

# Impairment Related Work Expenses

Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWEs) are items and services which, because of an impairment, a person needs and uses in order to work.

## IRWEs Have Two Different Uses:

- ◆ To reduce countable earnings, thereby avoiding the \$980 substantial gainful activity (SGA) rule.
- ◆ To reduce countable income, thereby increasing the amount of the monthly SSI benefit.

## The Three-Part Test for an IRWE:

- ◆ The individual with a disability must pay for the item or service.
- ◆ The item or service must be related to the person's disability.
- ◆ If the person did not spend the money and receive the item or service, he or she would not be able to work.

## The Following are Examples of Items or Services that Could Qualify as IRWEs:

- ◆ Transportation to work, including costs related to modified vehicles, operating a vehicle, or paying a driver or transportation company.
- ◆ Attendant care services at home (to get a person ready for work) or at the job.
- ◆ Medical devices (e.g., wheelchairs, inhalators, pacemakers) and prosthetic devices (e.g., artificial arms or legs).
- ◆ Residential modifications for persons who work away from home or in the home.
- ◆ Prescription drugs and medical services.

## Alternative Methods of Allocating IRWEs:

- ◆ The full amount can be deducted in the month it is paid.
- ◆ For large expenditures, the amount can be divided by 12 and deducted monthly.
- ◆ For long-term loans or credit card payments, the amount of the monthly payment is deducted.

## IRWEs and SGA:

- ◆ The \$980 SGA rule for 2009 (\$1,640 for persons who are legally blind) applies to SSI applicants and SSDI applicants and recipients.
- ◆ The monthly amount of all IRWEs is deducted from gross monthly earnings to obtain countable earnings.
- ◆ If countable earnings are less than \$980, after IRWE deductions, the person is not performing SGA.
- ◆ NOTE: Subsidies and paid time off (vacation, personal, holiday, and sick pay) can also be used to reduce countable income.

## IRWEs and SSI Budgeting:

- ◆ The monthly amount of all IRWEs is deducted from gross wages.
- ◆ Since IRWEs are deducted after the \$65 deduction, but before the additional 50 percent deduction, the result is that the SSI check is increased by 50 cents for every \$1 of IRWEs.