

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) An Overview

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a needs-based program.

SSI provides financial support to individuals and couples with low income and limited resources. SSI covers food and shelter costs. SSI funding comes from U.S. General Funds and the Social Security Administration (SSA) operates the program.

Individuals that are eligible to receive SSI are:

- Individuals age 65 and up
- Adults who have a disability or are blind
- Children who have a disability or are blind Individuals must have \$2,000 or less in resources and eligible couples have \$3,000 or less in resources in order to meet the resources requirement. NOTE: A child application (under 18) for SSI includes the parent(s) / guardian(s) income and resources.

In New Mexico, an individual or eligible couple that qualifies and receives SSI cash benefits also receives Medicaid/ Centennial Care.

SSI Monthly Benefit Amount

SSI cash benefit amounts may change over time. An SSI check is based on income that was reported two months before (e.g. January's income determines March's SSI check). Typically, there is a cost of living adjustment for SSI on January 1st of every year.

SSI Safety Nets and Work Incentives

SSI has safety nets and work incentives that allow individuals who work to maintain SSI cash benefits and Medicaid up to certain levels. These safety nets and work incentives include:

- General Income Exclusion (\$20)
- Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE)
- Earned Income Exclusion (\$65)
- Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE) are unreimbursed costs that can be excluded from an individual's earnings
- Divide by 2 (\$1.00 out of every \$2 in earned income is counted against)
- Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) - allows individuals to set aside money in an account towards an employment goal
- Medicaid Buy-in Program - pay to access Medicaid if income is above the cutoff
- 1619(b) - if work income results in a \$0 cash benefit, as long as other eligibility continues, one can maintain Medicaid coverage
- Blind Work Expenses (BWE) is more extensive impairment related work expenses for individuals that are statutorily blind
- Property to Essential Self-Support (PESS) - property for a trade or business will not count against an individual's resources