

SSI Application Process

When a child or an adult plans to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, it is important to know what documents the SSI program will need to process the claim. To be eligible for SSI, the applicant must establish a very severe disability and demonstrate financial need.

To begin the application process, the person must contact the local Social Security Office for either an appointment at Social Security or to set up a telephone interview. Alternatively, the application process can be started online. The application process is easier when the SSI program is given as much proof as possible with the application for benefits.

Application – A completed SSI application must be submitted with all questions answered. It is very important to provide as many disability-related details as possible.

Medical Proof – It is best to submit with the application any medical proof that is currently available. The applicant should provide SSI the full names and correct addresses of all doctors, clinics, therapists, or counselors the person is seeing concerning his or her disability. Letters from doctors and other medical professionals, giving a history of the applicant's condition, symptoms, and treatment can also be very helpful. If the applicant is a child, statements from teachers concerning the impact the disability has on classroom performance can also be extremely helpful.

Proof of Need – An applicant will need to submit proof of current income, all bank statements, cash surrender value of life insurance policies, and documentation concerning any other income or resources. If the applicant is under 18 years old, the SSI program will need to see proof of parental income and resources. If the applicant is over 18, parental income and resources will not be considered available to the applicant. The SSI program will also need proof of the applicant's living arrangement since the SSI program bases the payment amount on the individual's living arrangement. See "SSI Income Rules" and "SSI Resource Rules" from our At a Glance series for more information on these issues.

Important things to remember throughout the application process:

- The applicant should always respond to requests for additional information. If the SSI program does not have enough information, the application is likely to be denied.
- The applicant should provide complete and accurate information, to the best of his or her ability.
- If the SSI program schedules a consultative examination with a doctor or other professional, it is very important that the applicant goes to that appointment. An SSI application can be denied solely due to a failure to attend a consultative exam.

Note: This document is produced, printed, and disseminated at U.S taxpayer expense. One hundred percent of the funding for this document is through a Social Security cooperative agreement that funds our Western NY Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Project. Although Social Security reviewed this document for accuracy, it does not constitute an official Social Security communication.