

Using SSA's Disability Analysis File (DAF): You're Invited!

What? The DAF is ready to help you get up and running quickly to answer your questions about beneficiaries in SSDI, SSI, or both. The DAF repackages existing SSA administrative data with research and analysis in mind, and includes detailed information about **all SSDI adults and SSI children and adults who have received disability benefits in any month since 1996.**

Some of the types of questions that can be answered using the DAF include:

- ✓ How many beneficiaries first received SSDI in 1999 and what was their age distribution, by gender and race?
- ✓ How does the distribution of primary disabling condition of beneficiaries who have participated in Ticket to Work compare with that of beneficiaries who have not participated?
- ✓ How many SSDI beneficiaries had their cash benefits suspended or terminated because they were working above Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA), and what was the dollar value of those forgone benefits?

Why? For most research projects, the **DAF eliminates tedious data development steps**, letting you quickly focus on data analysis. Benefits of working with the DAF include:

- It combines information across many SSA administrative data files, significantly cutting down on the time spent merging across sources.
- It offers in-depth documentation including helpful hints for analysis and variable descriptions that are not readily available elsewhere.
- It is structured as one-observation-per-beneficiary, spanning SSDI and SSI so that it is easy to account for concurrent beneficiaries and movement between programs.
- It is already available in SAS format and can be converted to Stata or SPSS for researchers more familiar with those analysis packages.
- Key measures, such as monthly flags for program participation, indicators of suspension or termination for work, and the dollar value of benefits forgone for work are already constructed based on information across sources, significantly cutting down on the time you'll spend constructing variables from scratch.
- It makes it easy to limit your analysis to specific years and to conduct cross-sectional or longitudinal analysis.
- Beneficiaries can be easily identified using SSN, and commonly used groups of beneficiaries are already pre-selected in data marts and extracts (including new awardees, working beneficiaries, and participants in certain SSA demonstration projects).
- DAF files can be linked using SSN to other data sources, such as:
 - SSA administrative data on groups of *demonstration participants*
 - SSA survey data from the *National Beneficiary Survey (NBS)*
 - Administrative data from CMS including *Medicare and Medicaid claims*
 - Administrative data from RSA including the *RSA-911* files

Who? Whether you have used SSA data for years or are new to data analysis, the DAF is designed to meet your needs. The DAF is a wonderful resource for:

- *SSA staff who routinely work with other SSA administrative files.* You will find all of your familiar variables in the DAF, in SAS format, from sources such as the MBR, SSR, Numident, 831 & 832/833 files, and DCF.
- *SSA staff who rarely work with administrative data because of its complexity.* Using the DAF will remove the daunting start-up process of working with administrative data.
- *External researchers conducting disability policy research.* The DAF will be valuable to analysts from other government agencies and to SSA-affiliated researchers because it streamlines the process for accessing data from multiple sources.

How? Starting to work with any new dataset can seem overwhelming at first. The best place to start if you're new to the DAF is Volume 1 of the DAF documentation, Getting Started With the DAF. The following figure shows some of the basic steps you might use if you were interested in knowing how many working-age beneficiaries with mental illness assigned their Ticket in each year from 2004-2006 and wanted to know whether they subsequently had benefits suspended or terminated for work or generated Ticket payments for ENs. While the DAF components listed below are stored separately and each contains unique information, remember that DAF files can be easily linked to one another using the SSN contained in each file.

Step 1: Consult DAF documentation to determine which variables and files will be best for your analysis.

Step 2: Use the DAF Ticket component to identify all beneficiaries who assigned Tickets from January 2004-December 2006.

Step 3: Merge to DAF Annual Files from 2004-2006 to determine age and disabling condition in the month of Ticket assignment. Use this to refine analytic sample.

Step 4: Use the NSTW variables from the DAF Annual Files to determine benefit suspension and termination in each month after Ticket assignment.

Step 5: Merge analysis file to Ticket payments file to determine milestone and outcome payments made to ENs from assignment month onward.

Where? The DAF documentation contains information about where and how to access the data files and can be found at <https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/daf.html>. Other researchers can contact ORDES.DAF@ssa.gov with inquiries regarding using the DAF or accessing its documentation.

The DAF is updated annually to include another calendar year of data. The current version contains information for all prior releases, and may also contain newly constructed variables and revisions and updates to data from previous years. So, always seek the most current version when getting started on a new project.

When?