



COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
OF PHILADELPHIA



Losing Cash Assistance? Are you disabled? Apply for SSI !!

You may be able to get SSI if you are low income and:

- have a permanent disability that stops you from working, or
- are 65 or older or are blind.

You can be disabled because of **mental health** or **physical health** problems (or both) if they will stop you from working for at least 12 months.

How can I apply for SSI? How long does it take?

You can apply for SSI by calling **1-800-772-1213** or by going to your local Social Security Office. SSI benefits can only start after the date of your application, so **start your case as soon as possible**.

The first decision in your case should take 3 to 6 months. If you are denied the first time, appeal! It may take as long as 1½ to 2 years before you get a “final” decision in your case.

What questions will Social Security ask me when I apply?

Social Security will ask you: 1) why you can't work, and 2) what problems you have every day as a result of your disability.

Even if it is embarrassing or upsetting, it is important to tell them ALL the things it hard for you to do because of your medical problems.

They will also ask about your doctors and all of the medical treatment you have gotten in the last few years. Information from your medical providers is what will help you prove your case.

It is very important to tell Social Security the names of all of the doctors, hospitals, psychiatrists, physical therapists and mental health centers where you have been treated.

If you have learning problems or were in special classes in school, you should also tell Social Security about this.

What should I bring with me when I apply?

Do some homework to put yourself in the best position when you go in to Social Security. When you apply, try and bring:

- ✓ a list of your doctors, therapists and psychiatrists and their phone numbers and addresses
– business cards from your doctors are great;

- ✓ a list of all the medications you take (your drug store might be able to print a list for you) or the bottles of medication;
- ✓ dates when you have been in the hospital and/or the Emergency Room over the past 5 years and which hospital..

* If you don't have some or all of this information, you can still apply! *

How else can I help my SSI case?

Go to your doctors **regularly** and follow your doctors' advice.

Be sure to talk to your **doctors** about **all** of the medical problems you are having. If you do not talk to your doctors about your problems, they cannot help you.

If you have medical problems that you are not seeing a doctor about, go to the doctor. If you feel depressed or anxious, get treatment for those conditions.

If your doctor or the Social Security office wants you to go to a special doctor or get special tests, do what they ask as soon as possible.

Can I get SSI based on my addiction?

You cannot get SSI if the reason you are disabled is because of current drug or alcohol use.

You can get SSI even if you are currently using drugs or alcohol if you are disabled by some other physical or mental problem.

You can also get SSI if the reason you are disabled is because of the permanent effects of past drug use (such as brain damage caused by long term drug use or cirrhosis caused by alcohol), as long as the disability will not go away if you are not drinking or using drugs.

It is always better for you and your SSI case for you to remain sober.

Can I get SSI if I have a criminal record?

Yes. You can get SSI even if you have a criminal record, including most kinds of warrants. You cannot get SSI while you are incarcerated.

What if Social Security turns me down?

If you are turned down, **appeal your case!!!** If you appeal, get a lawyer as soon as possible.

Do not give up!!!