

Social Security Benefits

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What documents are important to keep and how should I organize them?

All written records from Social Security, the Human Services Department (HSD), the department of Health (DOH), and any other organization that provides benefits and/or services for the individual. Keep a binder and/or accordion file with all written documentation for the individual. Organize the records by year and month (e.g. 2021-January-Social Security, HSD, DOH, then February, etc.).

How Should work be reported and how often if the beneficiary is working?

Work should be reported by calling SSA monthly. If the employment stops or change, please report these changes to SSA as soon as possible to ensure the individual's record is accurate, they receive the appropriate cash benefit changes if possible, and to ensure there is no possibility of payment issues.

Why do benefits change over time?

Benefits can change over time for many reasons including cost of living adjustments (typically January 1 of every year), changes in an individual's work record, legislative changes (federal, state, and local), changes in an individual's living situation (e.g. Start or stop work, where they live, and rent), and more.

What if they live with family? What if they live independently?

If an individual lives with a family member and receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI), they need to have a lease agreement that includes the terms of their lease (cost of room and food), that is signed by both parties in the presence of a public notary. Provide SSA the agreement so that the individual is eligible to the full possible SSI amount. If this is not done, SSA can reduce the individual's SSI amount by about one-third. If the individual lives alone, a lease agreement as explained above should be given to SSA to ensure they receive the full SSI amount possible as well.

What about guardianship and representative payees?

If the individual is not their own guardian, guardianship documents need to be provided to SSA. Also, the guardian will fill out paperwork with SSA to become the individual's representative payee to manage benefits and communication with SSA.

Who can help with benefits?

- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Benefits Advisors (1-866-526-0863)
- Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) (1-800-432-2080)
- Social Security Administration (1-800-712-1213)

For more information, please contact Kyle Henderson at 505-539-6079 or KAHenderson@salud.unm.edu.