

SSDI Benefits & Related Work Incentives

Fact Sheet 2019

Basics of SSDI Eligibility & Work:

- SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance) cash benefits are paid to beneficiaries who have been determined to be disabled by Social Security.
- Monthly cash benefit amounts are based on the years a person has worked and paid towards Social Security and Medicare taxes.
- Generally, SSDI monthly cash benefits are paid on any other day besides the first of the month.
- SSDI is an “all or nothing program” where, depending on your earnings, you can receive all of your monthly SSDI cash benefit or nothing.

SSDI Phases & Work Incentives:

Several work incentives exist under the SSDI program, which are designed to encourage individuals to work and become self-sufficient. The following are 3 different time periods, or phases, to keep in mind when you work and receive SSDI:

Trial Work Period (TWP):

- This work incentive phase allows you to make an unlimited amount of money for 9 months, while receiving your full SSDI cash benefit throughout.
- In 2019, if you gross \$880 or more in a month, then you will use 1 of your 9 TWP months, and in any months you earn below \$880 it will not count as a TWP month. **Other TWP annual figures available on page 2.*
- Your TWP will be considered complete if you have used 9 TWP months within a 5-year window.
- The duration of a TWP varies from person to person; some never start, some never finish, others finish after 9 months, and others take anywhere from 9 months to 5 years.

Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE):

- This next work incentive phase automatically begins in the month following your final (9th) TWP month and it lasts for 36 consecutive months, whether you are working or not.
- During this 3-year safety net, Social Security will compare your gross monthly earnings and work pattern to a monthly threshold referred to as Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA), \$1,220 or \$2,040 if you are blind in 2019. **Other SGA disabled and blind annual figures on page 2.*
- This is how it generally works: if you gross at or above SGA, you will not be entitled to your SSDI payment for that month, and if you gross below SGA, you will be. There is one exception to this rule, however, which is the first month you make over SGA during EPE – this is known as your Cessation month and the following two months are known as your Grace Period months. During these three months, you will still be entitled to your SSDI payments, even though you were technically over SGA the first month.
- You can use additional work incentives, e.g. Impairment-Related Work Expenses, Income Averaging, Special Conditions, Employer Subsidies, and Unsuccessful Work Attempts, during EPE if you qualify for them. If so, these incentives could lower your countable gross monthly earnings below SGA, effectively making you eligible for a monthly cash benefit.
- If your earnings ever fall below SGA during EPE, you do not have to reapply for SSDI to get your cash benefits back. All you need to do is notify Social Security office that your earnings are below SGA.

For more information about Work Without Limits Benefits Counseling contact

1-877-YES-WORK (1-877-937-9675) or visit www.workwithoutlimits.org/benefitscounseling

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Post-Extended Period of Eligibility:

- After your EPE is complete, Social Security will continue to compare your gross monthly earnings to that year's SGA monthly threshold.
- If your Cessation and Grace Period months occurred during your EPE, then your SSDI case will be terminated the first time you are at or above SGA, after your EPE.
- If this did not occur during your EPE, you will be entitled to a Cessation month and a Grace Period the first time you gross at or above SGA, after your EPE has ended. Thereafter, if you continue earning over SGA, your case will close.

Work & Medicare:

If you start working and earn enough to begin your Trial Work Period (TWP), know that your Medicare will be preserved throughout. If you ever complete your TWP, also know that you will have Medicare for at least another 93 months after, due to a special work incentive called the Extended Period of Medicare Coverage (EPMC).

Note: SSDI beneficiaries can continue using EPMC so long as they pay their Medicare premiums and continue to meet Social Security's disability standards. Social Security is the only agency that can give you a definitive date of when your Medicare eligibility will stop. Therefore, it is recommended you make an inquiry about this to your local Social Security office shortly after you finish your TWP.

Tips for Reporting to Social Security:

- Report any new work activity to your local Social Security office by the 10th of the month, following the month you start working. They may give or mail you a Work Activity Report (*Form SSA-821*) for you to complete. This form will capture basic information about your job. To review this form, visit: www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-821.pdf.

- At the beginning of every month (once you receive the paycheck reflecting your last work days for the month you are reporting for), submit copies of your paystubs or your-employer's monthly direct deposit payroll report to your local Social Security office by postal mail, online, or in person. Some offices may accept faxes. If you choose to mail in your paystubs, be sure to call the Social Security office 1-2 weeks after to confirm they received your reported earnings and that they have been entered into the system.
- **Note:** Report earnings from hours you physically worked - *paid vacation/sick days do not need to be reported* – and make sure you obtain a receipt from Social Security confirming you did in fact report your earnings.
- Track the hours and earnings you work every day so you know where you stand with respect to the TWP or SGA thresholds.
- Lastly, inform Social Security immediately about any significant work or life changes such as increased work hours, job promotions, changes of address, changes in bank account, etc.

Annual SSDI Monthly Thresholds			
Year	TWP	SGA/Disabled	SGA/Blind
2012	\$720	\$1,010	\$1,690
2013	\$750	\$1,040	\$1,740
2014	\$770	\$1,070	\$1,800
2015	\$780	\$1,090	\$1,820
2016	\$810	\$1,130	\$1,820
2017	\$840	\$1,170	\$1,950
2018	\$850	\$1,180	\$1,970
2019	\$880	\$1,220	\$2,040

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