

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is social insurance financed with Social Security taxes (FICA contributions) paid by workers and employers. These contributions are based on individual earnings (or those of a spouse or parents). Beyond having a disability that limits their work, a worker must earn sufficient credits based on taxable work to be "insured" for Social Security purposes to be eligible for a SSDI. The amount of the monthly disability benefit is based on the Social Security earnings record of the insured worker. After receiving two years of SSDI cash benefits, a beneficiary will automatically get Medicare health coverage.

Qualifying for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

Qualification for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is based not only on having a disability but also on a person's work history. Social Security looks at two factors based on a work history to determine if a person is insured. First, has a person worked recently (Recent Work Test); and second how long has the person worked (Duration of Work Test). To find out if you are insured, create an account at My Social Security (<https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount/>).

After checking if insured, Social Security determines if the disability meets their criteria. A person's inability to do their previous work does not necessarily mean they have a disability. Social Security's definition for disability for an adult is the inability to engage in any Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) due to a physical or mental impairment that is expected to result in death or last for at least a continuous 12 month period. (According to Social Security, Substantial Gainful Activity [SGA] is the monthly earned income before taxes that shows a person is capable of doing significant work. In 2018, SGA is \$1,180 per month [\$1,970 for a person who is blind].) If a person is capable of earning SGA considering age, education and work experience, no matter whether such work exists in the immediate area or whether there are job vacancies, they do not have a disability. The worker's impairment(s) must be the primary reason for their inability to engage in SGA.

If the person is insured and has a disability according to Social Security criteria, they may qualify for SSDI benefits. The amount received each month depends on the work history.

How to Apply:

- Online (<https://www.ssa.gov/applyfordisability/>)
- At your local Social Security office (<https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>)
- Call 1-800-772-1213 or 1-800-325-0778 (TTY).

[There Are SSA Rules to Test Work](#)

Social Security provides work incentives to test returning to work to earn more than the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) limit without worrying about losing necessary benefits. Most people will follow a three-stage process of work incentives when receiving SSDI and going to work.

SSDI Work Incentives

Trial Work Period (TWP): Nine trial work months occurring within a rolling five-year window where an individual can work and continue to receive their full SSDI benefit. A Trial Work month is triggered when an individual's gross earnings is at or above the TWP amount. In 2018, the amount is \$850. The nine months do not have to be consecutive. An individual keeps the entire SSDI check during TWP, regardless of earnings.

Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE): After TWP, the Extended Period of Eligibility is a three-year period during which an individual can receive an SSDI check during months in which the "countable income" is at or below the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)* limit (in 2018 \$1,850 or \$1,970 if blind). If countable income is above SGA, the individual will not receive a cash benefits for those months. During this time if countable income goes below SGA, cash benefits will be restart.

* **Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)** is the gross monthly earned income that shows a person is capable of doing significant work according to Social Security. In 2018, SGA is \$1,180 per month (\$1,970 for a person who is blind). But an individual can use work incentives to reduce what SSA considers countable earnings.

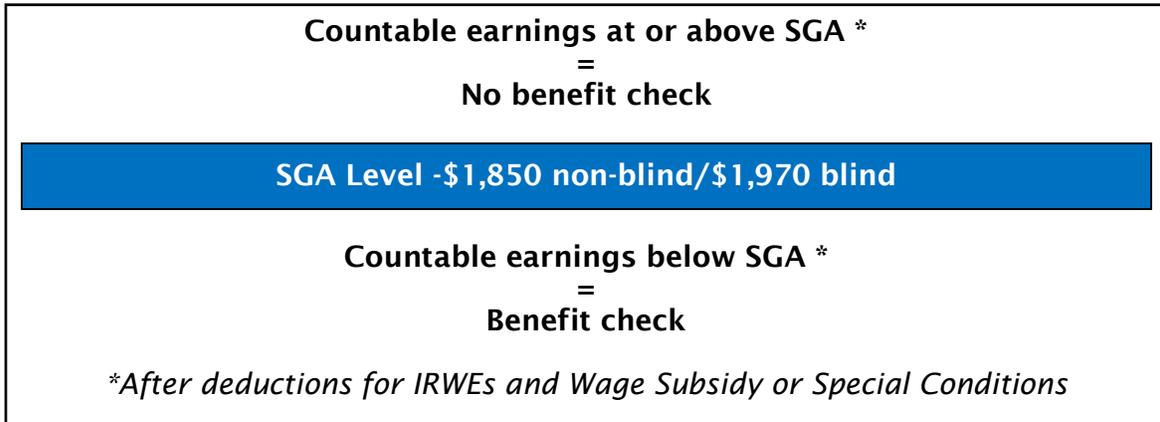
[SGA is More Than Just a Number](#)

There are additional work incentives that allow an individual to make more money than SGA. These work incentives cannot be used during the Trial Work Period.

Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE): Documented expenses paid out-of-pocket that are related to the disability, without which you could not work are not counted. Expense for items such as mobility devices, doctor visits, prescription copayments, assisted technology, and personal care services are deducted from countable income. Expenses must have a receipt and be approved by Social Security.

Wage Subsidy and Special Conditions: These are supports a person receives on the job that may result in getting paid more than the actual value of the services performed. Wage subsidy refers to support from the employer, such as more supervision or less tasks. Special Conditions is the support to be able to perform a job that is received by someone other than your employer, like Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor or Job Coach. Social Security must approve and determine the value of Wage Subsidy and Special Conditions. The determined value will not be used as countable income.

SGA Impact on Benefit Check



Expedited Reinstatement (EXR): If countable earnings are at the SGA level or higher after completing the Trail Work Period (TWP) and Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE), SSDI benefits stop. However, Expedited Reinstatement (EXR) allow for SSDI benefits to restart if countable earned income drops below the SGA level within the next five years without the need to reapply.

Calculating the impact an income will have on your SSDI check

During the Trail Work Period (TWP), an individual continues to get SSDI cash benefit, no matter how much they earn.

During the Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE), use the following to calculate effect of income on SSDI check.

Step 1:	Add up gross earnings each month (before taxes)	Monthly Earnings
Step 2:	Subtract out-of-pocket disability-related expenses (IRWE's)	- IRWE's
Step 3:	Subtract hours of job coach support x wages/hr.	- Job Coaching Subsidy
Step 4:	Subtract the value of employer support	- Employer Subsidy
Step 5:	This is the amount of earning SSA counts	= Countable Income
Step 6:	Is countable income below or above SGA (\$1,850 non-blind/\$1,970 blind in 2018)?	
	If countable income is below SGA	You get a SSDI check
	If countable income is above SGA	SSDI Check stops
* At any time during EPE if countable drops below SGA, SSDI cash benefits start again.		

Supplemental Security Income (SSDI) and Health Care

After receiving SSDI benefits for 24 months, Original Medicare benefits automatically start. Individuals on SSDI can keep Medicare for 93 months after completing their Trail Work Period (TWP), as long as they haven't medically improved.

Original Medicare includes Part A (pays for hospital medical care) and Part B (pays for outpatient care like doctor appointments). An individual can sign up for Medicare Advantage and Part D (pays for prescription drugs) during open enrollment or if there is a life change that impacts healthcare coverage. A person can have Medicare and other health coverage at the same time. If they have low income or resources, they may qualify for Medicaid, Medicare Savings Programs, and/or Low Income Subsidy to help pay for Medicare. Most states have the ability for people on SSDI to buy-in to Medicaid for a low monthly premium (maximum of \$35 a month) if they are working. Additional health coverage options such as employer-sponsored coverage or private individual coverage are also available.

Getting Help with Benefit Planning

Understanding SSDI Social Security benefits can be confusing. Certified benefit planners provide individualized benefits counseling to learn how work will impact benefits. Some projects like Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) provide comprehensive services for free. Services may also be paid for through providers like Vocational Rehabilitation or private pay. Also some Ticket to Work projects offer benefit counseling as part of their services.

Receiving Both SSDI and SSI

If a person receives both Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), both sets of rules and work incentives apply. It is highly recommended to use a certified Work Incentive Coordinator to assist in this situation. See section on Benefit Planning assistance.