



Are you a formerly incarcerated person with a mental health or physical condition that stops you from working?

STAY STEADY

WITH **SSI** AND **SSDI**

You could get financial support from government programs. Read this guide to learn more!

Supplemental Security Income
Social Security Disability Insurance



If you have a mental and/or physical disability, you may be able to get financial support from the government through the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) programs.

This guide explains:

- What benefits you could get
- Who's eligible
- How to get SSI/SSDI back after being incarcerated
- How to apply
- What information you'll need
- What happens after you apply
- Where to get help

Have you heard about Social Security benefits?



Health Insurance

Having SSI makes you eligible for Medicaid, but you need to apply separately.

Monthly Payment

The amount is set by the government each year. In 2022, the benefit typically reaches \$841, but it could be more.

Family Benefits

SSI doesn't come with family benefits.

SSI



What benefits can I get?

If your application is approved, here's what you can get:

SSDI



Monthly Payment

What you can get depends on your work history.

Family Benefits

Your spouse or children might qualify for benefits too.

Health Insurance

SSDI gives you access to Medicare.

Am I eligible?

Do you have a disability?

YES

NO

You must have a disability to be eligible.

Are you a US citizen or permanent resident?

NO

Only US citizens and permanent residents are eligible.

YES

Apply to SSI

SSI Requirements

- If you're applying alone, you can own your own home but you can't have more than \$2,000 in savings.
- If you're applying with your spouse, your combined savings can't be more than \$3,000.

Disability Requirements

To qualify for SSI and SSDI benefits, your mental health and/or physical condition needs to prevent you from:

- Doing your past jobs
- Doing any job at all, AND
- It must be expected to last for over a year or stay with you for the rest of your life

You may be eligible for both programs. Apply for SSI first and you'll be notified if you qualify for SSDI too!

Have you worked for over 10 years? (The work has to be on the books—under the table work doesn't count.)

YES

NO

If you're under 31 and have less than 10 years of work history, you can still qualify for SSDI.

Apply to SSDI

SSDI Requirements

- You need to have at least 40 work credits, which is about 10 years of work history.

What if I had SSI or SSDI before I was incarcerated?

If you were incarcerated for more than 30 days, your SSI and SSDI benefits were stopped and won't automatically start up when you get out.

Here's how to get your benefits back:

Had SSI?

Were you incarcerated for less than a year?

NO

You'll need to fill out a new application.

Turn to page 8 to learn how.

YES

If approved, Social Security will pay any payments you missed starting the month you were released.

Had SSDI?

You'll have to wait one month after your release date before your benefits can start up again.

Not sure if you had SSI or SSDI?
Call your local Social Security office to find out.

Contact your local Social Security office.

They'll probably ask for your release date, so have that information ready.

Social Security Administration:
How can I help you today?

I was recently incarcerated and am calling to reinstate my benefits.

How do I apply?

Getting SSI or SSDI benefits can change your life. Even though it will take patience and support, you should apply!

There are lots of ways to apply:



Online

SSI

Go to ssa.gov/benefits/ssi/start.html

They will schedule a call with you to help you fill out the application.

SSDI

Go to ssa.gov/benefits/disability



By Phone

Call your local Social Security office.

They will schedule a call with you to help you fill out the application.



In-person

Visit your local Social Security office.

Call to check their hours before you go!

Don't have an address or phone number?

Ask a trusted friend, family member, or advocate if you can use theirs.

Can I use your address or phone number on my application?



What information do I need?

Social Security will follow up to ask you questions and for additional documents. Here's some information that's helpful to have ready:

Proof of US citizenship or immigration status

Like:

- Birth certificate
- Passport
- Immigration papers

Make sure your records include information about your mental health and/or medical conditions.



Medical information

Like:

- A list of all your doctors and their addresses and phone numbers
- A list of all your prescribed medications
- A copy of your medical records, doctors' reports, and any recent test results

If you were incarcerated:

Discharge papers

You can get this from nysdoccslookup.doccs.ny.gov

If you were in a special education program or went to a trade or vocational school:

School records

Like:

- Individual Education Program (IEP)
- Records about your educational accommodations

What happens after I apply?

Social Security is going to take a while to review your application. They'll contact you from time to time to let you know the status of your application and if they need more information.

You should hear from them within 6 months if your application was approved or denied. If you don't get an answer in 6 months, call your local Social Security office.



Approved

If you're approved, there will be a follow-up interview. They might ask you about your income, savings, and where you live. This is so they can figure out how much your monthly payment will be.



Denied

There is a chance that your application will be denied, but don't give up. File an appeal!

I need help filing an appeal.

For help filing appeals, call your local Social Security office.



Don't ignore messages!

During this time, be on the lookout for messages from Social Security, read everything you get, and follow their deadlines. If Social Security doesn't hear back from you, they can cancel your application.

If you don't understand what a message means, call Social Security or ask a friend or family member for help!

First Appeal

If Social Security decides you don't qualify, you have 60 days to send a "Request for Reconsideration" form.

Appeal forms can be found at ssa.gov/forms

IF DENIED

Second Appeal

If your request for reconsideration is denied, you have 60 days to send a "Request for Hearing by Administrative Law Judge" form.

Appeals take time, stay steady!

IF DENIED

Third Appeal

If the judge decides you don't qualify for benefits, you have 60 days to send a "Request for Review of Hearing Decision/Order" form.

Stick with it!

IF DENIED

Fourth Appeal

If the judge doesn't change their decision, your last option is to file a complaint in federal court.

If you don't win after all this, **you can reapply**. Even though you'll have to start over, you'll be more prepared the next time around!

Need Help?

Whatever you need, your local Social Security office is the first place you should go.

This project was created through a collaboration of the Center for Urban Pedagogy, the Mental Health Project of the Urban Justice Center, Wellcome's Mindscapes program, and designers 13milliseconds.



The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, in partnership with historically marginalized communities.

welcometocup.org



Mental Health Project

The Mental Health Project aims to disrupt and dismantle cycles of hospitalization, homelessness, and incarceration by providing direct legal and social work services, and promoting systemic change through litigation, legislation, and community education.

mhp.urbanjustice.org



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wellcome.org/what-we-do/our-work/mindscales

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