



SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION WORK INCENTIVES FOR YOUTH IN TRANSITION

Students receiving Social Security Administration (SSA) benefits are eligible for Work Incentive Programs. Work Incentives allow a student to participate in paid employment while maintaining his or her benefits. Incorporating Work Incentives into a student's Individual Education Program/Transition Plan may increase his or her employment and independent living options after completing high school. All of these work incentives are available to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries and some are available to Social Security Disability (SSD) beneficiaries.

WHAT ARE WORK INCENTIVES?

Work incentives allow students to participate in paid work situations and maintain their benefits. Through the use of Work Incentives a student can:

- Engage in paid employment
- Increase income without loss of cash benefits or eligibility for other benefits such as Medicaid
- Offset expenses incurred as a result of his or her work
- Save for further postsecondary education and training or to start a business

SSI Work Incentives available to transition students include: General Earned Income Exclusion (EIE), Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE), Impairment-Related Work Expense (IRWE), Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), and Blind Work Expenses (BWE). Each of the Work Incentives is an income or resource exclusion that assists individuals with disabilities in maintaining necessary benefits until they are self-sufficient.

GENERAL EARNED INCOME EXCLUSION (SSI ELIGIBLE)

The first \$65 (up to a maximum of \$85 if you have no income other than earnings) of any monthly earned income plus one-half of remaining earnings are excluded for SSI benefit computation purposes. This general earned income exclusion is intended to help offset expenses incurred while working.

STUDENT EARNED INCOME EXCLUSION (SSI ELIGIBLE)

Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE) allows a person with a disability who is under age 22 and regularly attending school to exclude up to \$1780 of earned income per month before applying the Earned and General Income Exclusions. The maximum annual Student Earned Income Exclusion is \$7180. This means that earnings up to those limits will not change SSI payment amounts. The SEIE is available to you if you are in any of the following:

- A college or university for at least 8 hours a week under a semester or quarter system
- Grades 7-12 for at least 12 hours a week
- A training course to prepare for employment for at least 12 hours a week (or 15 hours a week if the course involves shop practice)
- Any of the above for less time for reasons beyond the student's control, such as illness
- A home school situation, for at least 12 hours per week and in accordance with the home school law of the State or jurisdiction in which the student resides

If you are homebound because of a disability, you may also qualify if you:

- Study a course or courses given by a school (grades 7–12), college, university, or government agency; and
- Have a home visitor or tutor from school who directs the study or training

The SEIE is available during school vacations if you attend classes regularly just before and after the school vacation and tell Social Security. If you are home schooled, you may be considered by SSA as regularly attending school.

IMPAIRMENT-RELATED WORK EXPENSE (SSI & SSD ELIGIBLE)

Impairment-Related Work Expense (IRWE) allows the costs of certain impairment-related items and services to be deducted from gross earnings. Such expenses may include attendant care, transportation, assistive devices, or job coaches. IRWE must be:

- Paid for out of your pocket;
- Related to a serious medical condition;
- Necessary in order to go to work; and
- Approved by SSA

PLAN TO ACHIEVE SELF-SUPPORT (SSI ELIGIBLE)

The Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) allows you to set aside income and/or resources for a specified period of time to achieve a work goal. For example, you may set aside money for postsecondary education, the purchase of job-coaching, personal transportation, job-related equipment, or to start a business. This plan has to be approved by SSA.

- **Setting up a PASS Plan:**
 - Anybody may help you write a PASS including a vocational counselor or a relative. SSA can also help you with a PASS or refer you to someone who can help write a plan.
 - You can get a copy of the PASS application Form SSA-545-BK from your local Social Security office or online at: www.socialsecurity.gov/online/ssa-545.html.
 - You can get a PASS Cadre Specialist's telephone number by calling SSA's toll-free number, 1-800-772-1213.

BLIND WORK EXPENSES (SSI ELIGIBLE)

Blind Work Expenses (BWE) provide that any earned income of a person who is blind which is used to meet expenses needed to earn the income is not counted in determining SSI eligibility and the payment amount. BWE may include: guide dog expenses; transportation to and from work; federal state and local income taxes; Social Security and Medicare taxes (i.e., FICA); visual and sensory aids; Braille translations; etc. All expenses must be approved by SSA.

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