

Social Security Income (SSI)

Apply for your child or adult-child with autism.

Your child (under age 18) with autism may be eligible for SSI if he or she meets the Social Security Administration's (SSA's) definition of disability for children, plus allowable income and resources fall within the eligibility limits. Because SSI is a needs-based benefits program, eligibility is based on two categories of assets:

- **Income** refers to the amount of money a person receives from wages, benefits and food assistance programs, pensions, and so on. The child must not have earned more than \$1,000 a month in 2011.
- **Resources** refer to the value of assets, such as cash savings, equity, or real estate. For the individual, the resource limit is \$2,000, and the family limit is \$3,000.

SSA considers your child's income and resources as well as those of family members living in the child's household.

What happens when your child reaches 18?

Both the medical and non-medical rules and eligibility criteria for SSI change, so an 18 year old with

autism who was not previously eligible for SSI may now be. Likewise, if this adult-child had been receiving SSI, he or she will now be reviewed and re-evaluated for eligibility purposes based on adult rules.

The biggest difference: Family income and resources no longer matter when the child reaches 18. Only the young adult's income and resources count towards eligibility. (See the second bullet, Resources.)

SSI is particularly important because it not only provides some income but is also required for Medicaid eligibility. Medicaid is the primary health insurance for children and adults with disabilities. It's also the gateway to adult services. All residential services are provided under a Medicaid waiver, so to get some key services, an adult must be eligible for SSI and Medicaid. Currently, eligibility for Medicaid is not required for day or vocational services, but some consideration has been given to that end, so we encourage you to apply for SSI and Medicaid when your child reaches 18.

For more information, see <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10026.html>.