

# Going to Work

A Guide to Social Security Benefits and Employment for Young People with Disabilities in Utah

## Contents

The Basics of Social Security Disability Benefits: The Two Social Security Disability Programs - SSI and SSDI .....	3
An Additional Benefit Program: Childhood Disability Benefit (CDB).....	5
How Earned Income Impacts SSI benefits and Medical Coverage .....	6
How Earned Income Impacts SSDI benefits and Medical Coverage .....	10
Methods for Maximizing Benefits.....	13
1. Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE).....	13
2. Blind Work Expenses (BWE).....	15
3. Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS).....	16
4. Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE).....	17
5. Subsidy.....	18
What Happens When a Young Person Turns 18? The Age 18 Redetermination .....	19
If You Are Helping a Young Person Determine the Impact of Employment on Benefits.....	21
Tips for Managing Social Security Disability Benefits.....	23
Housing Incentive.....	24
The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (The Ticket).....	24
Resources.....	26
Glossary of Terms.....	31
Acknowledgements .....	35

## Introduction

- Are you the parent of a young person who gets disability benefits?
- Are you a professional working with young people with disabilities and their families?
- Are you a young person with a disability?
- Are you wondering what happens to Social Security or health benefits when a young person goes to work?
- Then this booklet is for you!

### This booklet will:

- Provide you with basic information about Social Security disability and health benefit programs
- Tell you what happens to Social Security disability and health benefits when a young person goes to work
- Explain how to maximize a young person's options when he or she goes to work.

Knowledge is power. Young people and their families are in the best position to make choices about working when they have good information about the impact of work on benefits. The Social Security and Utah Medicaid programs have **work incentives** that can help young people give work a try. These incentives provide a "safety net" for individuals who work and are on SSA disability benefits.

The purpose of this booklet is to give families and professionals working with young people some practical, hands-on information about work incentives. We also hope that young people themselves will read this booklet and use the information to help them make the best choices when they go to work.

**Note:** This guide gives a general overview of the rules for Social Security work incentives in effect on the date this booklet was published. Depending on circumstances, Social Security uses several different financial limits to make its decisions. These amounts may change every year to keep up with the cost of living.

**The amounts used in this guide are accurate for 2011. Check [www.workabilityutah.org](http://www.workabilityutah.org) or [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov) for updated financial limits in the future.**

Work Ability Utah will revise this document with updated information as needed. You may also find the Transition Toolkit located at [www.workabilityutah.org/youth](http://www.workabilityutah.org/youth). You should contact the Social Security Administration (SSA) and/or the local Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program for updates on any changes and for individual information for your particular situation. (See contact information in the Resources section of this booklet.)

# The Basics of Social Security Disability Benefits for Young People

## Terms to Know

### **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**

Benefit for people considered disabled (by Social Security standards) who have low incomes and low resources.

### **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)**

Benefit for people considered disabled (by Social Security standards) who have worked enough to qualify for benefits.

### **Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)**

The dollar amount of earnings that is the cutoff point for eligibility for disability benefits. In 2011, SGA is set at the gross (before taxes) work earnings level of \$1,000 per month (\$1640 for blind persons). SGA may be adjusted on an annual basis. Whenever considering employment or increased earnings, check the current SGA amount.

### **Earnings or Earned Income**

Money from working; for example, the amount in a paycheck. The terms “**gross earnings**” or “**gross earned income**” refer to the amount a person earns before taxes are deducted.

### **Medicaid**

The state health coverage program for people with disabilities and others who qualify. In Utah, SSI recipients meet the eligibility criteria for Medicaid but need to fill out a separate application with the Utah Department of Workforce Services.

### **Medicare**

The federal program that provides health coverage retirees and to individuals who receive SSDI and other Social Security benefits (not including SSI).

### **Resources**

Social Security’s term for what most people call “assets.” It includes anything you own, such as cash, a bank account, cars, stocks, or other property that you can use to support yourself.

The table below provides a quick, basic overview of Social Security disability benefits and the impact of income from work on benefits. More details are provided in the rest of this guide.

## There are two Social Security disability programs\*:

**SSI**—Supplemental Security Income

**SSDI**—Social Security Disability Insurance, also referred to by Social Security simply as "Social Security benefits"

	SSI	SSDI
<b>Requirements to qualify</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled.</li> <li>• Low income.</li> <li>• Resource limit of \$2000 (\$3000 for married couple). Parental resources are counted for youth under 18.</li> <li>• Earnings below the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level of \$1,000/month (in 2011). (Blind persons do not have to meet this requirement.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled.</li> <li>• Earnings below the SGA level of \$1,000 per month or \$1640 for blind persons (in 2011)</li> <li>• Previously worked and paid Social Security taxes.</li> </ul>
<b>Effect of earnings on cash benefits</b>	Gradual reduction.	All or nothing.
<b>Medical coverage</b>	Medicaid	Medicare.
<b>Effect of earnings on medical benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Even if cash benefits end, Utah Medicaid coverage continues until earnings are above \$28,381 (in 2011) or until resources are above the SSI limit.</li> <li>• If earnings and/or resources are above these limits, the person may be eligible for Medicaid Work Incentive</li> <li>• If resources are above these limits, the person may be eligible for other types of Medicaid or other health insurance options.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When cash benefits end, Medicare coverage stays in effect for up to 93 months.</li> </ul>

**\*Notes:**

- Some people receive benefits from both programs.
- Contact a legal advocate or benefits specialist for information about citizenship/residency requirements.

## An Additional Benefit: Social Security Childhood Disability Benefit

Social Security has an additional benefit for adults with disabilities whose parents have worked enough to qualify. This benefit is called the Childhood Disability Benefit (CDB). To get this benefit, a young person must be:

- Onset of verified disability before age 22
- 18 years of age or older
- Since turning 22, has never had earnings at or above the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level. The SGA level for 2011 is \$1,000 per month (\$1640 for blind persons).
- Unmarried (or married to another CDB or SSDI benefits recipient)
- The child of a parent who worked and is now deceased, or who gets Social Security retirement or disability benefits

CDB recipients are **like SSDI beneficiaries** in many ways. For example, they get Medicare, just like SSDI beneficiaries. They also have the same work incentive programs as SSDI beneficiaries.

CDB recipients are **different than SSDI beneficiaries** because they get benefits based on their parents' work records instead of their own, and have to meet other special criteria. In addition, **there are different rules for getting back on CDB benefits after they have ended due to work.**

Young people under age 18 can also get a Social Security benefit if their parents have worked enough, and are now deceased or getting Social Security retirement or disability benefits. This benefit has a similar name: "Child's Benefit." To receive a Child's Benefit, a young person under age 18 does not have to have a disability. A young person with a disability who has been receiving a Child's Benefit will become eligible for the Childhood Disability Benefit after turning 18.

It is possible that someone can get both CDB and SSI benefits. A few people may even get benefits from all three programs: CDB, SSDI, and SSI.

**In this booklet, assume that the same rules apply to both SSDI and CDB recipients. If the rules are different in certain cases, this booklet will make that clear.**

If you have questions about how CDB benefits work in a particular situation, contact a local SSA representative, or Benefits Specialist.



## **The Impact of Earnings from Employment**

*In general, young people who get Social Security cash benefits (SSI or SSDI) will be better off financially when they go to work, at least on a part-time basis. Work incentive programs allow people to work without having Social Security count all their income when calculating how much the beneficiary should receive. How earnings and work incentives affect a young person's benefits depends on the benefit type. There are different rules for the SSI and SSDI programs. This section will help you understand how work affects benefits.*



### **Helpful Hint: When Social Security Counts Earnings for SSI**

*Social Security counts earnings for SSI by the date the pay was issued, not earned. For example, a paycheck issued on May 5 for the week ending April 28 counts for May.*

## **How Earned Income Impacts SSI Benefits**

SSI cash benefits go down gradually as earnings from work go up. Social Security uses gross (before taxes) earnings to decide how much to subtract from the SSI check. Here is how the amount is figured:

- The first \$85 of earnings from work is not counted, in most cases.\*
- After subtracting this \$85 from the person's gross earned income, Social Security divides the remaining earnings by two.
- This amount, called "countable income," is then subtracted from the amount of the original SSI check. The amount left over is the amount of the person's adjusted monthly SSI payment.

*\*For example, Social Security only excludes \$65 from earnings for people who get both SSI and other unearned income like SSDI.*



### **If the Person Is Working...**

#### **STEP ONE:**

(Gross Monthly Earnings from Job *minus* \$85) divided by 2 = Countable Income

#### **STEP TWO:**

Amount of original SSI Check *minus* Countable Income = **Adjusted SSI Monthly Payment While Working**



## Example: Effect of Working on SSI

Casey is a 19-year-old high school graduate who lives on her own in a subsidized apartment. She receives \$674.00 per month in SSI. She began working 28 hours per week in the mailroom at a large law firm and now earns \$10 per hour. Her gross earnings are \$1120/month. Her SSI check is reduced in proportion to her earnings. The first \$85 she earns has no impact on her SSI check. After that, her check is reduced \$1 for every \$2 she earns.

### *Monthly income prior to working*

SSI benefit	674.00
Work earnings	+ 0.00
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$674.00</b>

### *Monthly income when Casey works*

#### **STEP ONE:**

Work earnings	1120.00
Income exclusions	- 85.00
Remaining	1035.00
Divide by two	÷ 2
Total <b>countable</b> income	\$517.50

#### **STEP TWO:**

SSI Benefit	674.00
Total <b>countable</b> income	- 517.50
Adjusted SSI payment	\$156.50

#### **STEP THREE:**

Adjusted SSI payment	156.50
Work earnings	+ 1120.00
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$1276.50</b>

As you can see, Casey's overall **income is significantly higher** when she is working. Although her SSI check has been reduced, she is now getting \$1120 from her job plus \$156.50 from SSI for a total of \$1276.50 each month. This represents an **income increase of \$602.50 per month**. Because she continues to be eligible and receive an SSI cash benefit, she will also keep her eligibility for Medicaid coverage.

Some people will earn enough money that their SSI payment will be reduced to \$0 based on the calculation described above. This is called "The Break-Even Point".

## Two Programs to keep Medicaid and earn money

### The 1619(b) Provision: Keeping Medicaid beyond the Break-Even Point

Social Security has a provision that allows SSI recipients to keep their Medicaid coverage, even if they have reached the break-even point and earn too much money to continue to get SSI cash benefits. This is called **1619(b)**.

- Under 1619(b), Medicaid coverage continues until annual earnings reach \$28,381 (2011 in Utah). This is called **the threshold amount**. In addition, their resources must stay below the SSI limit of \$2000/single individual or \$3000/married couple. Parental resources are counted for youth under age 18.
- If individuals' gross earned income is above this threshold amount, they may be able to stay on Medicaid by using work incentive programs that allow them to reduce the amount of income that Social Security counts when calculating their SSI check. These work incentives include **Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWEs)** and the **Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)**. See the "Methods for Maximizing Benefits" section to learn more about these work incentives. Talk to a Benefits Specialist for more information.
- In some situations, individuals whose earnings are above the threshold amount may be able to keep Medicaid by proving that they have "extraordinary medical expenses." Social Security decides whether medical expenses meet this standard on a case-by-case basis.
- Another option for individuals whose earnings are above the 1619(b) threshold amount or the SSI resource limit is a program called Medicaid Work Incentive.

### Medicaid Work Incentive for People with Disabilities Who Work

The MWI (Medicaid Work Incentive) provides Medicaid to adults with disabilities who work. It was designed for people with disabilities who are working, but because of their income and/or assets do not qualify for a "free" Medicaid Card. This Program instead gives a person the option to pay a premium, based on their countable income, to obtain health care with a Medicaid Card.

The same disability eligibility criteria apply however there are several advantages. Earnings can be up to 250% of poverty, higher than the 100% of poverty for regular Disability Medicaid. Resources are not limited to \$2000 per person, but rather are up to \$15,000. The working person with a disability can also save for retirement, and that retirement account is not counted as an asset even if the person stops working and leaves the MWI.

A monthly premium is calculated based on the household countable income, and is 5%, 10% or 15% of the worker's income. (See the Resources section for contact information.)

## How Can a Young Person Get Back on SSI Benefits After Working?

- If young people work and earn **above the 1619(b) threshold amount**, their SSI eligibility will be “suspended.” This means that they will be considered temporarily ineligible for SSI cash benefits. (They may be able to keep Medicaid Work Incentive.)
- Many people’s earnings go up and down. If their earnings go back down **below the 1619(b) threshold amount** within the first 12 months after their eligibility is suspended, they may be able to get Medicaid **through 1619(b)** again.
- If their earnings go below the **break-even point**, they may also be able to get **SSI cash benefits** again.

It is important to report any changes in the amount a person earns to Social Security as soon as those changes happen.

- If the person’s SSI remains in suspense for 12 consecutive months, their eligibility is considered “terminated.”
- Even after eligibility has terminated, it may be possible to get back on SSI benefits by contacting Social Security and asking for **Expedited Reinstatement (EXR)**. This depends upon whether the disability is the same as or related to the disability that originally qualified the person for SSI and other circumstances. If a person asks for expedited reinstatement within five years from the month when cash benefits ended, he or she can get up to six months of **provisional benefits** while waiting for a decision.
- It may also be possible to start over with a new application, although this does not include provisional benefits. A Social Security Claims Representative should be able to explain the pros and cons of each process.

## How Earned Income Impacts SSDI Benefits

SSDI benefits work differently from SSI. The SSDI program does not include an option for reductions in benefits. A person receiving SSDI either gets the full cash benefit or no benefit at all. SSDI work incentive features have helped many people return to work.

### The Trial Work Period (TWP)

SSDI beneficiaries can test their ability to work while still getting their full cash benefit **and** Medicare by using the **Trial Work Period**. The Trial Work Period is **nine months** during which individuals can earn as much money as they can, and still receive their full SSDI check. During the TWP, beneficiaries can test their ability to work and still get their full SSDI cash benefit.

- The nine months of the TWP can be consecutive (all in a row) or can be spread out over a 60-month period (five years).
- A **TWP month** is any month a person earns **more than \$720** (2011 amount)
- A month in which an individual earns **less than \$720** (in 2011) **does not count** as a TWP month. After working and using up the nine **TWP months within a 60-month period (five years)**, a person automatically enters the Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE).

### SSDI Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE)

Many people worry about going to work because they are concerned that their health may get worse or that they may lose their job at a later date and then have a hard time getting back on benefits. For this reason, SSA has created the Extended Period of Eligibility. The EPE makes it easier for people to get back on cash benefits during a certain period of time after they start working.

- The EPE starts right after the nine-month trial work period and lasts for 36 months (three years).
- During the EPE, a different earnings limit applies. The earnings limit that applies during the EPE is the **Substantial Gainful Activity** (SGA) level. In 2011, the SGA level is \$1000 per month (\$1640 for blind persons).
- The first time individuals earn more than SGA after the TWP ends, they will receive their check for three additional months. This three-month period is called the “Grace Period.”
- If earnings stay **above** the SGA level **after the Grace Period ends**, benefits will be “**suspended**” and the person **will not receive a check**.

- **During** the EPE, the person will **get a check** for any month that their earnings drop **below** the SGA level. They must report this change to Social Security to get a check.
- **After** EPE ends, if a person’s earnings remain **above** SGA level, **cash benefits will stop** and are considered “**terminated.**”
- On the other hand, if earnings stay **below** the \$1,000 SGA level, month after month, **without ever going higher**, then benefits continue with no time limit, even after the EPE ends.
- Work incentives known as Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE) or a Subsidy can be used to stay below the SGA level; information is included later in this publication.



### **Example: Effect of Working on SSDI**

Jose is 21 years old and receives an SSDI check of \$785 per month. He has started working 30 hours per week as a data entry clerk in a local bank. He earns \$9.50 per hour and has a monthly gross income of \$1140.

During the first nine months that he works, Jose uses his Trial Work Period (TWP), so his SSDI check is not affected. He receives both his paycheck and his full SSDI check. After his nine-month trial work period ends, Jose enters his 36-month extended period of eligibility (EPE).

Because Jose continues to earn over the SGA amount of \$1000/month (in 2011), the first month of his EPE is his **cessation month**. He receives full SSDI benefits for his cessation month and the following two months, regardless of how high his earnings are. These three months are called the **grace period**. After this point, he stops getting SSDI checks.

His SSDI benefits can be reinstated within the 36-month EPE if his earnings stop or drop below the SGA level during that period. If Jose’s earnings are above the SGA level when the EPE ends, his eligibility for SSDI benefits will terminate.

*Monthly income during first 12 months*

SSDI benefit	785.00
<u>Work earnings</u>	<u>+ 1140.00</u>
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$1925.00</b>

*Monthly income after 12 months (TWP + grace period)*

SSDI benefit	0.00
<u>Work earnings</u>	<u>+ 1140.00</u>
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$1140.00</b>

Because Jose is losing his SSDI due to earnings above the SGA level, if his earnings fall below the SGA level again within five years he can file for expedited reinstatement of benefits without having to reapply.

As you can see, for the first 12 months that he works, Jose will take home **\$1140 more** than he made on SSDI benefits alone. Once his SSDI check stops after the first 12 months of work, he will still be making **\$355 more per month** than he received in SSDI benefits. With or without his SSDI cash benefits, Jose **comes out ahead when he works**. He will also be able to keep his Medicare for 93 months (almost 8 years) after the end of his TWP.

Note: Under **very limited circumstances**, it may be possible to prove individuals who worked for six months or less had an **Unsuccessful Work Attempt**, if they stopped working for disability-related reasons. For example, if someone quit because a disability got worse when he or she went back to work, then this may be considered an Unsuccessful Work Attempt. In some cases, proving that individuals had an unsuccessful work attempt may help them stay on SSDI and even get benefits for the months that they worked. Social Security will not make this determination automatically. Individuals must take steps to prove that their work activity qualifies as an Unsuccessful Work Attempt.



#### **Helpful Hint: When Social Security Counts Earnings for SSDI**

The rules for counting earnings for SSDI are different than the rules for SSI. For SSDI, Social Security counts by the date the pay was earned, not issued. So, income earned in June but paid in July counts as earned income for June and, if over \$720 (in 2011), would make June count as a TWP month.

### **How Can a Young Person Get Back on SSDI Benefits After Being Terminated?**

After SSDI benefits terminated - **because a person's earnings are above the SGA level** - he or she may have two options, depending on the situation, to get back on benefits if necessary.

- Once benefits have terminated because of work after the EPE, **expedited reinstatement (EXR)** is a faster reapplication option if disability benefits are again needed. If a person asks for expedited reinstatement within five years from the month when cash benefits ended, he or she can get six months of provisional benefits while waiting for a decision. To qualify for EXR, a person's disability must be the same as or related to the disability that originally made him or her eligible for benefits.
- The third option is to reapply, which means starting from scratch and filing a new application. (This does not include provisional benefits.) A Social Security claims representative should be able to explain the pros and cons of each process.

Note: **The rules for reinstatement and reapplication are different for Childhood Disability Benefits (CDB)**. Individuals who receive CDB benefits should consult with a local Social Security representative, legal advocate, or Benefits Specialist about how the rules for each process apply to them.

## Medicare Eligibility

SSDI beneficiaries can keep their Medicare coverage for up to 93 months (almost eight years) after the end of the TWP unless Social Security decides that they are not disabled. Persons must pay the same Medicare Part B and Part D premiums that they paid while receiving cash benefits. Medicare Part A, which covers hospital services, continues to be free of charge during this time period. After free Medicare Part A benefits end, individuals can buy Medicare Part A, in addition to Part B and Part D, by paying a premium. In 2010, that premium was \$461 per month for Medicare Part A.

## Methods for Maximizing Benefits – Work Incentives

Social Security has several incentives that reduce the impact of work on disability benefits. These work incentives allow individuals to subtract certain work-related expenses from their income in order to maintain SSI/SSDI eligibility, and/or reduce the amount of money taken out of their benefit check. For further information on any of these incentives, contact the local Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach / Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program (see the Resources section) or check the Social Security website: [www.ssa.gov/work/ResourcesToolkit/workincentives.html](http://www.ssa.gov/work/ResourcesToolkit/workincentives.html).

### 1. Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE)

IRWE are expenses for items or services a person needs in order to work. Social Security gives its beneficiaries an incentive to work by excluding these costs from the gross earned income that it counts for both the SSI and SSDI programs.

- The items and services must be needed because of the person's disability. Examples of items that may qualify as an IRWE include attendant care services, transportation costs, job coaching, medical devices, adaptive equipment, medication, psychological evaluations, and therapy.
- The expense must be paid for by the individual, and not covered by insurance or otherwise paid for by another source or a family member.
- The local Social Security office determines whether a particular expense is deductible as an IRWE. **These expenses must be documented and reported to SSA to qualify for the exclusion.**
  - Example: The cost of the expense is deducted from the amount of earnings that Social Security counts. For instance, if a person earns \$450 but spends \$50 on job coaching, Social Security would only count \$400 of earnings (\$450 *minus* \$50 = \$400).



### Example: IRWE and SSDI

Mai receives \$750 per month in SSDI benefits. In 2011, she begins a new job and earns \$1100 per month before taxes. Because her wages are higher than the 2011 SGA level of \$1,000, without an IRWE Mai will stop getting her Social Security benefits following the end of her TWP and grace period.

Mai uses the services of a job coach to help her with job-related functions. Part of the cost of the job coach is paid for by the state vocational rehabilitation agency, but Mai needs a few more hours of coaching, which she pays for out-of-pocket. These services cost her \$200 per month. By deducting an IRWE from her gross monthly wages, Mai's countable income would be below SGA, allowing her to keep her SSDI benefits.

#### STEP ONE:

Work earnings	1100.00
IRWE	- 200.00
Remaining earnings	\$900.00
(Below SGA)	

#### STEP TWO:

Remaining earnings	900.00
SSDI check	750.00
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$1650.00</b>

As you can see, the IRWE helped Mai to **keep her SSDI benefits and more than double her usable income!**



### Example: IRWE and SSI

Marcus is 23 years old and lives in his own apartment. He receives \$674.00 per month in SSI. Then he begins a new job that pays him gross monthly earnings of \$1000.

Marcus has a physical disability. He cannot use available public transportation and cannot drive himself. Therefore, he pays a driver to transport him to his job as well as a job coach at work. These services cost Marcus \$300 per month and qualify as impairment-related work expenses. Marcus can reduce the impact of his earnings on his countable income by deducting IRWEs from his gross monthly wages.

#### *Monthly income prior to working*

SSI benefit	674.00
Work earnings	+ 0.00
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$674.00</b>

*Monthly income while working*

**STEP ONE:**

Work earnings	1000.00
Income exclusions	- 85.00
<u>IRWES</u>	<u>- 300.00</u>
Remaining earnings	\$615.00

**STEP TWO:**

Remaining earnings	615.00
<u>Divide by two</u>	<u>÷ 2</u>
Total countable income	\$307.50

**STEP THREE:**

SSI benefit	674.00
<u>Total countable income</u>	<u>- 307.50</u>
Adjusted SSI payment	\$366.50

**STEP FOUR:**

Adjusted SSI payment	366.50
<u>Work earnings</u>	<u>+ 1000.00</u>
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$1366.50</b>

**As you can see, when Marcus used an IRWE with his work earnings, he has more income!**

## **2. Blind Work Expenses (BWE)**

If a person receives SSI and is blind, he or she can exclude expenses needed to work (not necessarily related to the disability) from their gross earned income when Social Security decides on the amount of their SSI check. These expenses are called Blind Work Expenses (BWE). Examples include transportation to and from work, federal and state income taxes, Social Security taxes, union dues, translation of materials into Braille, and guide dog expenses. These expenses must be documented and reported to SSA to qualify for the exclusion.

In the example of Marcus, if he were legally blind, then he could deduct **any** expenses that he paid in order to work. Unlike Impairment-Related Work Expenses, Blind Work Expenses do not have to be related to the person's disability. For example, Marcus could deduct the cost of transportation to work regardless of whether his blindness required any specialized arrangement. He could also deduct expenses such as income taxes and union dues. Of course, costs related to blindness are also included, so he could deduct expenses for items such as adaptive computer software or guide dog services. This could result in Marcus preserving much of his SSI cash benefit.

### **3. Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS)**

A PASS plan is a work incentive that allows an SSI recipient age 15 or older to **set aside** (save) money, including SSDI and other Social Security benefits, for expenses to achieve a work goal. These set-aside funds will not be counted when determining a person's eligibility or the amount of their SSI cash benefit. By using a PASS, a young person may:

- 1. Qualify for SSI**
- 2. Keep SSI, even if they make too much money to qualify otherwise**
- 3. Increase monthly SSI benefits by setting aside income**

- Money set aside does not count as income and also does not count towards the \$2000 limit on resources (\$3000 for couples) for the SSI program. This is how using a PASS may help someone qualify for SSI.
- Examples that a PASS plan can be used for include education and training classes, job coaching, transportation, initial costs for purchasing a car or van, clothes for a job, items to start a business, and equipment to do a job.
- The Social Security Administration must approve a PASS plan. There is a PASS application form, which is available from the Social Security website and offices. PASS plan applications are submitted to the local office, which forwards them on to the regional office for review.
- A PASS plan is time-limited, based upon the time frame that is outlined in the approved plan.
- Teams of Social Security specialists, called "PASS cadres," are available for advice. See the Resources section of this booklet for contact information.
- It is possible to have a PASS plan for one or more expenses, and at the same time have an IRWE for other work-related expenses not covered by the PASS.

### **4. Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE)**

The Student Earned Income Exclusion is a work incentive that allows qualified young people who are in school to keep some or all of their earnings without losing money from their SSI checks. If an SSI recipient is a student under the age of 22, Social Security can exclude up to \$1640 of earnings in a month from his or her countable earnings for SSI purposes. The maximum annual exclusion is \$6600 (2010). These amounts change annually to keep up with inflation. To qualify for this exclusion, the student must be:

- In college or university for at least eight hours a week, or
- In grades 7-12 for at least 12 hours a week, or

- In a training course to prepare for employment for at least 12 hours a week (15 hours a week in a course involving shop practice)

Students may be eligible for the SEIE if they are in school for less time than indicated above due to reasons beyond their control, such as illness. In addition, a homebound student may be eligible for this exclusion in some circumstances. Contact a local Social Security representative, benefits specialist, or legal advocate for more information.

### Example: SEIE and SSI

Marta is a 15-year-old high school student who lives with her parents. Because some of her parents' income is deemed to be available to her, she receives a monthly SSI check of 385.25. As part of her IEP, Marta has a part-time job in the school's canteen. She works ten hours per week and earns \$8.50 per hour. Her total monthly income is \$340. Because she is a student, Marta can use the Student Earned Income Exclusion, which allows her to exclude her earnings up to \$1640 per month (up to a total of \$6600 per year in 2010) from her countable income for SSI.

#### *Monthly income prior to working*

SSI benefit	385.25
Work earnings	+ 0.00
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$385.25</b>

#### *Monthly income while working*

##### **STEP ONE:**

Work earnings	\$340.00
<u>SEIE</u>	<u>- 340.00</u>
Total countable earnings	\$0.00

*(same amount, because under the maximum allowed)*

##### **STEP TWO:**

SSI benefit	385.25
Work earnings	+ 340.00
	725.25
<u>Total SSI deduction</u>	<u>- 0.00</u>
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$725.25</b>

*nothing deducted, because all earnings are excluded)*

**In Marta's case, all of her work earnings are excluded, and there is no impact on her benefits.**

## 5. Subsidy

A subsidy is for SSDI recipients who get certain kinds of help at work because of their disability. If so, then, Social Security may not count all the earnings from work when they say if earnings are above SGA. This may be an appropriate work incentive if you need this help to keep your job.



### Example: Subsidy

Samuel receives \$750 per month in SSDI benefits. In 2011, he begins a new job at a local information and referral center, working 25 hours a week at \$10.50 per hour. His total monthly income is \$1050.00. Because his wages are higher than the 2011 SGA level of \$1,000, without a subsidy, Samuel will stop getting his Social Security benefits following the end of his TWP and grace period. His responsibilities include taking calls to assist the public about services for people with disabilities and conducting outreach in the community through workshops. His employer has made accommodations to his workspace and he is able to take calls and create his presentations for workshops. However, when time comes to make a presentation, he requires assistance to gather materials, make copies, load his vehicle and then to unload and set up at the workshop site. The time involved for each presentation is five hours per week. During this five hours, he is assisted by a co-worker. The co-worker's assistance represents the subsidy, for 20% of his time, or \$210.00.

*Monthly income while working, utilizing a subsidy*

#### **STEP ONE:**

Work earnings	1050.00
<u>Subsidy = 20%</u>	<u>- 210.00</u>
Remaining earnings (below SGA)	\$840.00

#### **STEP TWO:**

SSDI benefit	750.00
<u>Work earnings</u>	<u>+ 1050.00</u>
<b>Total Gross Income</b>	<b>\$1800.00</b>

**As you can see, because of the use of a subsidy, with his work earnings, Samuel has more income!**

# What Happens When a Young Person Turns 18?

## The Age 18 Redetermination

When a young person who gets SSI turns 18, the Social Security Administration reevaluates his or her eligibility under new medical standards designed for adults. This review is called an **Age 18 Redetermination**.

The adult disability standards are different than the disability standards for children. In some cases, Social Security will decide that the young person **is disabled** under the adult standard and he or she will continue to receive SSI and Medicaid benefits. In other cases, Social Security will decide that the young person **is not disabled**, and therefore **not eligible** for SSI under the adult standard. Typically, this would result in a termination of SSI benefits and possibly Medicaid.

**If SSA decides that a young person is not disabled during the Age 18 Redetermination, he or she may keep receiving SSI benefits by filing an appeal within 10 days along with a request that benefits be continued.**

### Things to Think About When a Young Person Turns 18

There are several things that young people and their families may want to think about to help them prepare for the future, starting about a year before the young person turns 18. Considerations include:

- Who can provide evidence of their disability to Social Security for the Age 18 Redetermination?
- Who will they live with (e.g., alone, or with family or roommates), will they pay rent, and how will that affect the amount of their SSI check?
- Will their income or resources change when they turn 18? For example, will they inherit money, receive money from a trust, or lose other public benefits or child support?
- Can they manage their own benefits, or do they need a representative payee? Is there a trustworthy person who can be the representative payee?
- Have they made future educational or vocational plans? **How can work incentives help them reach these goals?**
- Who can help them achieve their employment and other goals? Would a referral to Vocational Rehabilitation or other services (e.g., occupational therapy, counseling) be appropriate?
- Should they contribute any of their income or resources towards a PASS plan? If a PASS plan already exists, does it need to be amended to account for any changes in income or other factors?

- If SSA decides that they are no longer disabled after age 18, will Social Security continue their benefits under Section 301 (see below)? What steps can they take ahead of time to qualify for the 301 Continuation Period?

*This checklist is adapted from a more detailed version developed by Virginia Commonwealth University called “Age 18 Benefits Check-Up for Youth Transition Demonstration Participants.” Work Ability Utah also has other helpful information for transition-age youth under the Youth in Transition on its website, [www.workabilityutah.org](http://www.workabilityutah.org).*

## **Another Option for Keeping Benefits: Section 301**

Social Security has a special program that allows people who are actively pursuing work-related goals to keep their SSI and Medicaid benefits, even when Social Security has decided that they are “not disabled” under the adult standard. This program is called Section 301. To decide whether a particular person is eligible, Social Security reviews each case individually. If they are participating in an appropriate program of vocational rehabilitation or similar services, benefits may continue until participation in the program ends. Young persons may meet this requirement if they are between the ages of 18 and 21 and have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in place that meets certain standards.

Young persons may also meet this requirement if they are participating in an “appropriate” vocational rehabilitation (VR) program **prior to** the date that Social Security decided that they were not disabled under the adult disability standards **and for at least two months afterwards**. Social Security looks at each vocational program individually to decide whether it is “appropriate” and to determine whether it is likely to prevent a person from seeking disability benefits in the future.

A few examples of vocational plans and programs that might be included in this category are:

- A PASS Plan
- An Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) with the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation
- An Individual Work Plan (IWP) with a Ticket to Work Employment Network
- A program of vocational rehabilitation, employment, or other support services under a similar Individualized Written Employment Plan with a federal agency, Department of Workforce Services, or other provider approved by SSA (such as a public, private, or parochial school).

## **Work Incentives and the IEP**

Under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, transition planning for youth receiving special education services must begin “not later than the first Individualized Educational Program (IEP) to be in effect when the student turns 16, or

younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team.” This means that transition planning will start no later than age 15. The transition planning process provides a unique opportunity to focus on how work incentives can help youth with disabilities plan a future that includes employment. Work incentives can help reassure young people and their families that young people can work and take steps toward future education and employment and still have a “safety net” in place.

Ways that work incentives can facilitate transition planning include:

- A PASS plan can be used to achieve goals such as saving for college or job development services.
- Young people under age 22 who work while in school may be eligible for the Student Earned Income Exclusion. This work incentive can encourage students to include part-time work in their transition plans, thereby preparing them for work as adults.
- The Section 301 Continuation benefit can help students who have an IEP or are participating in a vocational or employment program to keep their SSI benefits even if they are no longer considered “disabled” under Social Security standards after the age of 18.

## If You are Helping a Young Person Determine the Impact of Employment on Benefits

You need to know:

- The person’s age
- The benefits the person receives (SSI, SSDI, CDB, or a combination)
- The amount of the monthly payment

If unsure, request this information in writing from Social Security, with a signed release from the parent or guardian if the youth is under age 18. Persons over age 18 can sign for themselves unless they have a legal guardian, in which case that person signs the release instead. A representative payee receives checks in a beneficiary’s name, and may or may not be the legal guardian. Social Security has a form titled “Consent for Release of Information” (form SSA-3288), which can be found at [www.ssa.gov/online](http://www.ssa.gov/online).

- Inform the young person about work incentives (IRWE, PASS, etc.) and make suggestions on how to use them.
- Remind the young person that income and job changes (employment starts and stops, a new job, a job loss) **must** be reported to Social Security as soon as they happen.

- If the young person is on SSI and will stay on it when he or she starts working, remind him or her that resources must stay below the \$2000 limit (\$3000 for a married couple). For youth under age 18, parental resources must remain below \$2000 (if a child lives with one parent) or under \$3000 (if the child lives with two parents). Otherwise the person can lose SSI and possibly Medicaid. Note: Young people under age 19, in this situation may be eligible for CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) and should contact the local Department of Workforce Service Office as soon as possible to prevent an interruption in coverage.

## **What Happens to Benefits If a Young Person Gets Funding for College or Other Education/Training Beyond High School?**

Social Security **does not count** as income any federal student financial aid received under the Higher Education Act, such as Pell grants and work-study funds. These funds must be used for educational purposes in order to be excluded. There is no time limit on this exclusion. Specific examples include funds from the following federal educational assistance programs:

- Work-Study Programs
- Pell Grants
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunities Grants (FSEOG)
- Federal Educational Loans (Federal PLUS Loans, Perkins Loans, Stafford Loans, Ford Loans, etc.)
- Upward Bound
- LEAP (Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership)
- SLEAP (Special Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership)
- State educational assistance programs, **including work-study**, funded by LEAP or SLEAP

Some other forms of financial aid for education may be subject to special rules. Check with a Social Security representative, or a Benefits Specialist for more information.

Note: It is often a good idea to put any education-related funds into a separate account. This arrangement can help show Social Security that these funds are intended only for educational expenses and should not be counted in the same way as other income or resources. A separate account can help prevent any misunderstanding about these funds that might otherwise cause an interruption in benefits.

## Tips for Managing Social Security Benefits

- Refer young persons to a Benefits Specialist who can assist them in understanding how working affects their benefits. (see the Resources section in this booklet).
- Develop a good relationship with the local Social Security office. Do not rely solely on the toll-free Social Security telephone representative.
- Arm yourself with information: Learn about the different programs and learn as much as you can about the impact of employment on benefits.
- Additional help is available locally to directly assist youth and families with managing benefits, including legal and advocacy organizations. The SSA sponsors a network of Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) programs throughout the country. In Utah the WIPA is located within the Utah Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach Program. (See the Resources section for contact information.)
- Discuss the best method for reporting earnings with the local Social Security office. This is particularly important if a recipient's earnings vary from month to month. SSI and SSDI beneficiaries should keep good records concerning work history, wages (pay stubs), and benefits received.
- **Be aware that the Social Security Administration (SSA) sometimes will send checks that should not have been issued.** The recipient will then get an "overpayment notice" and will be told to pay the money back. This may be because the recipient neglected to report a wage increase, or it may be because the SSA made a mistake. To avoid hardship, the recipient may want to set aside funds not due to them in a separate bank account. If a recipient feels he or she should not have to return the funds, that person has 60 days to file an appeal or a waiver form. If the person does not qualify for an appeal or waiver, it may be possible to work out a payment plan. If the overpayment was due to work income, the recipient may contact the Protection and Advocacy program for assistance, PABSS. (see Resources section for contact information)
- Make and keep copies of everything sent to the SSA. Send important letters (e.g., appeals) by certified letter, return receipt requested.
- Keep a written record of all phone calls to the SSA — whom you spoke to, date and time, information given and received. Always follow up any substantive phone conversations in writing.
- Read and respond quickly to all letters from the SSA.
- If a young person goes into the hospital, and will be in for at least a month, notify SSA immediately.

- An individual has the right to appeal any decision that the SSA makes. Time limits apply. Act quickly.

## **Housing Benefits: Work Incentive**

People who live in public or subsidized housing have another concern related to going to work. They face the potential for a rent increase when their income goes up, due to starting a new job. Section 8 tenants may be eligible for an Earned Income Deduction for two years. Contact the local Housing authority to see how these rules may apply at [http://b2b.utahhousingcorp.org/cgi-bin/R?P=HOUSING\\_AUTHORITIES](http://b2b.utahhousingcorp.org/cgi-bin/R?P=HOUSING_AUTHORITIES).

## **Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (The Ticket)**

The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 was designed to assist people with disabilities in going to work while addressing concerns over benefit loss. It includes several important opportunities for people who receive Social Security disability benefits. The Ticket to Work allows people receiving Social Security disability benefits to obtain assistance in finding employment at a vendor/service of their choice.

### **What Is the Ticket to Work Program?**

Ticket to Work is a program of the Social Security Administration. The program offers Social Security disability beneficiaries age 18 to 64 greater choices in obtaining the services they need to help them go to work.

### **What Does a Ticket Look Like?**

The Ticket is a paper document that has some personal information and some general information about the Ticket program. Go to [www.ssa.gov/work/Ticket/newTicketImage.html](http://www.ssa.gov/work/Ticket/newTicketImage.html).

### **How Does a Person with a Disability Get a Ticket?**

SSA is working with an organization, named Maximus, Inc., manages The Ticket program. After the age 18 Redetermination, a recipient will automatically receive the Ticket in the mail with a letter explaining the program.

### **If a Person Gets a Ticket, Does He or She Have to Use It?**

No. The Ticket program is voluntary.

### **Where Does a Person Take His or Her Ticket to Get Services?**

The person takes The Ticket to an **Employment Network**. Employment Networks are private organizations or public agencies (i.e. Vocational Rehabilitation, a local school district or a community provider) that have agreed to work with Social Security to provide services under this program.

## How Does a Person Find Out About Employment Networks?

When requested the program manager, Maximus, will send a list of the approved Employment Networks in their local area. Employment Networks may also directly contact people with disabilities to offer their services. This information is also available on the Social Security website at [www.yourtickettowork.com](http://www.yourtickettowork.com)

## How Does a Person Choose an Employment Network?

Ticket holders can contact any Employment Network in their local area to find the right one for them. Both The Ticket holder and the Employment Network have to agree to work together.

## Can a Person Change Employment Networks?

Yes. Ticket holders have the right to stop working with one Employment Network and begin working with another one. Before individuals make this decision, however, they should fully understand how the new Employment Network plans to help meet their employment goals.

## If a Person Throws a Ticket Away by Mistake, Can He or She Still Participate in the Program?

Yes. They can contact Maximus if The Ticket has been lost or if there are questions about Ticket eligibility. However, they do not need the actual paper Ticket to participate. Any Employment Network can electronically check eligibility for Ticket Services.

## More Information about the Ticket Program

Contact the program manager:

Maximus Corporation

Voice: 866-968-7842

TTY: 866-833-2967

Website: [www.yourtickettowork.com](http://www.yourtickettowork.com)

You can also contact the Social Security Administration:

Voice: 800-772-1213

TTY: 800-325-0778

Email: [ttwwiia@ssa.gov](mailto:ttwwiia@ssa.gov)

Website: [www.ssa.gov/work/Ticket/ticket\\_info.html](http://www.ssa.gov/work/Ticket/ticket_info.html)

<p><b>Social Security Administration</b></p> <p><b>Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency</b></p> <p>Ticket Number 123-45-6789TWW</p> <p>Claim Account Number 987-65-4321 W</p> <p>Issue Date:</p>	 <p>This ticket is issued to you by the Social Security Administration under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program. If you want help in returning to work or going to work for the first time, you may offer this ticket to an Employment Network of your choosing or take it to your State vocational rehabilitation agency for services. If you choose an Employment Network and it agrees to take your ticket, or if you choose your State agency and you qualify for services, these providers can offer you services to help you go to work.</p> <p>An Employment Network provides the services at no cost to you. The Social Security Administration will pay the Employment Network if you assign your ticket to it, and the Employment Network helps you go to work and complies with other requirements of the Program. An Employment Network serving under the Program has agreed to abide by the rules and regulations of the Program under the terms of its agreement with the Social Security Administration for providing services under the Program. Your State agency can tell you about its rules for getting services.</p> <p><i>James G. Barron</i> Commissioner of Social Security</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Written materials are available at local Social Security offices. Information about The Ticket program is also available from many other private and government organizations that help people with disabilities.

## RESOURCES

The organizations described in this resources section can help individuals with their Social Security work incentives and benefits questions. They may also be available to provide assistance to parent and professional groups that work with young people. Consider inviting one of these resources to provide periodic benefits information and training to young people, their families, and interested professionals as a regular activity at your organization or school.

### Social Security Administration (SSA)

#### National

Mailing Address

Social Security Administration—Office of Public Inquiries

6701 Security Blvd.

Room 4-C-5 Annex

Baltimore, MD 21235

Social Security Toll-Free Number

Voice: 800-772-1213

TTY: 800-325-0778

Call between 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM any business day.

Social Security has local offices throughout the United States

#### Website

The Social Security Administration has a very comprehensive and user-friendly website with extensive information, publications, and forms available. In addition to the main website, specific sections are dedicated to disability issues:

- Social Security Online: [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)
- Employment Support for People with Disabilities: [www.socialsecurity.gov/work](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work)
- Benefits for People with Disabilities: [www.socialsecurity.gov/disability](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disability)

Each of the regional offices also has a website, which can be accessed through [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) or [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

## Social Security locations in and near Utah

<b>OFFICES OPEN FULL TIME</b>			
<p><b>Salt Lake City, Utah</b> 175 East 400 South Ste. 500 SLC Utah, 84111 1 (866) 851-5275 FAX (801) 524-5892</p>	<p><b>Murray, Utah</b> 348 East Winchester #100 Murray Utah 84107 (801) 268-1060 FAX (801) 268-1490</p>	<p><b>Ogden, Utah</b> 324 25<sup>th</sup> Street 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Fed. Bldg Ogden Utah, 84401 (877) 378-9081</p>	<p><b>Provo, Utah</b> 485 North Freedom Blvd Provo Utah 84601 (866) 366-9549 FAX (801) 375-4608</p>
<p><b>Cedar City, Utah</b> 2390 West 400 North #12 Cedar City, Utah 84720 (435) 586-6133 FAX (435) 865-1688</p>	<p><b>St. George, Utah</b> 923 South River Road #102 St. George, Utah 84790 (435) 674-9226 or (800) 532-6930 FAX (435) 674-9219</p>	<p><b>Grand Junction, Colorado</b> 744 Horizon Court Room 12 Grand Junction, CO 81506 (866) 931-7120 FAX (970) 243-8161</p>	<p><b>Farmington, New Mexico</b> 4650 North Butler Farmington NM 87401 (505) 327-7345 FAX (505) 327-1956</p>
<p><b>Durango, Colorado</b> 103 Sheppard Drive #120 Durango, CO 81303 (970) 247-3128 FAX (970) 247-1158</p>			
<b>OUTREACH OFFICES</b>			
<p><b>Blanding Utah</b> 1<sup>st</sup> full week of month Wednesday 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Thursday 8:00 a.m. – noon DWS office-511 North 100 East</p>	<p><b>Roosevelt, Utah</b> 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Crossroads Senior Center</p>	<p><b>Price Utah</b> 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month 9:30 a.m. -2:30 p.m. County Courthouse</p>	<p><b>Richfield Utah</b> 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month 9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. DWS office 201 East 500 North</p>
<p><b>Vernal, Utah</b> 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. County Building</p>	<p><b>Monticello Utah</b> 1<sup>st</sup> full week of the month on Wednesday 10:30 a.m. – noon DWS Office 16 East 300 South</p>	<p><b>Kayenta Arizona</b> Every Wednesday 10 a.m. -2:00 p.m. Chapter House</p>	<p><b>Shiprock New Mexico</b> 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Northern Navajo Medical Center</p>

## **Social Security Publications**

The Social Security Administration has an extensive number of publications on issues related to disability benefits. Some of the publications available include:

- Understanding the Benefits (Publication No. 05-10024)
- Benefits for Children with Disabilities (Publication No. 05-10026)
- What you need to know when you get Social Security Benefits (Publication No. 05-10029)
- Social Security Disability Benefits (Publication No. 05-10153)
- What You Need to Know When You Get SSI (Publication No. 05-11011)
- Supplemental Security Income (Publication No. 05-11000)
- Working While Disabled... How We Can Help (Publication No. 05-10095)
- Red Book (A Summary Guide to Employment Support for Individuals with Disabilities) (Publication No. 64-030)
- Working While Disabled: A Guide to Plans for Achieving Self-Support (Publication No. 05-11017)
- If You Are Blind or Have Low Vision — How We Can Help (Publication No. 05-10052)
- Ticket to Work (Publication No. 05-10061)
- If You Are Self-Employed (Publication No. 05-10922),
- Your Right to Question the Decision to Stop Your Disability Benefits (Publication No. 05-10090)
- A Guide for Representative Payees (Publication No. 05-10076)
- Medicare (Publication No. 05-10043)
- Medicare Information – for prescription drug costs links to <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp/>

These and many other publications are available free of charge through the website ([www.ssa.gov/pubs/englist.html#ssi](http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/englist.html#ssi)), at local Social Security offices, or by calling the toll-free number. Most are also available in Spanish and alternative formats.

## **Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Programs**

SSA has funded a national network of Work Incentives Planning and Assistance programs. WIPA programs provide counseling to help individuals understand the impact of work on their benefits. Persons who receive SSI, SSDI, and/or CDB benefits can get these services free of charge from in Utah. Services are available statewide. For more information, contact:

Utah Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach/WIPA Program  
1595 West 500 South  
Salt Lake City UT 84104  
801-887-9530  
Toll free: 866-454-8397  
<http://www.workabilityutah.org/work/bpao.php>

## **Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS)**

Denver Regional Pass Cadre  
(serving Colorado, Montana, North and South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming)  
P.O. Box 25447  
Denver Federal Center  
Denver, CO 80225-0447  
303-231-0015  
Toll free 800-551-1034

## **Ticket to Work (TTW) Program Manager**

Maximus Corporation  
Voice: 866-968-7842  
TTY: 866-833-2967  
Website: [www.yourtickettowork.com](http://www.yourtickettowork.com)

## **Utah State Office of Rehabilitation**

The Utah State Office of Rehabilitation is the state Vocational Rehabilitation agency that directly provides services, funds, and contracts for a variety of services focused on employment and independence for people with disabilities. Services for persons who are blind or visually impaired, or who are deaf or hard of hearing are also available. For a listing of local area offices, go to <http://usor.utah.gov/contact>

Administration Offices  
250 East 500 South  
PO Box 14420  
Salt Lake City UT  
801-538-7530  
Toll free: 800-473-7530

## **Work Ability Utah**

People with disabilities can work and want to work. Work Ability Utah Utah's Comprehensive Employment Systems Infrastructure Grant (the MIG). The project's goal is to assist people with disabilities, who receive public benefits such as Medicaid and Social Security, and to connect with supports to help them find and maintain employment. Work Ability Utah provides information and referral for many areas, including: Medicaid, Social Security, personal assistance, benefits planning, Supported Employment, work incentives, health care, employer supports, job placement, assistive technology, tax credits for business and more. For more information contact:

Work Ability Utah  
Utah Department of Health  
1595 West 500 South  
Salt Lake City Utah 84104  
(801) 887-9529  
(877) 246-9675 toll free  
[www.workabilityutah.org](http://www.workabilityutah.org)

## **Legal and Advocacy Organizations**

### **Disability Law Center (DLC)**

The Disability Law Center provides information, referral, advice and counsel regarding legal rights and services for people with disabilities. The DLC also provides legal services including Social Security representation, to eligible people and groups whose cases meet DLC priorities. PABSS or the Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security is located in the Disability Law Center

Disability Law Center  
205 North 400 West  
Salt Lake City, UT 84103  
Toll free: 800-662-9080  
[www.disabilitylawcenter.org](http://www.disabilitylawcenter.org)

### **Independent Living Centers (ILCs)**

ILCs are local not-for-profit serve and advocacy organizations. They are non-residential, community based, cross-disability organizations that serve all people with disabilities. ILCs embrace the following IL philosophy: All people, regardless of disability have the right and responsibility to make their own choices, to live independently as possible in the community, and to participate as full and equal citizens in their communities. For further information and to locate a Center for Independent Living go to <http://usor.utah.gov/independent-living/centers-for-independent-living/>.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

## **Blind Work Expenses—BWE**

A work incentive involving funds that people who are blind spend in order to work (not necessarily related to the disability). Social Security does not count these expenses when it calculates countable income for SSI purposes. Examples of these expenses: transportation to and from work, federal and state income taxes, Social Security taxes, union dues, translation of materials into Braille, and guide dog expenses.

## **Childhood Disability Benefit—CDB**

A benefit for people considered disabled whose parents have worked enough to qualify for benefits and who are now deceased, getting Social Security retirement or receiving disability benefits.

## **Earnings or Earned Income**

Money from working; for example, the amount in a paycheck.

## **Expedited Reinstatement—EXR**

A process for getting back on benefits that a person can request without having to start over with a new application. If you stop getting your check because you work, you may be able to get back on SSI more quickly than if you filled out a new application. You can ask that Social Security start your check back up if it has been less than five years since your SSI check was terminated. You may get up to six months of checks while Social Security decides if you are still disabled under their rules.

## **Extended Period of Eligibility—EPE**

The EPE lasts for three straight years after you finish your TWP. During this time, you should get a check if you are earning under SGA. If you are earning over SGA, you shouldn't get a check that month. After the EPE is over, you will continue to get your check for as long as your earnings stay under SGA. If you earn over SGA, after the EPE ends, then you will be terminated from SSDI.

## **Impairment-Related Work Expense—IRWE**

A work incentive that can be used to help reduce the impact of earnings on Social Security disability benefits (SSI and SSDI). An IRWE (Impairment Related Work Expense) lets you use the reasonable cost of certain items or services you pay for every month to lower the amount of your wages that SSI will count. To be an IRWE the cost has to:

- Be paid out of your pocket-No one else can pay it
- You have to need the item because of your disability
- You have to pay for the item while you are working

Examples include attendant care, medical or prosthetic devices, drugs and medical services, residential modifications, special transportation.

## **Income Exclusion**

An amount of money that is not counted when Social Security decides how much it will pay in a benefit check. Social Security has several income exclusions for things like earned income, certain work expenses, and other items.

- Everyone on SSI can get a \$20 General Income Exclusion from other income coming into their household.
- If you are earning money from work, Social Security will give you an additional Earned Income Exclusion of \$65 per month and after that deduction, they will count ½ of the rest of your money from work.

## **Medicaid**

The joint federal-state health benefits program for eligible individuals and families with low income and resources. It is a means-tested program joining funded by the federal government and the states and is managed by the states. Among the groups of people served by Medicaid are eligible low-income parents, children, seniors and people with disabilities. The Utah Department of Health manages Medicaid in Utah.

## **Medicare**

A federal health insurance program typically connected with SSDI and CDB benefits. Part A includes hospitalization and helps pay for skilled nursing facility, home health care and hospice. Part B provides supplemental medical insurance (doctor and outpatient services). Part B also requires payment of a monthly premium that is usually deducted from the SSDI benefit check. Part C is the Medicare Advantage plans such as HMSs and PPOs...Part D is prescription drug coverage and may also have a premium cost. Beneficiaries receive Medicare after 24 continuous months on SSDI, and must pay certain deductibles and coinsurance fees. Toll-free Medicare hotline: 800-633-4227 or 1-800-MEDICARE.

## **Overpayment**

It is not uncommon for recipients to receive a letter from SSA stating that they have been paid too much and must return the excess funds. SSA will negotiate gradual repayment of the debt, or the recipient can file an appeal or a waiver form within 60 days of receipt of the overpayment notice.

## **Plan for Achieving Self-Support—PASS**

A Social Security work incentive that allows a person with a disability to set aside income and/or resources towards a work goal for a specified period of time (e.g., a person could set aside money for education, vocational training, or business start-up expenses). A PASS can be used to help reduce the amount that SSA deducts from an SSI check because of a person's earned income. SSA must approve PASS plans.

## **Resources**

The term that Social Security uses for what most people call "assets." It includes anything you own, for example, cash, a bank account, cars, stocks or other property that you can use to support or maintain yourself. Social Security does not count all your resources when deciding SSI eligibility. The SSI resource limit is \$2000 for an individual (\$3000 for married couple) in 2011. If the resource limit is exceeded, eligibility may be reestablished once the excess resources have been "spent down" below the limit.

## **Section 301 (Recovery during Vocational Rehabilitation)**

If you get better while you are doing a Vocational Rehabilitation plan, you may be able to keep your check until the plan ends. This would only happen if Social Security thinks that you can pay all bills with the job obtained when the program is over.

### **1619(b) Continuation of Medicaid**

Continuation of free Medicaid if the money earned from work is too high to be paid an SSI check. To qualify the individual must:

- Have received an SSI check the month before 1619 (b) eligibility,
- Have gross wages below state threshold amounts (\$28,381 per year for a single person in Utah for 2011)
- Continue to be disabled or be blind,
- Meet all other rules for SSI payments other than wages (like asset limits), and
- Need Medicaid in order to work

### **Social Security Administration—SSA**

SSA is the federal agency which provides monthly cash benefits to retirees, and individuals with disabilities under the SSDI and SSI programs.

### **Social Security Disability Insurance—SSDI**

SSDI provides benefits to disabled or blind individuals who are “insured” by workers’ contributions to the Social Security trust fund. These contributions are based on your earnings (or those of your spouse or parents) as required by the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA). Title II of the Social Security Act authorizes SSDI benefits.

### **Substantial Gainful Activity—SGA**

For purposes of determining eligibility for SSDI and SSI, “disability” is defined as the inability to engage in any “substantial gainful activity” by reason of a medically determinable physical or mental impairment that is expected to last for 12 continuous months. For calendar year 2011, the SGA limit is \$1,000 per month in work earnings (\$1640 for individuals who are blind). SGA may be adjusted on an annual basis. Whenever considering employment or increased earnings, check the current SGA amount.

### **Supplemental Security Income—SSI**

The SSI program makes cash assistance payments to aged, blind, and disabled individuals (including children) who have limited income and resources. The Federal Government funds SSI from general tax revenues.

### **Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act**

The Ticket to Work offers Social Security disability beneficiaries age 18 to 64 more choice in obtaining the services they need to help them go to work.

### **Trial Work Period—TWP**

You have nine months (that don't have to be in a row) where you can earn as much money as you can and still get your full SSDI check and Medicare. You would use a Trial Work Month any month you earned over \$720 (gross in 2011) in a job, or worked over 80 hours for yourself in a month. The TWP continues until you accumulate 9 months (not necessarily consecutive) within a rolling 60-month period.

### **Work Incentives Planning and Assistance—WIPA**

WIPA programs are funded by the Social Security Administration and are located across the county. WIPA staff is trained to help individuals understand the impact of income from employment on the full range of public benefits, including SSI, SSDI, Medicare, Medicaid, public housing, TANF, and food stamps. In Utah, the WIPA program is co-located with the Utah Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach Program.

# *Going to Work*

A Guide to Social Security Benefits and Employment for Young People with Disabilities in Utah

## **Acknowledgements**

The Work Ability Utah (Medicaid Infrastructure Grant) acknowledges its partner project, the Massachusetts Medicaid Infrastructure and Comprehensive Employment Opportunities Grant for its extensive work to create the foundation of this Utah Guide. The Massachusetts MIG is a collaborative project of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Center for Health Policy Research at UMass Medical School, and the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston.

Both Work Ability Utah and the Massachusetts CEO are funded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CFDA #93-768).

Appreciation is extended to the Utah team for their editorial contributions.

Esther Medina, Area Work Incentives Coordinator, Social Security (Utah, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota)

Jolene Wyler, WIPA CWIC, Utah Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach Program

Margot Dana, Benefits Specialist, Utah Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach Program

Eileene Simon, Health Program Specialist, Work Ability Utah

Carol Ruddell, Director, Work Ability Utah

The opinions contained in this publication are those of the grantees and do not necessarily reflect those of the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services.

## **For more information, contact:**

Work Ability Utah

Utah Department of Health

1595 West 500 South

Salt Lake City Utah 84104

801-887-9529

Toll free: 877-246-9675

[www.workabilityutah.org](http://www.workabilityutah.org)

**This publication will be made available in alternate formats upon request.**