

SHOULD I APPLY FOR SSI?

When you filed your application for disability benefits with Social Security, **you should have applied for both SSDI and SSI benefits.** Both SSDI and SSI are disability benefit programs administered by SSA; however, SSI is a needs based program and takes a person's financial situation into account; whereas SSDI is not a needs based program, so a person's financial situation does not matter. You may qualify for both programs.

If a person has household income in excess of income limits set by SSA or resources worth over \$2000 for an individual, and \$3000 for a couple at the time they file for Social Security disability, the SSI claim will be denied. However, you may have a decline in your household income and resources, and can apply for SSI again.

If you have a decline in your household income and resources while your claim for SSDI is pending, you should immediately call your SSA field office or 800-772-1213 and schedule an appointment to file an SSI claim. Once you have filed an SSI claim, SSA will make a new decision based on your current circumstances. You may file for SSI at any time, even if you previously filed an SSI claim and were denied SSI benefits.

Please review the list below of exceptions to the SSI asset limit and keep in mind that you will need to contact your local SSA office directly to file a new SSI application if your income and/or assets decline while you are waiting for an SSA determination on your disability claim. At this time, SSI claims may not be filed online.

Entitlement to SSI benefits generally also entitles a person to Medicaid and other public assistance benefits.

What are the exceptions to the asset limit?

SSA has a list of assets that don't count against your asset limit. In other words, you can own these things and still be eligible for SSI. Here are the most significant things on the list:

1. Your home. It can have any value; but if you move out and rent out the house, it becomes an asset and is counted.
2. Household goods and personal effects valued up to \$2,000, or \$3000 for a couple. (Note: The value of such things is what you can get for them at a garage sale.)
3. Wedding and engagement rings.

4. Household goods and personal effects required because of your physical condition, such as wheel chairs, hospital beds, etc.
5. A car of any value as long as it is necessary for employment, necessary for medical treatment, modified for handicapped use, or is otherwise necessary. If none of these rules apply, then there is a \$4,500 limit on the value of a car.
6. If life insurance has a face value not exceeding \$1,500, its cash surrender value won't be counted as an asset.
7. Term insurance, that is, life insurance which does not have any cash surrender value.
8. Burial insurance.
9. Burial spaces.
10. Burial funds up to \$1,500 (as long as you don't use the exclusion of \$1,500 face value life insurance).

What is the SSI income limit and what counts as income?

This is a tricky question to answer as SSA has a unique rules for defining income and some income is not counted. Thus, if your household income has decreased since you filed your disability application and you do not have an open SSI claim, we suggest that you contact SSA. More information about SSI can be found at www.ssa.gov.

*****If you believe you may qualify for SSI at any point in your claim process, do not hesitate to contact Social Security at 800-772-1213 and schedule an appointment to file an application to apply (or reapply) for SSI benefits.**