

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Noncitizens



Who can get Supplemental Security Income?

Generally, if you're a noncitizen in one of certain immigration categories granted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), you may be eligible for SSI if:

- You were lawfully residing in the United States on Aug. 22, 1996, and you're blind or disabled; or
- You were receiving SSI on Aug. 22, 1996, and you're lawfully residing in the United States; or
- You were lawfully admitted for permanent residence under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) and you have a total of 40 credits of work in the United States. (Your spouse's or parent's work also may count.)

NOTE: *If you entered the United States on or after Aug. 22, 1996, then you may not be eligible for SSI for the first five years as a lawfully admitted permanent resident, even if you have 40 credits of earnings.*

Some other noncitizens who may be eligible for SSI payments are:

- Active duty members of the U.S. armed forces;
- Noncitizen members of federally recognized Indian tribes;
- Certain noncitizens admitted as Amerasian immigrants;
- Cuban/Haitian entrants admitted under the Refugee Education Assistance Act;
- Certain victims of severe forms of human trafficking; and
- Certain Iraqi or Afghan special immigrants who are admitted as lawful permanent residents.

There are others who may be eligible for payments. If you're a noncitizen and want to apply for SSI benefits, contact us to see if you're eligible.

Seven-year limit for some noncitizens

Some refugees and other noncitizens can get SSI for up to seven years. If your SSI payments are limited to seven years because of your

particular noncitizen status, we'll send a letter to you telling you when your seven-year period ends. We'll send another letter explaining your rights to appeal before we stop your payments.

If you're a current or former SSI recipient subject to SSI eligibility under the seven-year time limit, and you've applied for citizenship, we encourage you to contact the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to find out how to:

- Expedite processing of your pending naturalization (N-400) or adjustment of status (I-485) application; and
- Waive fees for the cost associated with filing these applications.

You (or your representative) may call USCIS toll-free at **1-800-375-5283** (wait for the SSI option on the main menu) or **1-800-767-1833** if you're deaf or hard of hearing (TTY), and request expedited processing. You also may request expedited processing in writing or by going to the local USCIS office. Be sure to tell them that you're a **current or former** SSI recipient. To learn more, contact your local USCIS office, or visit the USCIS website at www.USCIS.gov/feewaiver.

NOTE: *The seven-year SSI eligibility period for refugees, asylees, and certain humanitarian immigrants, including victims of human trafficking, is extended two years (or up to three years under certain conditions) during the period from Oct. 1, 2008, to Sept. 30, 2011. Learn more by visiting www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/11051-sup.html.*

Credits of work

A person's work history determines his or her eligibility for Social Security benefits, as well as SSI eligibility for some noncitizens. A person earns work credits based on the amount of money earned. The amount needed to earn a work credit goes up slightly each year as average earnings levels increase.

For Social Security benefits, a person can earn a maximum of four credits per year based on his or her own earnings. A noncitizen also can receive additional credits per year based on the work of a spouse or parent.

Work credits remain on a person's work record indefinitely. The extra work credits from a spouse or parent help toward eligibility but aren't posted to a noncitizen's work record and aren't counted to determine the amount of benefits. For more information, ask for *How You Earn Credits* (SSA Publication No. 05-10072).

We need proof of your status

When you apply for SSI, you must prove your noncitizen status. Noncitizens who've served in the U.S. armed forces may also need to give us proof of military service. These are examples of things you may need to provide:

- As proof of your noncitizen status — a current Form I-94 (arrival/departure record), or I-551 (lawful permanent resident card) from DHS or an order from an immigration judge withholding deportation or granting asylum; or
- As proof of military service — U.S. military discharge papers (DD Form 214) showing honorable discharge not based on your noncitizen status.

Your local Social Security office can tell you what other types of evidence you can submit to prove your status.

Information about Medicaid

If you have Medicaid coverage based on your SSI, your Medicaid should continue as long as you get SSI.

You can file a new claim

If your SSI payments stop because you're not an eligible noncitizen, you can apply again. Contact us right away if your immigration status changes, or if you become a U.S. citizen, and you think you qualify, or you have 40 credits of work. You'll need to bring us your naturalization certificate or other documents that show your current immigration status.

If you have a sponsor

When you entered the United States, you may have had someone sign an agreement to provide support for you. This agreement is called an affidavit of support, and the person who signed it is called your sponsor.

We count a portion of your sponsor's and his or her spouse's income and resources as yours from the time you came to the United States. Your local Social Security office can give you more information about these rules, and about what they mean to you.

Social Security numbers

If you're a lawfully admitted noncitizen with permission to work in the United States, you may need a Social Security number. Ask for *Social Security Numbers for Noncitizens* (Publication No. 05-10096).

Becoming a citizen

To learn more about how to become a United States citizen, call USCIS toll-free at **1-800-375-5283** (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call the TTY number, **1-800-767-1833**). You also can contact your local USCIS office, or visit them online at www.uscis.gov.

Contacting Social Security

Visit www.socialsecurity.gov anytime to apply for benefits, open a **my Social Security** account, find publications, and get answers to frequently asked questions. Or, call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**). We can answer case-specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. Generally, you'll have a shorter wait time if you call after Tuesday. We treat all calls confidentially. We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service, so a second Social Security representative monitors some telephone calls. We can provide general information by automated phone service 24 hours a day. And, remember, our website, www.socialsecurity.gov, is available to you anytime and anywhere!