

## Offices of Florida Rural Legal Services

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## Questions & Answers About

# Disability Benefits

from the

## Social Security Administration

Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.





# Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.

Florida Rural Legal Services seeks to ensure that low-income and rural communities in Florida have access to justice and the provision of basic human rights.

## How can I apply for benefits?

There are several ways to begin the application process.

You can:

- Fill out the forms online at [www.ssa.gov/applyfordisability](http://www.ssa.gov/applyfordisability) or
- Visit your local Social Security office or
- Call 1-800-772-1213.

You will have to fill out an application and answer questions about your health problems. Social Security will need to talk with you about your health and how much money you make.

## What information will the Social Security Administration need from me?

They will need all of these:

- Your Social Security number
- Your birth certificate
- Names and addresses of doctors, clinics and hospitals that have cared for you
- A list of all your medicines
  - Medical test results and
  - Information about all of your past jobs and how much money you made.



They may ask you for other information, too.

## How will Social Security decide if I am disabled?

The Social Security Administration (SSA) will only give you disability benefits if they find that you have a health problem so bad that it will last for at least a year or you will die from it. You must be unable to work very much because of your health problem. (SSA calls this “unable to do substantial work”). If your medical problem allows you to work or you will get better in the next year, you will not get disability benefits. Social Security will look at all of your medical information and the jobs you had in the past. They may even pay for you to go see a doctor.

## What does Social Security mean by “substantial work”?

They look at several things. If you have been working this year and you are earning more than \$980 per month, you will not get disability benefits. The amount of money you can make each month changes a little every year.

## How long will it take to get a decision on my application?

It will take 3 to 6 months in most cases to get your first decision.

## What should I do if the SSA does not give me benefits?

If the SSA decides you are not disabled, you will get a letter in the mail that says you do not meet the requirements to get benefits. You have the right to ask the SSA to look at your application again within 60 days of the date they sent you the letter. If the SSA still says no, you can try one more time to get benefits by asking



to see a judge within 60 days of the second time the SSA said you were not disabled. If you wait longer than 60 days, they may not look at your case again. It is important to appeal your denial on time. If you do not, and you have to start your application over again, you may lose benefits.

## Does Social Security offer different kinds of disability benefits?

**Yes**, they have two programs. SSDI pays you disability benefits if you worked for a long enough period of time and paid your taxes. The check you get from that program is based upon how much money you made when you worked in the past. SSI pays you disability benefits based upon how much you need the money. To get a check from this program they will want to check up on all of your household income. The SSA uses the same test for both programs to decide if you are disabled.

## Are there other benefits that I can get when I receive disability?

**Yes**, in many cases you can get medical benefits too. Check with Social Security and with the Department of Children and Families to see if you are eligible.

**Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc. helps low-income people with Social Security problems. If you are having trouble with Social Security, please call one of our offices.**

