

SOCIAL SECURITY FACTS

How Are The Social Security & SSI Disability Programs Different?

The Social Security Administration runs two separate programs to provide benefits to people with disabilities. One is the Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance program [OASDI], known as “Social Security.” The other is the Supplemental Security Income program [SSI].

	Social Security Disability	SSI
Funding	Social insurance funded by payroll taxes (FICA) paid by workers and their employers into the Social Security Trust Fund	“Means-tested” program funded by general revenues from the federal government
Common names	“SSDI,” “Social Security,” or “Title II” of the Social Security Act for disability insurance. “Social Security” or “Title II” for retirement and survivor insurance	“SSI” or “Title XVI (16)” of the Social Security Act
People who qualify	Workers earn coverage for themselves and family members [children, spouses, widow(er)s and disabled adult children] by paying Social Security taxes. They qualify if they have a severe long-term disability.	People with low income and resources who are age 65 or older, adults and children who are blind or disabled
Number of people who qualify with disabilities	Approximately 8.8 million people - disabled workers (6.2 million); spouses or dependent children of disabled workers (1.6 million); disabled adult children of workers who are dead, retired or disabled (759,000); disabled widow(er)s of deceased workers (207,000). People with disabilities may also get Social Security retirement or survivors insurance.	Approximately 5 million people based on disability or blindness, including 4 million adults and 993,000 children
Basis of monthly benefit amount	Based on worker’s taxable earnings during his/her lifetime	Based on maximum federal benefit, varies depending on each person’s income. Some states give an extra amount.
Average monthly benefit	Varies by category and household - disabled workers (\$895); disabled worker, spouse and one or more children (\$1,497); disabled adult children (\$465 if parent retired; \$609 if parent deceased)	SSI: \$428.30 average. Monthly 2005 maximum federal benefit: \$579 for an individual; \$869 for a married couple.
Income and resource rules	No limits on unearned income or resources	Strict, very low limits on income and resources
Disability rules	Individuals must have a severe physical or mental impairment that has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months or result in death that prevents them from working.	Uses same disability definition for adults. Separate definition of disability for children.
Health care	Most people qualify for Medicare after receiving disability benefits for 2 years.	In most states, individuals qualify for Medicaid.

Receiving Social Security Disability Insurance and SSI

People can get Social Security disability insurance and SSI benefits at the same time. In September 2004, 35.2 percent of all SSI beneficiaries also got Social Security disability benefits. This included individuals who qualified based on age [57.7 percent] and blindness or disability [30.4 percent]. Individuals who get Social Security disability must have very limited income and resources to qualify also for SSI.

Receiving Social Security Disability and Retirement Insurance

People with disabilities may get one benefit now and another type later. For example, this happens for workers who earn Social Security benefits before they must stop working due to their disability. When they stop working because of their disability, they may qualify for disability insurance if they are below normal retirement age. Then, if they are still disabled when they reach normal retirement age, their benefits automatically convert to retirement insurance, but they get the same amount.

Some people with disabilities get a benefit due to their disability from the disability, retirement or survivors insurance programs. For example, “disabled adult children” have a severe disability that began before age 22 and get benefits when a parent who paid Social Security taxes retires, dies or becomes disabled.

Working While Getting Benefits

Special rules allow people with disabilities to work while still receiving Social Security disability or SSI disability benefits as well as Medicare or Medicaid. These are called "work incentives." There are different rules for each program, especially about how much someone can earn and still qualify for benefits.

Social Security & Its Financial Future

There is a debate about how to ensure that Social Security is financially secure over the next 75 years. Some people ask if the SSI program is part of the discussions about Social Security's long-term financial future. Technically, it is not. But if people receive lower Social Security benefits, then more may qualify for SSI if their income and resources are low enough. However, some people may have income and resources that, while lower than before, would still mean that they could not get help from the SSI program.

The disability community urges Congress to request a **beneficiary impact statement** on every major component of any serious proposal. In a program that affects millions of individuals of all ages, it is essential for policymakers to understand the actual impact on people’s daily lives.