

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Children 0-17 years

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a Federal program funded by general tax revenues (not Social Security taxes)¹. It is designed to offer income assistance to children who have a disability and who have a limited income and resources. Children who have a qualifying condition can receive a monthly check. Their eligibility for SSI in turn allows the child to obtain Medicaid.

Providers (such as public health nurses, community health workers, family navigators and early intervention providers) who work with families who have children with disabilities are in an excellent position to assist families to apply for benefits. The following information is intended to guide providers as they work with families.

The U.S. Social Security Administration website is a great resource for any questions you may have about applying for SSI for a child or an adult. The caveat is that you need to know how to find specific pages - links to specific pages have been included in this handout.

<http://www.ssa.gov/>

Steps:

1. Identify children and youth who may qualify for benefits

- Does the child have a condition that is expected to last longer than 12 months?
- Does this condition result in functional difficulties for the child?
- Was the child born prematurely?
 - Guidelines for eligibility for premature infants can be found at the following website: SSI Benefits for Premature Children
http://ssa-custhelp.ssa.gov/app/answers/detail/a_id/368/~/ssi-benefits-for-premature-children
- Does the child have a condition that is listed as a “compassionate allowance”?
 - Compassionate allowances are conditions that are known to cause a limited lifespan, or to cause significant lifelong problems. If a person has one of these conditions, the medical eligibility for SSI can be expedited. For more information, refer to the following website:
<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances/>

2. Discuss SSI with family and/or youth

- Do they want to apply?
- What about income and resource limits for children 18, 18 and older, foster kids or young adults/kids leaving an institution or treatment facility?

3. Explain the application process

Process:

- Family completes application with ROI'S signed and/or copies of medical records.
- Parent has phone or in person appointment with local SSI office to verify information in application, and make any corrections.

- File is then sent to the state Disability Determination Service office (DDS).
- The state office sends the ROI'S out for medical records, and then makes a decision.
- The file is returned along with the decision to the local office.
 - If the application is approved, child can start receiving benefits.
 - *For children that are approved, there is a separate application for Medicaid benefits.*
 - If the application is denied, family can appeal.

4. Assist parents to start application process

3 ways to start the process:

1. Online. Families can apply online, or print off the application and complete it.
http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disability/disability_starter_kits.htm
2. Families can apply at their local or regional Social Security office.
3. Families can also call **1-800-772-1213** to start the application process.

5. Help them gather medical and educational information

- Help families identify and locate addresses for previous medical providers.
- Offer to write a letter if you have information that may not be documented in medical records (e.g. child's ability to function in daily life).
- Make sure that social security has a signed ROI from parents for you.
- Parents should also bring a copy of the child's IFSP, IEP, or 504 plan as well as any other school records to the SSI caseworker. This will expedite the process.

6. Explain application process and timelines to parents.

7. Explain what money can be used for, importance of keeping records, information about the Representative Payee option, etc.

- Guide for Representative Payees:
<http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10076.html#a0=4>

8. Explain importance of responding to requests for information quickly.

9. Explain appeals process. Don't miss appeal deadlines.

Tips for Completing SSI Application:

- **Make sure all spaces on application are complete or are marked through with N/A.** If a family has limited literacy or English language skills, they may need help completing the application.
- **There are two sections on the application where parents can write additional information about how their child's condition impacts their functional abilities- Section 3 and Section 10.** It is important that the parent explain what areas their child needs help with that a child of that age would normally be able to do themselves, or treatments that a typically developing child would not need.

- **Example:** A 5 year old is still wearing diapers because of a medical condition that impacts their continence, such as spina bifida, or because they have a intellectual disability, the parent should report this.
- **Other things to report:**
 - Daily need for medication and/or treatments (e.g. nebulizers)
 - Daily reliance on oxygen, feeding tube, mobility, need for assistance with adl's beyond what a typical child of that age would need
 - Need for close supervision because of behavior, seizures, etc.
 - Need for frequent trips to specialists

SSI Benefits for Adults over 18 years

Parents can start applying for SSI benefits for their child 3 months before their 18th birthday. For young adults with significant disabilities, having SSI entitles them to other supportive services. The application process is the same as for younger children, if the teenager has not previously qualified for SSI. A child may have met the medical eligibility but their parent's income may have been too high to receive benefits. Once the child turns 18, SSI eligibility is based on the young adult's income and resources, not the parents.

Helpful weblinks

The following links will take you directly to specific pages at the Social security website that will answer particular questions. You can also type in the title of the page listed above the link in the search box at the social security website.

Social Security Online

<http://www.ssa.gov/>

Understanding SSI

<http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-understanding-ssi.htm>

What you should know before you apply for SSI disability benefits for a child

<http://www.ssa.gov/disability/Factsheet-CHLD.pdf>

SSI for children

<http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-child-ussi.htm>

SSI for Adults (18+)

<http://www.ssa.gov/applyfordisability/>

Child and Adult Disability Starter kits

http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disability/disability_starter_kits.htm

Ticket to Work Program:

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10061.html#a0=1>

Disability Evaluation under Social Security

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/general-info.htm>

Benefits for Children with Disabilities

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10026.html>

Disability Related Publications for Health & School Professionals

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disability/professionals/publications.htm>

Understanding Supplemental Security Income

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi/text-income-ussi.htm>

Understanding Supplemental Security Income

SSI Spotlight on Dedicated Accounts for Children 2012 Edition

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi/spotlights/spot-dedicated-accounts.htm>
