



Understanding Supplemental Security Income SSI Application Process and Applicant's Rights

HOW TO APPLY FOR SSI BENEFITS

You can apply for SSI benefits by:

- ✓ Calling us at 1-800-772-1213 (or TTY 1-800-325-0778 if you are deaf or hard of hearing) and making an appointment to apply for SSI benefits. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, we also will take your telecommunications relay services (TRS) assisted calls at 1-800-772-1213. With an appointment, one of our representatives will help you apply for benefits. You can have an appointment to apply for benefits on the telephone or in person at your local Social Security office.
- ✓ Having someone else call and make the appointment for you or assist you with your application for SSI benefits. For more information, see our chapter on HOW SOMEONE CAN HELP YOU WITH YOUR SSI.
- ✓ Visiting our office to apply without making an appointment, but you may have to wait awhile.

You will have to provide information and work with us to get documents concerning SSI eligibility.

You will have to file an application.

We do not have SSI applications online. Most of the forms to apply for SSI are not designed for self-completion. Our claims representative interviews you and uses a personal computer to complete the forms with information you give to us or someone else gives to us on your behalf.

WHEN TO APPLY

Apply as soon as possible so that you do not lose benefits. We cannot pay benefits for time periods earlier than your application effective date.

If you call us to make an appointment to apply and you file an application within 60 days of the call, we may use the date of your call as your application filing date.

If you do not keep this appointment and you do not contact us to reschedule the appointment, we will try to contact you. If we do not get in touch with you to reschedule the appointment, we will send you a letter. The letter will say that if you file an application within 60 days from the date of the letter, we will use the date of your original contact with us as your SSI application date.

If you are in a public institution, but you will be leaving within a few months, you may not be eligible for SSI benefits until you leave. You may, however, be able to apply before you leave so that SSI benefits can begin quickly after you leave. Check with the institution and us about filing an application under the "prerelease procedure."

If you are a disabled youth in foster care, eligibility for foster care payments in most States ends when you attain age 18. You may need the income support and health services that result from SSI eligibility to ease the transition to independent living. To help with this transition, SSA may accept an SSI application from you up to 90 days before your foster care eligibility ends due to age.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO APPLY

Anyone may apply for SSI.
There is no charge to apply.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE HELP FROM SOCIAL SECURITY

We will complete the application forms for you based on information you give to us.

We will help you get documents you need to show that you meet the SSI eligibility requirements.

If you are applying because of disability or blindness and we decide that the medical information needed to make a decision is not available from existing sources, we will pay for you to have a doctor's exam or test and make the appointment for you. If you need a medical exam or test, you must go to the exam or test in order to receive SSI benefits. We may also pay your travel costs to get to this exam or test.

For information on when we pay for travel to medical exams, see our SSI Spotlight on Payment for Travel to Medical Exams or Tests.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO A REPRESENTATIVE

You may appoint someone to help you with your SSI claim and go with you to your appointment(s) with us.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO A NOTICE

We will notify you in writing of any determination about your eligibility or any change in your benefit amount. We will also send copies of all notices to your representative if you have one. Each notice affecting your eligibility or change in SSI benefit amount will explain your appeal rights.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXAMINE YOUR FILE

You or your representative may examine and get a copy of the information in your case file, upon request. You or your representative also may review and copy the laws, regulations and policy statements used in deciding your case at: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi/law-regs-finder.htm>

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO APPEAL

You may appeal most determinations we make about your eligibility for SSI benefits, or changes we make in your benefit amount.

THIS INFORMATION IS GENERAL. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778), OR CONTACT YOUR LOCAL SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE.