

Fact Sheet – Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

Also known as “Title II” Benefits

Facts about SSDI:

- Basic eligibility: Potential beneficiaries must have a significant disability that impacts his/her ability to work and earn in excess of the substantial gainful activity level (SGA). In addition, potential beneficiaries must have worked and earned enough “credits” to be eligible for “insured status” with Social Security.
- There is no resource limit for SSDI beneficiaries.
- The payment amount for SSDI beneficiaries varies based on how much he/she earned and paid through Social Security taxes before becoming eligible for SSDI benefits.
- SSDI benefits are not impacted by the income of other individuals living in the beneficiary’s household.
- In 2016, an individual who receives less than \$753 from SSDI may also be eligible for an SSI check.

SSDI and Employment Earnings

- SSDI benefits are not reduced as earnings increase. A beneficiary will normally either receive his/her entire check or no check at all.
- A variety of protections are available to individuals with SSDI who go to work. These include the Trial Work Period, the Extended Period of Eligibility, and Cessation and Grace Period Months.

- A beneficiary who works and receives SSDI will normally continue to receive his/her benefit as long as his/her income remains below the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level. In 2016, the SGA level is:
 - For beneficiaries who are considered disabled – earnings of more than \$1130 during a given month.
 - For beneficiaries who are considered blind – earnings of more than \$1820 during a given month.

The Trial Work Period

- When a beneficiary begins receiving SSDI benefits, he/she is eligible for a pool of nine months of trial work.
 - In 2016, a working SSDI beneficiary will only use up one of these nine trial work months during any month in which they earn \$810 or more.
 - As long as any of the trial work months are remaining, the beneficiary can work and earn any amount of money without impacting his/her SSDI benefit.
- Once all nine trial work months are used, the trial work period ends. Trial work months do not have to be used consecutively.
- Trial work months that were used more than sixty months previously are rolled over and no longer count towards the trial work period.

The Extended Period of Eligibility

- The month immediately following the final trial work month is the start of the extended period of eligibility.

- During this thirty six consecutive month period, earnings of more than the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level (\$1130 in 2016) would cause the beneficiary's SSDI check to stop **for the corresponding month**. If earnings decrease to below the SGA level, the SSDI check would start again without a new application.
- Individuals who are in the extended period of eligibility can lose and regain their benefits check repeatedly during the course of the thirty-six months.

The Cessation and Grace Period Months

- The first month following the trial work period during which an individual earns more than the SGA amount is called the cessation month.
- A beneficiary will continue to receive his/her full SSDI check during the cessation month and the two months that immediately follow (called grace period months)
- The cessation month could occur during or following the extended period of eligibility

The Period Following the Extended Period of Eligibility

- Once the extended period of eligibility ends, the beneficiary will continue to receive his/her benefits as long as earnings are less than the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level.
- If the beneficiary receives earnings in excess of SGA following the extended period of eligibility, his/her SSDI check will stop. If the cessation and grace period months have not been used, these will apply. Typically this means the beneficiary will receive three months of benefits before the actual SSDI check stops (one month for the cessation month and two grace period months). If they have been used, benefits may stop immediately.
- If earnings stop or are later reduced to less than SGA, the beneficiary may be able to receive benefits through expedited reinstatement.