

Yes, You Can Work!

WORKING AND SEEKING EMPLOYMENT WHILE APPLYING FOR SSA BENEFITS

We encourage individuals to work and seek employment while applying for SSI/SSDI benefits. SOAR providers are critical in helping bust myths about working during the application process.

The Myth

One of the most common and long-standing myths about applying for Social Security disability benefits (SSI/SSDI) is that an applicant will be denied if they are working or seeking employment during the application process. This myth is especially harmful because of its negative consequences on applicants.

Employment is *especially* beneficial to people with disabilities. The benefits go far beyond the monetary gains. Employment gives people a sense of purpose and meaning to their days, opens gateways to social interactions, and brings a connection to the community.

The Facts!

People *can work during the application process*. In fact, information gathered from work activity can help strengthen the SSI/SSDI application by documenting any functional limitations an individual experiences at work. SSA looks at the *type and amount* of work completed to see if an individual can maintain [substantial gainful activity \(SGA\)](#). *If an applicant can work but not at a substantial gainful level, they can still be found eligible for SSI/SSDI benefits.*

Work and Recovery

Many people in recovery from behavioral health disorders describe the process of becoming employed as pivotal or central to their recovery as opposed to something they sought only after reaching other milestones. Pro-employment models such as [Individual Placement and Support \(IPS\) Supported Employment](#), a SAMHSA Evidenced-Based Program, recommend that people begin seeking employment right away rather than waiting until certain conditions in their lives improve (i.e., reduction in symptoms).

People seeking SSA benefits are encouraged to work or seek employment either independently or with the help of professional support like Supported Employment Programs. Case workers are encouraged to support individuals in pursuing their vocational goals, both before and after submitting an SSI/SSDI application.

Work Incentives

For more information about the many SSA work incentive programs available for people who choose to go back to work (or continue working!) after receiving SSA benefits, please see the [SSA Redbook – A Guide to Work Incentives and Employment Supports](#) and [SSI/SSDI and Employment: A Brief Overview of SSA Work Incentives](#).