

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

An Overview

What is SSDI/Disability?

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is an insurance program that workers pay into. Individuals on SSDI receive a monthly benefit based on their work record or of a relative's (e.g. parent, spouse) from employment taxes. An individual is eligible for SSDI payments when:

1. an individual meets the Social Security Administration's (SSA) definition of disability,
2. an individual is not achieving Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) (performing significant physical and/ or mental tasks while employed, even if it is illegal), and
3. the disability is expected to last for at least twelve months or result in death.

Eligible individuals for this program include:

- Workers that meet SSA's definition of disability
- Their children
- Widow(er)s (age 50 -59) (Disabled Widow(er)'s Benefit)

SSDI cash benefits begin 5 months after the date of onset of a disability for an approved individual. There is no resource limits associated with SSDI unlike Supplemental Security Income (SSI). An individual is eligible for Medicare 24 months after they begin receiving SSDI cash benefits, which is typically 29 months after the date of onset of the disability. Some exceptions to the 24-month wait period based on specific conditions or disabilities may apply.

SSDI Monthly Benefit Amount

The SSDI check amount is based off of a work record. SSDI cash benefit amounts can vary between people and over time. An individual either receives a cash benefit or does not, unlike the SSI program that may be a different amount from month-to-month. Beneficiaries who have one child or more under age 18 can receive an additional partial cash benefit per child.

SSDI Safety Nets and Work Incentives

The SSDI program includes work incentives and safety nets for beneficiaries that attempt or do return to work:

- Trial Work Period (TWP)
- Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE)
- Extended Period of Medicare Coverage
- Grace Period
- Medicare Savings Programs
- Expedited Reinstatement (EXR)
- Subsidy and Special Conditions
- Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE)