

SSI's Childhood Disability Standard

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program considers an adult disabled if his or her condition limits the ability to work for 12 months or longer. By contrast, children under 18 are considered disabled when the condition seriously limits development and functioning in typical daily environments (i.e., school, home, community) for 12 months or longer.

If the child meets certain medical criteria, such as total blindness, total deafness, or very severe cerebral palsy, the SSI program could find that disability criteria is met on the medical evidence alone. If not approved based only on the medical evidence, the SSI program will compare the child's development and functioning to that of a child of the same age who has no known disabilities. The SSI program is required to identify any and all limitations imposed by the illness or condition.

The areas of development and functioning are defined as:

- ◆ Acquiring and using information
- ◆ Attending and completing tasks
- ◆ Interacting and relating to others
- ◆ Moving about and manipulating objects
- ◆ Caring for himself or herself
- ◆ Health and physical well being

If a child is extremely limited in one of these areas, the child should be found disabled. If the child is not extremely limited in any area, but is very seriously limited in two areas of development and functioning, the child should be found disabled.

Here are two examples of how the Childhood Disability Functional Standard can work:

- ◆ Child with asthma: Information is collected from treatment sources including doctors, hospitals, emergency rooms, prescription profiles, teachers and family members. If evidence supports the conclusion that the asthma severely limits the child's ability to care for him or herself and severely limits health and physical well being, a finding of disabled would be appropriate.
- ◆ Child with a learning disability: Information is collected from educational and vocational sources, teachers, and family members. If evidence supports the conclusion that the learning disability severely limits the child's ability to acquire/use information and interact/relate to others, a finding of disabled would be appropriate.

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