income and resource limits that your family cannot exceed.
 - Income includes: Money you earn from work and money you get from other sources such as relatives, friends, unemployment benefits, etc. You can find more information at <http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-income-ussi.htm>
 - Limited resources include: Things you own such as cash, bank accounts, stocks, land, vehicles, life insurance and anything else you own that could be converted to cash and used for food or shelter. You can find detailed information at <http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-resources-ussi.htm>

How to apply?

You can apply by calling 1-800-772-1213 or visiting your local Social Security office. You can complete some of the forms online.

What kind of information will I need to provide?

When you make an appointment with your local office ask them for a list of the documents you will need to provide. The documents can include: social security card, birth certificate, payroll stubs, bank statements, lease or rent agreement, property tax bill, your child's medical report, names, addresses and telephone numbers of the doctors, medical providers, teachers, and caregivers who work with your child, list of prescription medications, your child's IEP, etc.

How long does the application process take?

It can take the agency anywhere between three to five months to make a decision.

What are your rights and responsibilities?

You have the right to:

- Apply for benefits, free of charge
- Get help from the social security office to fill out the application forms and obtain medical records
- Have someone help you with your SSI claim and have that person go with you when you visit your local office
- Be represented by an attorney or other qualified person of your choice
- Ask to see or get copies of the information in your records
- Get a letter that will tell you what benefits you can get
- Appeal if you disagree with their decision
- Have the assistance of an interpreter, free of charge
- Get copies of the law, regulations or policy statements used to decide your claim.

Your responsibilities include letting social security office know if:

- You move, change your address and or change your name
- You get help with living expenses or get income from child support
- You get married, separated or divorced

Supplemental Security Income

- There is a change of income in your household

What if my application is not approved?

It is not usual to receive a denial when initially applying for SSI benefits. If this happens, contact Parent to Parent who can assist you by pairing you with other parents who have been turned down at first, but was able to eventually obtain SSI benefits. The more supporting medical documentation of how your child's disability results in "marked and severe functional limitations" will help provide a stronger case for approval. This will not however guarantee approval. Being persistent is key. Some families may need to seek legal help in getting approved.

What happens once you get SSI?

You will start receiving monthly checks. The dollar amount will vary depending on individual living situations, the amount of income and assets you have and the state you live in. If your child is eligible for SSI, their case will be reviewed every 3 years. If your child is an infant, receiving SSI, then a review will take place when your child turns a year old. In Georgia, if your child receives SSI, he or she automatically qualifies for Medicaid. SSI can be transferred from state to state.

What happens when your child turns age 18?

At age 18, your child is considered to be an adult. The rules for determining SSI for an adult are very different from that of a child. For example, the agency does not count the income and resources of family members when deciding whether an adult meets the financial limits for SSI. They only count the adult's income and resources. The "disability" definition for an adult is different from that of a child. You can find a more detailed explanation <http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-eligibility-ussi.htm>.

If your child is already receiving SSI payments, his or her medical condition will be reviewed when they turn 18. The review will be done during the one-year period that begins on your child's 18th birthday.

If your child was not eligible for SSI before his or her 18th birthday because you and your spouse had too much income or resources, he or she may become eligible for SSI at age 18. You will need to apply.

Can an individual work and still get SSI?

Yes! There are ways for an individual to work and continue to get some or all of their SSI cash benefits or Medicaid coverage. You can find out more information about SSI work incentive programs at <http://ssa.gov/redbook/>. The Benefits Navigator Program is a Georgia program that provides free information and counseling services that can help you and your child make informed decisions regarding vocational goals. You can find more information at <http://www.bpaoga.com/> or by contacting them at 1-866-772-2726.

Where to go for more information:

Parent to Parent of Georgia
770 451-5484 or 800-229-2038
www.p2pga.org

Georgia Department of Public Health
Children's Medical Services
404-657-2726 or toll free: 1-800-300-9003
<http://dph.georgia.gov>