



## **APPLYING FOR SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY BENEFITS**

You can apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) by going online to [ssa.gov](http://ssa.gov) (recommended) or contacting the Social Security Administration (SSA) at 1-800-772-1213. If you contact the SSA by phone, a phone appointment will be scheduled for a later date to finalize the application through a telephone interview.

### **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SSI AND SSDI?**

SSI benefits are income-based benefits that rely on income and asset limits and age/disability when determining eligibility. These benefits are for people who have no significant work history. Patients who are eligible for SSI benefits will receive a set Federal benefit rate.

SSDI benefits are work-history based benefits that rely on your work history and how many work credits you have as well as your age/disability. There are no income or asset requirements for SSDI benefits. Patients who are eligible for SSDI benefits will receive a benefit amount based on their work history.

### **WHAT DOCUMENTS DO I NEED TO APPLY?**

You may be asked to provide the following documents to help determine your eligibility for SSI and/or SSDI benefits:

- Birth Certificate or proof of birth;
- Proof of U.S. citizenship or lawful alien status if you were not born in the United States;
- U.S. military discharge paper(s) if you had military service before 1968;
- W-2 forms(s) and/or self-employment tax returns for last year;
- An Adult Disability Report that collects more details about your illnesses, injuries or conditions, and your work history; If you apply by phone, this report will be mailed to you. If you apply online, this report is part of the application.
- Medical evidence already in your possession. This includes medical records, doctors' reports, and recent test results; and
- Award letters, pay stubs, settlement agreements or other proof of any temporary or permanent workers' compensation-type benefits you received.

Please note that the SSA can accept photocopies of W-2 forms, self-employment tax returns or medical documents, but they must see the original of most other documents such as your birth certificate.

## **WHAT WILL I BE ASKED WHEN I APPLY?**

- Your name, gender and Social Security number;
- Your name at birth (if different);
- Your date of birth and place of birth (State or foreign country);
- Whether a public or religious record was made of your birth before age 5;
- Your citizenship status;
- Whether you or anyone else has ever filed for Social Security benefits, Medicare or Supplemental Security Income on your behalf (if so, we will also ask for information on whose Social Security record you applied);
- Whether you have used any other Social Security number;
- Whether you were ever in the active military service before 1968 and, if so, the dates of service and whether you have ever been eligible to receive a monthly benefit from a military or Federal civilian agency;
- Whether you or your spouse have ever worked for the railroad industry;
- Whether you have earned Social Security credits under another country's Social Security system;
- Whether you qualified for or expect to receive a pension or annuity based on your own employment with the Federal government of the United States or one of its States or local subdivisions;
- Whether you are currently married and, if so, your spouse's name, date of birth (or age) and Social Security number (if known);
- The names, dates of birth (or age) and Social Security numbers (if known) of any former spouses;
- The dates and places of each of your marriages and, for marriages that have ended, how and when they ended;
- The names of any unmarried children under age 18, age 18-19 and in elementary or secondary school, or disabled before age 22;
- Whether you have or had a child under age 3 living with you during a calendar year when you had no earnings;
- Whether you have a parent who was dependent on you for 1/2 of his or her support at the time you became disabled;

- Whether you had earnings in all years since 1978;
- The name(s) of your employer(s) or information about your self-employment and the amount of your earnings for this year and last year;
- Whether you received or expect to receive any money from an employer since the date you became unable to work;
- Whether you have any unsatisfied felony or arrest warrants for escape from custody, flight to avoid prosecution or confinement, or flight-escape;
- The date you became unable to work because of illnesses, injuries or conditions and if you are still unable to work; and
- Information about any workers' compensation, black lung, and/or similar benefits you filed, or intend to file for.

### **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I APPLY?**

Once your application is submitted, the SSA sends the application to a state agency that makes disability decisions. The state has medical and vocational experts who will contact your doctors and other places where you received treatment to get your medical records.

The state agency may send you forms to complete or ask you to have an examination or medical test. If the state does request an examination, make sure you keep the appointment. You will not have to pay for any examination or test you are sent for by the state agency.

Generally, it takes about 3 to 5 months to get a decision. However, the exact time depends on how long it takes to get your medical records and any other evidence needed to make a decision. You will receive written notice from the SSA with the decision on your application.

### **WHAT HAPPENS IF I RECEIVE A DENIAL?**

If you are denied benefits, you have 60 days from the date on the notice to file an appeal if you disagree with the decision made by the SSA. If you submit an appeal after 60 days, then you will have to start over by reapplying for benefits with the SSA. If you receive a denial notice, you should talk to your healthcare provider about referring you to Land of Lincoln Legal Aid through the Medical Legal Partnership of Southern Illinois for assistance. Please note that while Land of Lincoln may be able to assist with the appeal process, Land of Lincoln **will not** assist you in filing your initial appeal.

**Medical Legal Partnership of Southern Illinois**

**Land of Lincoln Legal Aid**

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*Breaking Barriers to Justice*