

## Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Medicare

### ❖ **What is SSDI?**

SSDI is a federal income benefits program that provides financial assistance to Americans with certain types of disabilities. While the title of this benefit refers to “insurance”, SSDI is monthly income for individuals with a disability **who have either paid enough credits into Social Security from their own income, or who had a disability prior to age 22 and have a disabled, retired, or deceased parent who has paid enough credits.**

SSDI is referred to as insurance because of these “premiums” that workers pay into Social Security for their future financial protection. Typically, one begins receiving benefits once they retire or become disabled. The federal government has created the opportunity for not only spouses to be able to receive partial benefits for a retired, disabled, or deceased beneficiary, but also for a disabled adult child (DAC) to receive benefits, as well.

### ❖ **How are SSDI and SSI different?**

The Social Security Administration (SSA) administers two programs that provide benefits based on disability: the SSDI program (title II of the Social Security Act (Act)) and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program (title XVI of the Act). They differ in a few ways:

- The **SSDI** program pays benefits to you and certain family members if you are “insured.” This means that you worked long enough – and recently enough - and paid Social Security taxes on your earnings.
- The **SSI** program pays benefits to adults and children who meet the requirements for a qualifying disability **\*and\* also have limited income and resources.**
- SSI does not require that one has ever worked or paid into Social Security.
- SSDI is federally funded and is associated with Medicare eligibility, while SSI is funded by the state and is associated with Medicaid eligibility.
- Typically, SSDI pays several hundred dollars more than SSI, so it is important to apply for both if you think your loved one might qualify.

**While these two programs are different, the medical requirements are the same.** If you meet the nonmedical requirements (limited income for SSI and work credits for SSDI), monthly benefits are paid if you have a medical condition expected to last at least one year or result in death. The difference is where the funding for each program comes from, how one qualifies, and the amount that is paid to recipients.

**Finally, one can receive BOTH SSI and SSDI.** If the amount that a disabled adult child receives in SSDI is less than the max unearned income for SSI (\$934), **and** they qualify for both, they can receive SSI and SSDI concurrently. In this circumstance, they would also have Medicaid (automatic when one has SSI) and would be eligible for Medicare in 24 months. *{See information on Medicare below and additional information on SSI in the handout: “SSI and Medicaid”}*

### ❖ **How does one qualify for SSDI?**

Typically, one begins receiving their social security income upon retirement. However, there are circumstances for which one’s disabled adult child (DAC) can also receive benefits:

- If that retired individual has an **adult child who was diagnosed with an eligible disability prior to age 22**, that child can receive up to 50% of that parent's social security income (sometimes referred to as Social Security Retirement Income or SSRI).
- The same is true if that parent becomes disabled, themselves; the disabled adult child (DAC) can receive up to 50% of the parent's SSDI.
- If a DAC has a deceased parent, they can receive up to 75% of the parent's social security, sometimes referred to as "survivors benefits".
- While the DAC does not have to apply before age 22, their disability does have to have been diagnosed prior to age 22. If one of the above circumstances applies (parent's retirement, disability, or death) a DAC will be eligible, regardless of age.
- \*Keep in mind that there are **family maximums**, and all of these payments are subject to whether there is a spouse also receiving a portion of these benefits.

An applicant for SSDI will need to prove that they have an eligible disability. The law defines disability as the **inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity (SGA) by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment(s) which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months**. Eligible disabilities can be found in the SSA "Blue Book": [Disability Evaluation Under Social Security](#).

#### ❖ **How do I apply for SSDI?**

- If you believe that you or your loved one are eligible for SSDI, you can visit [www.ssa.gov/ssi](http://www.ssa.gov/ssi) to apply online and to find instructions for what you will need to apply. You can also apply at your local Social Security office. **While SSA lists an 800 number that you can call, it is often best if you reach out to your local office.**  
**Local Lubbock SSA:** 5825 16th St  
 (866) 467-0460
- Whether applying online or in-person, you will not yet need documentation for the application, but **you WILL need names, phone numbers, and addresses of both medical sources (doctors and therapies) as well as school sources**. Having medical documentation, IEPs, 504's, etc will become important once you have an interview.
- **Once you have submitted your application you will need to call to make an appointment. Call to make an appointment even if you are not instructed to do so.** Offices are often weeks or months behind, so be prepared to make an appointment for 2-3 months out.
- Take all pertinent documentation to your interview including medical and therapy documentation, IEPs, 504's or anything else which defines or proves your child's disability
- Approvals take 3-5 months and will come in the mail.

#### ❖ **What is Medicare?**

Medicare is the federal health insurance program for people age 65 and older, and for people who have a disability or special health care needs and have been receiving SSDI benefits. **Medicare coverage has 3 important parts:**

- **Medicare Part A** (hospital insurance) covers inpatient hospital stays, care in a skilled nursing facility, hospice care, and some home health care costs.
- **Medicare Part B** (medical insurance) covers certain doctor's services, outpatient hospital care, medical supplies, and preventive services. Your young adult must pay a monthly premium (fee) for Part B.

- **Medicare Part D** (prescription drug coverage) adds prescription drug coverage to other Medicare health plans that don't offer this coverage. Insurance companies approved by Medicare offer these plans. Your young adult will pay a monthly premium for Part D.

❖ ***How does one qualify for Medicare?***

A person is eligible to receive Medicare if:

- A person who is age 65 and older.
- A person before age 65 who has been receiving [Social Security Disability Insurance \(SSDI\)](#) benefits for 24 months.
- A person who has ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) will be automatically enrolled in Medicare Part A and Part B the first month they receive SSDI benefits.
- A person who has end-stage renal disease.

**Someone who has been receiving SSDI benefits will be automatically signed up for Original Medicare after 24 months.** Once your child has received SSDI benefits for 24 months, they will be **automatically enrolled in Original Medicare**. Coverage will start the 1st day of their 25th month of SSDI benefits. Their Medicare card should come in the mail about 3 months before this date.

Additionally, they can pick a Medicare Advantage Plan, add on a Prescription Drug plan, or buy a supplemental policy directly from a private insurance company. For more information on Medicare plan options, you can visit: [Medicare for Children with Disabilities | Navigate Life Texas](#)

If you believe you or your loved one is eligible for Medicare or has been on SSDI for 24 months but you have not received a Medicare card, you can call: tel:1-800-772-1213 or visit your local Social Security office.