



Benefits for Youth in Transition Fact Sheet Social Security Administration (SSA) Benefit Programs

As youths who receive disability cash benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA) move into adult life, it's important to be aware of changes and available supports. Understanding the changes and using the supports will help in making a smooth transition into adult pursuits such as post-secondary school, work, and general independence.

This Fact Sheet outlines some of the major disability benefits programs of the Social Security Administration and how they relate to youths transitioning to adulthood.

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Title II

Social Security monthly benefits for retired people and their families, survivors of deceased workers, or people with disabilities who have worked and their families (including disabled adult children.)

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Title XVI

Monthly payments for aged people or people with disabilities (including children under 18) who have low income and resources; income an SSI recipient receives normally lowers the amount of his/her monthly payment.

SSDI or Title II

Child under 18

If a parent receives retirement or SSDI benefits from SSA or is deceased, a child under 18 may receive benefits based on the parent's past earnings.

Turning age 18

A child can keep receiving benefits past age 18 in two ways.

- 1) If in full time attendance at a school that provides elementary or secondary level courses, benefits continue until age 19.
- 2) If past age 18 and disabled before age 22, benefits continue as Childhood Disability Benefits (CDB), also known as Disabled Adult Child (DAC) benefits.

Benefits on own record

Someone who has worked and earned enough Social Security credits and is disabled can receive Disability Insurance Benefits (DIB) based on their own earnings.

A Childhood Disability Beneficiary (CDB) who have worked enough may be entitled to DIB. Similarly, CDB's who work after age 18 may earn enough Social Security credits to become entitled on their own work record. A youth under age 24 needs only six (6) credits to qualify.

Work incentives

SSA has special employment incentives or supports that help youth receiving SSDI enter the workforce by protecting their eligibility to SSDI benefits and Medicare coverage. These incentives include a 9 month **trial work period** during which a beneficiary can work and earn any amount without benefits being affected. Once the youth used this trial period, if his/her work earnings are not substantial (**Substantial Gainful Activity** or SGA), benefits continue. In deciding if a youth's earnings are SGA, SSA considers any **subsidy** (special assistance) the youth may receive on the job and will not count the value of such assistance in looking at the earnings. SSA will also exclude from earnings any **impairment related work expenses** (e.g. special transportation, job coaching) the youth may need to stay employed.

Medicare

Related to SSDI benefits is Medicare, a basic federal health insurance program that helps pay for:

- 1) care in a hospital and skilled nursing facility, the home, and a hospice (Part A) and,
- 2) for doctors, out-patient hospital care, and other medical services (Part B.) Part D is a drug prescription benefit program also available.

Beneficiaries over 65 or entitled to SSDI benefits (including Childhood Disability Benefits) for 24 months are eligible for Medicare.

SSI or Title XVI

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program is the largest cash assistance program that provides benefits to youth with disabilities. Children (under age 18) can qualify if they have "a medically determinable physical or mental impairment which results in marked and severe functional limitations, and which can be expected to result in death

or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months" [13].

Child under 18

For the SSI program a child is someone who is unmarried and under age 18.

SSA considers a child under 18 who lives in the same household with his/her parent(s) to be sharing his/her parents' income and resources. SSA considers ("deems") a certain amount of the parents' income and resources to be available for meeting the child's basic needs. Deeming stops the month after the youth attains age 18 when only the youth's income and resources count.

If after turning 18 a youth still receiving SSI lives with his/her parents, SSA may count as income in-kind (non-cash) support from the parents in calculating monthly payments. In order not to be charged with this support, the youth must show that he/she has rental liability, is paying his/her share of the household expenses, or has some degree of ownership in the home.

A Student Child

SSA considers as a child someone who is under age 22 and regularly attending school, college, or training designed to prepare him/her for a paying job. For a youth who is a student, a special **student earned income exclusion** applies in calculating the SSI payment. In 2012 SSA excludes up to \$6840 of earned income in the year (a maximum of \$1700 per month) in calculating the youth's SSI payment under this provision.

Medical Reevaluation

To keep SSI eligibility once age 18, a youth must undergo an SSA medical reevaluation. The medical disability standards SSA uses for adults (those 18 and over) are different from those used for children.

For childhood disability SSA looks at marked and severe functional limitations in terms of the learning process. For adult disability SSA analyzes what limitations a youth has on an adult level that would prevent him/her from doing substantial work.

Much like for adults, defining disability for youth is difficult because it is a multi-faceted concept that represents the relationship between an individual and his or her environment. It typically refers to a limitation in functioning that stems from the presence of a physical or mental impairment. This definition is complex, however,

because an individual who is limited in his or her ability to function in one environment (e.g., school) may not be limited when the environment is modified.

Unrealistically optimistic assessments of a youth's ability, or the lack of documentation of the disabling condition, or substantial work by the youth may hinder an SSA finding of disability.

Work incentives

SSI also has special employment provisions that help youth enter the workforce by protecting their eligibility to SSI payments and Medicaid coverage. These include earned income exclusion (\$65 + half the remainder is excluded per month), student earned income exclusion (see above), and impairment related work expenses (see SSDI above.) A work incentive related to MA called 1619(b) allows MA coverage to continue if an SSI recipient's payments end due to his/her work earnings.

Medicaid

Medicaid is the largest provider of means-tested health benefits for youth with disabilities. Medicaid is available to all children whose family incomes are below 100 percent of the federal poverty level and the State Child Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) makes federal funds available to states to increase coverage for children with incomes below 200 percent of poverty. SSI child recipients are categorically eligible for benefits.

Associated with SSI is Medicaid (or MA), comprehensive health care coverage for people (including youth) with disabilities and low income. The federal and Wisconsin governments fund Medicaid, and the state administers it.

People who receive SSI payments qualify for Medicaid automatically. People not eligible for SSI may be eligible for Medicaid through other programs including the Medical Assistance Purchase Plan (MAPP) and Medically Needy Medicaid (Medical Deductible.)

Resources:

Employment Resources, Inc.

Web: <http://www.eri-wi.org/wdbn>

Phone: 1-800-710-WDBN (9326).

Social Security Administration

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

Call: 1-800-772-1213