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What You Need To Know About Your Supplemental Security Income (SSI) When You Turn 18

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Introduction

This publication is for youth who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and their parents, teachers, health providers, caregivers, or representatives. You should learn about the changes that happen with your SSI benefits when you turn age 18; as well as services and supports that are available from Social Security and other federal and state agencies to help you prepare for a successful transition into adulthood.

The Age-18 Redetermination

When you turn age 18, we will review your eligibility for continued SSI benefits based on the disability rules for adults, including non-medical eligibility rules (income, resources, residency, citizenship, etc.), which are different than the rules that were applied when you were a child. We call this review an “age-18 redetermination.” We will make sure that you are aware of this important change and the process for providing us with needed information. We will usually contact you within a year of turning age 18. During this review, we will send you a letter to ask for the following information about your disability:

- Names of any medicines.
- Hospital stays and surgeries.
- Visits to doctors and clinics.
- Work activity.
- Counseling and therapy.

- Schools and special classes or tutoring.
- Teachers and counselors who have knowledge of your condition.

Doctors and other trained staff will decide if you meet the disability rules for adults. Our disability rules for adults are different from our disability rules for children. Historically, about one-third of children lose their SSI eligibility following the age-18 redetermination.

When we decide if you will continue to qualify for SSI, we will write to let you know our decision. Our letter explains your right to appeal our decision — that is, ask us to look at your case again.

If you want to appeal the decision, you must send a written appeal to Social Security within 60 days from the date you receive your letter. If you appeal the decision within 10 days of receiving the letter, you can also choose to have us continue to pay SSI benefits during the appeal process. For more information on the appeal process, go to **www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10058.pdf** and read *Your Right To Question The Decision We Made On Your Claim* (Publication No. 05-10058).

Earnings and the Age-18 Redetermination

The age-18 redetermination differs from a new application. Unlike in a new application for SSI, your earnings above

the substantial gainful activity (SGA)¹ level in a month will not automatically make you ineligible for SSI during your age-18 redetermination. We will make a decision about whether you meet the other medical and non-medical criteria to receive SSI. When we decide if you meet the medical criteria, we will also consider your level of functioning in your past work and what it says about your ability to work in the national economy. If you are able to work at the SGA level only because of SSI work incentives or other supports, we will consider that information in the redetermination.

Visit www.ssa.gov/oact/cola/sga.html to get the current year's SGA amounts (blind and non-blind amounts), and you should also visit www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10095.pdf and read *Working While Disabled: How We Can Help* (Publication No. 05-10095).

When we review non-medical eligibility during the age-18 redetermination, we will ask for information about all of your income, including any earnings. If you use SSI work incentives and supports to help you to work, we will not count some of your earnings and that will reduce your risk of you losing your SSI or Medicaid because of work. However, you must tell us about your work activity no matter how little you earn. Your SSI may continue while you work if you are still disabled. As your earnings go up,

¹ Social Security considers your monthly earnings to evaluate whether your work activity is at a level of substantial gainful activity.

the amount of your SSI will go down and eventually may stop. Even if your SSI stops, you may be able to keep your Medicaid coverage and keep working.

Social Security Work Incentives and Supports

We have work incentives that are available to help youth and adults. We also have additional information available to assist with benefits counseling and work supports. Work incentives allow you to continue receiving your SSI payments or Medicaid coverage while you work. We can give you information about our work incentives and supports, tell you when you qualify for them, and help you to use them. Some of the work incentives and supports are described below. For more information on these and other Social Security employment supports, visit [**www.ssa.gov/redbook**](http://www.ssa.gov/redbook) and read *The Red Book – A Summary Guide To Employment Supports* (Publication No. 64-030).

Continued Payments (Section 301 Payments)

If we find that you are no longer medically eligible after the age-18 redetermination, your SSI payments usually stop. However, if you are participating in an approved program of special education, vocational

rehabilitation (VR), or similar services, your benefits may continue until you stop participating in or complete the program.

To qualify for continued SSI payments under Section 301:

- You must be participating in an appropriate program of VR or similar services that began before your eligibility ends under our rules.
- We must review your program and decide that your continued participation in the program will likely result in you no longer receiving disability benefits.

Examples of appropriate programs may include:

- An individualized education program (IEP) for a youth who is age 18 through 21.
- A VR agency using an individualized plan for employment.
- Support services using an individualized written employment plan.
- A written service plan with a school under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- An approved Plan to Achieve Self Support (PASS).

Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE)

Are you working or planning to work? The SEIE allows youth under age 22 who are regularly attending school to

have some of their earnings excluded from their countable income when determining SSI eligibility and payment. The amount that we can exclude generally increases each year. To find the current amount we can exclude, visit www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10095.pdf and read *Working While Disabled: How We Can Help* (Publication No. 05-10095). This means that earnings up to these limits will not change SSI payment amounts. The SEIE is available to you if you are participating in any of the following:

- Grades 7 through 12 for at least 12 hours a week.
- Under certain circumstances, homeschooling meeting the homeschooling laws of the state or jurisdiction where you live.
- Online schooling authorized by the laws of the state where the online school is located.
- A college or university for at least 8 hours a week under a semester or quarter system.
- A training course to prepare for employment for at least 12 hours a week (or 15 hours a week if the course involves shop practice).
- Any of the above for less time for reasons beyond your control, such as illness.
- A transition program preparing you for employment while you receive special education services.

The SEIE is available during school vacations if you attend classes regularly just before and after the school vacation. You must let us know.

Make sure to let us know if you are attending school and working so we can apply this work incentive to your earnings.

For more information about your responsibilities when you work and how to let us know, visit www.ssa.gov/redbook and read *The Red Book – A Summary Guide To Employment Supports* (Publication No. 64-030).

Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)

A PASS is a written plan for your future. A PASS allows you to set aside income and resources for a specified period of time so that you may reach a work goal that will reduce your SSI payments. For example, you could set aside some of your earnings to pay for expenses for education, vocational training, starting a business, or other expenses related to achieving your work goal. If you have a PASS, **you may also qualify for continued SSI payments under Section 301.** Social Security must approve your PASS. You can locate the PASS Specialist for your area by visiting www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/passcadre.htm. For more information about PASS, read our publication,

Working While Disabled – A Guide to Plans for Achieving Self-Support (Publication No. 05-11017) or visit www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-11017.pdf. You can also visit www.ssa.gov/redbook and read *The Red Book – A Summary Guide to Employment Supports* (Publication No. 64-030).

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)

Beginning at age 14, WIPA projects provide information and benefits counseling to help you understand how work and earnings can affect your benefits. To learn more about work incentives and to locate the nearest WIPA project, contact the Ticket to Work Help Line at **1-866-968-7842** (TTY **1-866-833-2967**) Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Time. Visit www.choosework.ssa.gov/findhelp to find information on WIPA projects.

Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS)

PABSS organizations work to protect the legal rights of Social Security disability beneficiaries who want to work. PABSS organizations work with youth in transition to identify and remove barriers to employment and independence. These organizations can provide information about obtaining vocational

rehabilitation services. To locate the PABSS organization in your state, contact the Ticket to Work Help Line at **1-866-968-7842** (TTY **1-866-833-2967**) Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Time. Visit www.choosework.ssa.gov/findhelp to locate your PABSS organization.

Grants and Scholarships

You may be planning to continue your education in college, or in vocational or technical school, and you may get grants, scholarships, fellowships, and gifts.

As long as these items are used, or are set aside to be used at a future date, to pay for tuition, fees, or other necessary educational expenses at any educational institution (including vocational and technical schools):

- We do not count them as income when we figure your SSI payments. However, we do count any portion set aside or actually used for food or shelter.
- We do not count them as a resource for nine months when we figure your SSI payments.

In addition, we do not count other types of assistance as income and resources in their entirety, regardless of how you can use them. When we figure SSI payments, we do not count all student financial assistance received under:

- Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, including the following:

- Pell Grants.
- Federal PLUS Loans.
- Perkins Loans.
- Stafford Loans.
- Ford Loans.
- Work Study programs.
- Bureau of Indian Affairs student assistance programs.

Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Account

An ABLE account is a tax-advantaged savings account for an individual with a disability. You can use an ABLE account to save funds for many disability-related expenses. Anyone, including the account owner, family, and friends can contribute to the ABLE account.

The account owner of an ABLE account must meet one of the below criteria:

- Be eligible for SSI based on disability or blindness that began before age 26.
- Be entitled to disability insurance benefits, childhood disability benefits, or disabled widow's or widower's benefits, based on disability or blindness that occurred before age 26.
- Have a certification that disability or blindness occurred before age 26.

The money you have in your ABLE account (up to and including \$100,000) does not count as a resource under SSI rules. You can use money in an ABLE account to pay for certain qualified

disability expenses, such as those for education, housing, transportation, employment training, employment support, assistive technology, and related services.

Visit www.ablenrc.org to get more information on ABLE accounts.

National and Community Supports From Programs Other Than Social Security

There are many other free or low-cost supports and programs available that can help you prepare for your transition to adulthood. Many of these are available in the areas of health, education, finance, and employment.

- If you have not already done so, we encourage you to contact your local school district. Services may be available to you through the school system. Ask about an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 plan.
- *Get to Where You Want to Go* is a resource guide produced by the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation that provides tips and resources to help plan for adulthood and life after high school. Visit www.beforeage18.org to get information.
- Parent Centers, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, help

families with children who have special needs. You can find out about services for school-aged children, therapy, local policies, transportation, early intervention programs for babies and toddlers, and much more. Visit www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/ to find a Parent Center in your state.

- U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration provides financial assistance to all states and jurisdictions for the development of service systems that support and improve the health services needs for mothers, infants, and children. This includes children with special health care needs, and their families. Visit <https://mchb.tvisdata.hrsa.gov/Home> to get more information about state program contacts.
- State VR agencies help youth transition to adulthood. Visit www2.ed.gov/about/contacts/state/index.html to find your state VR agency.
- There are programs offering help with health care costs, assessments, and treatments for babies, youth, young adults, and their family members. Upon turning 18, you may be eligible to keep your current health insurance or you may need to find other health insurance. To find programs in your state offering help with health care costs, assessments and treatment, visit www.hrsa.gov

or call **1-800-311-2229** (Spanish **1-800-504-7081**).

- You can find a low cost, affordable health center by visiting [**www.hrsa.gov/index.html**](http://www.hrsa.gov/index.html) online. To get health insurance through a Health Insurance Marketplace, visit [**localhelp.healthcare.gov**](http://localhelp.healthcare.gov) or call **1-800-318-2596**.
- Got Transition is a federally funded resource center that provides information and resources to improve the transition from pediatric to adult health care, particularly for youth with disabilities. Visit [**www.gottransition.org**](http://www.gottransition.org) for more information.
- If you have questions about children's health insurance or want to apply, contact **1-877-KIDS-NOW (1-877-543-7669)** to connect to an agency in your state. In addition, you can contact your state's family-to-family health information center, funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration. Visit [**https://familyvoices.org/ncfpp/**](https://familyvoices.org/ncfpp/) to find a center in your state.
- You may apply for Medicaid through your state's Medicaid agency. Visit [**https://www.medicaid.gov/about-us/contact-us/contact-state-page.html**](https://www.medicaid.gov/about-us/contact-us/contact-state-page.html).
- Neighborhood Navigator Tool is a resource application created by the American Academy of Family Physicians. This interactive tool can support referrals from doctors, service

providers, counselors, families, and caregivers. Visit the Neighborhood Navigator Tool online at www.familydoctor.org/neighborhood-navigator to get information on thousands of local social services that can assist with needs like child care, housing, transportation, employment, and legal services.

- The Catalyst Center at Boston University, funded by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, publishes a monthly newsletter and infographic that focuses on financing of care, including Medicaid for children and youth with special health care needs and their families. Visit www.ciswh.org online and search for Infographic: Medicaid and Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs.
- American Job Centers (One-Stop Centers) offer many free education, employment, and training services to help job seekers. You can find lists of job openings, use computers with internet access to search for jobs, and get help writing your resume. You can talk to career counselors about career options, and learn about education and training for a new career. To find the nearest American Job Center, go online to America's Service Locator at www.servicelocator.org or call the toll-free help line at **1-877-US2-JOBS (1-877-872-5627)**.

- MyMoney.gov provides financial information on a variety of topics, including how to earn, save and invest, protect, spend, and borrow. Go online to **www.mymoney.gov** to learn more.
- Hands on Banking is a program available in both English and Spanish that teaches people at all stages of life about the basics of responsible money management. These basics include how to create a budget, save and invest, borrow responsibly, buy a home, and establish a small business. Visit **www.handsonbanking.org** to get more information.
- YouthBuild engages young people to rebuild their communities and their lives by providing pathways to education, employment, or training. Visit **www.youthbuild.org** to get information on YouthBuild.
- Think College is a national organization focused on developing, expanding, and improving research and practice in inclusive higher education for students with intellectual disability. Visit the website at **<https://thinkcollege.net/>** to learn about two hundred college programs for students with intellectual disabilities. These programs include those that have the Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Program designation from the U.S. Department of Education.

Social Security is not endorsing any particular non-federal government organization, program, or employees thereof by listing the organization or program in this publication. We include the names and contact information for organizations or programs only as a convenience to you.

For additional information directed to our youth audience to assist them with making a successfully transition into adulthood, please visit the Youth Toolkit 2021 at www.ssa.gov/youth online.

Contacting Social Security

The most convenient way to do business with us from anywhere, on any device, is to visit www.ssa.gov. There are several things you can do online: apply for benefits; get useful information; find publications; and get answers to frequently asked questions.

When you open a personal *my* Social Security account, you have more capabilities. You can review your *Social Security Statement*, verify your earnings, and get estimates of future benefits. You can also print a benefit verification letter, change your direct deposit information, request a replacement Medicare card, get a replacement SSA-1099/1042S, and request a replacement Social Security card (if you have no changes and your state participates).

If you don't have access to the internet, we offer many automated services by telephone, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** or at our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**, if you're deaf or hard of hearing.

A member of our staff can answer your call from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. We ask for your patience during busy periods since you may experience a high rate of busy signals and longer hold times to speak to us. We look forward to serving you.

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