

Applying for Disability Benefits with Autism in San Diego

Children and adults with autism can potentially receive disability benefits through the Social Security Administration (SSA). These benefits can help pay everyday living expenses and medical bills. Disability can make additional support services or have other costs associated with special needs more affordable as well. If someone you love has autism, there may be financial aid available for your family.

Disability Programs Available for People with Autism

The SSA has two programs for which applicants may qualify:

- [Supplemental Security Income](#) (SSI) – is the program through which disabled children most often receive benefits. This is because SSI has no work history requirements. It does however have income and asset limits, because it is a program based on not only medical disability but also financial need.
- [Social Security Disability Insurance](#) (SSDI) – is a program for disabled workers who paid into the Social Security system through income taxes.

People with autism will more often qualify for SSI benefits, because autism is a lifelong disorder and most adults with autism who are unable to keep a job likely have not been able to have a job throughout their lives.

People who qualify for SSI benefits also often qualify for Medicaid. In California, SSI comes with immediate eligibility for Medicaid and no additional application is required. Your Medicaid benefits start the same day that SSI benefits commence.

Qualifying Medically for Benefits with Autism

One of the basic requirements for getting disability benefits is meeting the SSA's severity level requirements. In other words, your loved one's autism must be severe enough to prevent gainful employment, or if you're applying for benefits for a child under age 18, his or her autism must prevent your child from participating in normal, age appropriate activities.

Your medical records and the details you provide in your disability application can prove severity level. However, it's also important to understand that the SSA uses disability listings to review claims. These listings are set standards against which disability determination services staff compare disability applications.

The autism listing appears in section 12.10 for adults and section 112.10 for children. These listings are in a manual known as the Blue Book. You can find the full Blue Book online [here](#).

Although technically qualifying will be different for children than adults, people with autism of all ages must have [medical evidence](#) showing the following:

- Difficulty with social situations, such as making friends, following instruction, and communication with others.
- Difficulty with self-care, such as paying bills, taking public transportation, or keeping clean.
- Difficulty with maintaining concentration and pace, such as finishing assignments or chores without becoming distracted.

Because the entire Blue Book is available online, you can review the adult and childhood autism listings with your child's doctor to determine if he or she is eligible.

Applying for SSD in San Diego

SSDI and SSI applications are separate, though they do both require medical information, work history details or school records, and other similar information. The application processes for these two programs are also different:

- For SSDI, you can apply in person or online via the [SSA's website](#). Again, most people with autism will not be eligible for SSDI benefits.
- For SSI however, you must apply on behalf of someone with autism through a personal interview and these interviews are usually conducted at local SSA offices.

There are two SSA offices in San Diego:

- 8585 Aero Dr., San Diego, CA, 92123
- 1333 Front St., San Diego, CA, 92101

If your child's initial application is denied due to medical reasons (which is unfortunately very common), you can request a [reconsideration review](#). This is the first step in an appeal. If you're denied again, you must request an [appeal hearing](#). Although the appeals process adds time to your wait for benefits, 51% of all San Diego hearings are approved, according to the most recently available data. Once approved, your child can use his or her disability benefits on rent, groceries and utility bills, future job training, in-home support, and any other daily living needs.

***This info provided by Deanna Power.** Deanna Power is the Director of Outreach at Disability Benefits Help, an independent resource dedicated to helping people of all ages receive the Social Security disability benefits they need. She specializes in helping applicants determine if they're medically eligible for benefits at no charge. If you have any questions on how to qualify with autism or about the Social Security disability process in general, she can be reached at drp@ssd-help.org*