Government Benefits 101
FD/MAS Alliance

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What Government Benefits Are Available?

- **Means Tested Programs**
  - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
  - Medicaid
  - Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Plan (SNAP)
  - Housing Choice Voucher Program
- **Non-Means Tested Programs**
  - Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)
  - Medicare

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Benefits Grid

	Means Tested	Non-Means Tested
Monetary Benefit	SSI SNAP Section 8 Voucher	SSDI
Medical Benefit	MedicAID	MediCARE

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"Federally" Disabled

Social Security's definition of disability

- **Under 18: You are disabled if you have a medically determinable physical or mental impairment which results in marked and severe functional limitations and can be expected to result in death or has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months.**
- **18 and over: You are disabled if you have a medically determinable physical or mental impairment which results in the inability to engage in any Substantial Gainful Activity and can be expected to result in death or has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months.***
- **Substantial Gainful Activity - $1,350/month (2022)**

* The Social Security Administration lists all the conditions it considers categorical disabilities in it manual on Disability Evaluation Under Social Security, also known as the Blue Book. The Blue Book is only available online at https://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/AdultListings.htm for adults and at https://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/ChildhoodListings.htm for children under 18.

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Means Tested Benefits

- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**
- **Medicaid**
- **Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Plan (SNAP)**
- **Housing Choice Voucher Program**

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Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

- **Federally funded income supplement program funded from general tax revenues, not Social Security taxes**
- **Designed to help the aged (65+), blind, and people with disabilities who have little or no income and resources**
- **Disability is expected to last more than 12 months or result in death**
- **Meant to provide resources for basic needs for food and shelter**
- **Eligible Income & Assets**
  - Before 18 - eligibility based on parent's assets and income (deemed available)
  - After 18 - based individual's assets & income only

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Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

- **Maximum Benefit (Federal Benefit Rate or FBR) - $841/month (2022)**
- **Maximum Countable Resources**
  - Single individuals - $2,000 (2022)
  - Married couples - $3,000 (2022)
- **Maximum Countable Income**
  - Unearned - $841 + state supplement (2022)
  - Earned – 2 x the unearned limit

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Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

"Resources" are things an you own such as: cash, bank account(s), stocks, U.S. savings bonds; land; life insurance; personal property; automobile(s); and anything else you own which could be changed to cash and used for food or shelter, subject to certain exclusions.

Resource Exclusions:*

- **Home**
- **One Automobile**
- **Household goods**
- **Personal effects**
- **Burial space**
- **Irrevocable Prepaid Burial Contract**
- **Life Insurance (combined face value of all policies total $1,500 or less)**
- **PASS (Plan for Achieving Self-Support)**
- **Joint ownership in residence**
- **Real property unable to be sold**
- **Food stamps**
- **School lunch programs**
- **Child nutrition programs**
- **Grants, scholarships, fellowships, or gifts for educational expenses**

*Social Security Program Operations Manual System (POMS) SI 01130.050 - Guide to Resources Exclusions

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Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

- **"Income" is any item an individual receives in cash or in-kind that can be used to meet the person's need for food or shelter. Income for SSI purposes includes receipt of any item which can be applied, either directly or by sale or conversion, to meet basic needs of food or shelter.**
- **Income Exclusions:**
  - First $20/month of general income
  - First $65 of earned income
  - In-Kind Support and Maintenance (ISM) above cap
    - free or reduced cost food and/or shelter
  - Certain Medical and Social Services
  - Food and shelter received during medical confinement
  - Personal services performed for an individual
  - Income Tax refunds
  - Rebates and Refunds or other return of money you have already paid
  - Loan proceeds
- **Note: An item that is not income in one month but held at the end of the month may become a resource!**

*Social Security POMS SI 00810.005 - What is Income

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Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Reductions to SSI

- **Unearned income reduces SSI $1 for $1 in unearned income after the $20 general income exclusion**
  - ISM reduction is capped at 1/3 the Federal Benefit Rate (FBR)
- **Earned income reduces SSI $1 for $2 in earned income after the $65 earned income exclusion and $20 general exclusion, if not used above**
  - Earned income can be reduced by applying Impairment Related Work Expenses
- **If SSI is reduced to $0 in a given month, Medicaid benefits may be lost!**

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Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

In-Kind Support and Maintenance (ISM)

- **Since SSI is for food and shelter, free or reduced cost room and board is unearned income**
- **Reduction capped at 1/3 SSI (Presumed Maximum Value)**
- **Options to not giving free stuff**
  - Charge pro-rata share of expenses
    - Food, mortgage (including property insurance **required** by the mortgage holder), real property taxes (less any tax rebate/credit), rent, heating fuel, gas, electricity, water, sewer, garbage removal*
  - Paying market rent

*Social Security POMS SI 00810.005 – 00835.465 – ISM and Households – Household Costs

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Medicaid

- **Jointly funded, Federal-State health insurance program for low-income and needy people.**
- **Specifically:**
  - Children
  - The aged, blind, and/or disabled
  - Other people eligible to receive federally assisted income maintenance payments.
- **Administered by state Medicaid agency.**
- **Traditionally provided institutional care for the aged, blind and disabled**
- **Medicaid for the Aged, Blind and Disabled is the key to unlocking state services as an adult**

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Medicaid

Eligibility

- **Blind, disabled or over 65, and meet income and resource test**
  - Automatically qualified if receiving SSI and living in a 1634 State (34 states)
  - 209(b) States: Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Virginia
  - SSI Criteria States: Alaska, Idaho, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, Oregon, Utah
  - If SSI is $0 can still be eligible under Section 1619(B)*
- **US citizen or non-citizen meeting certain exceptions.**

Source: Continued Medicaid Eligibility (Section 1619(B)) https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/1619b.htm

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Medicaid

What it covers

- **Inpatient and Outpatient Hospital and Clinics**
- **Physicians, Nurses and Dentists**
- **Pediatrics**
- **Laboratory and X-Rays**
- **Long Term Care (Nursing Home, ALF and Home Care)**
- **Prescription Medications (through Medicare Part D)**
- **Medical supplies, equipment, and appliances (wheelchairs, etc.)**
- **Transportation to medical appointments, including public transportation and car mileage**
- **Emergency ambulance transportation to a hospital**

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Medicaid

What is a Waiver Program?

- **States are allowed to "waive" certain requirements, such as income or asset levels or the requirement that individuals live in institutions in order to access Medicaid-based services**
- **Important Medicaid Waiver programs include:**
  - Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver
  - TEFRA/Katie Beckett Waivers/1915(c)

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Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Plan (SNAP)

- **Formerly called Food Stamps**
- **Federally funded nutrition program**
  - Stipend helps low-income people buy food
  - Supervised by the US Department of Agriculture
- **Administered by state and local agencies who**
  - Determine eligibility
  - Determine amount of stipend
  - Distribute the benefits

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Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Plan (SNAP)

- **Recipients receive their monthly stipend via electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards**
- **2022 Maximum monthly benefit is $250 for an individual and $459 for a couple (increases as family size increases)**
- **Money is only used for food items, but NOT**
  - Alcohol, food eaten in the store (with some minor exceptions for qualified homeless), or tobacco products
  - Non-food items such as pet food, vitamins and medicines
  - Hot food or food eaten in the store (with some minor exceptions for qualified homeless, elderly or disabled persons)

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Section 8 (Housing Choice Voucher Program)

- Provides low-income housing to persons with disabilities and to low-income people
- Tenant-based or project-based assistance
- Eligibility for Section 8 is based on income
- No resource test; however certain assets may be deemed to generate income, which is counted

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Non-Means Tested Benefits

- Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)
- Medicare

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Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)

- Not means tested
- Need own work credits - generally 40 qualified quarters of employment
  - For individuals disabled before 30, fewer quarters are needed
- Provides monthly cash payment
- NOT reduced by working in certain circumstances
- Receive MediCARE 24 months after first payment

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Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) – Own Work Record

Qualifying for SSDI on own work record

- $1,510 earned = 1 credit (2022); Maximum 4 credits/year
- Reduced requirements if disabled prior to 31:

Become Disabled at Age	Number of Credits Needed for SSDI on own work Record	Number of Years of Work
21 through 24	6	1.5
25	8	2
26	10	2.5
27	12	3
28	14	3.5
29	16	4
30	18	4.5
31 through 42	20	5

See Social Security brochure "How You Earn Credits", https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10072.pdf

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Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) – Childhood Disability Benefits

Qualifying for Childhood Disability Benefits (CDB)

- Formerly called Disabled Adult Child (DAC) benefit
- Available for individuals continuously disabled before age 22
- Parent retired, disabled or deceased
- Provides monthly cash payment based on parent's work record
  - 50% of primary insurance amount of living parent
  - 75% of primary insurance amount of deceased parent
- Receive Medicare 24 months after first payment
- SSDI is unearned income for SSI purposes, but if the only reason SSI goes to $0 is SSDI, Medicaid is not lost*

* Social Security POMS SI 01715.015 - Special Groups of Former SSI Recipients – "Pickle Amendment"

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Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) – Childhood Disability Benefits

Managing Childhood Disability Benefits (CDB)

- Predicated on child being continuously disabled since age 22
- If child gets married, may lose access to CDB
- If child works "too much", they can lose access to parent's social security work record permanently
  - If a CDB recipient has SGA (earnings in excess of $1,350) in any 9 months in a 60 month period access to parent's work record (and the higher SSDI amount) may be lost, but access to Medicaid may be recaptured if re-qualified as disabled
- Documenting IRWE paid by the individual can lower countable income and preserve CDB
  - Includes attendant care services, transportation costs that are impairment related, medical devices, prosthesis, work related equipment or services such as typing aids, page turning devices, telecommunications devices for the deaf, seeing eye dog, medical supplies such as elastic stockings, catheters, incontinence pads.*
  - Consult with Social Security prior to relying on IRWE to reduce countable income

* Social Security POMS SI 10520.001 Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE)

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Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) – Compared to SSI

SSDI vs. SSI

	SSI	SSDI
Type of Program	Means-Tested	Entitlement based on earnings
Eligibility	Age (65+) OR blindness (any age) OR disability (any age)	Disability AND any sufficient work credits through own/family employment
Asset Limitations	$2,000	None
Maximum Benefit	$841/mo (2022)	½ parent benefit (when parent collects); ¾ payment at parent's death
Reductions for unearned income	$1 for $1 (after $20 exclusion)	None
Reductions for earned income	$0.50 for $1 (after $65 exclusion)	None (if not exited Trial Work Period)
Max earned income allowed	$1,767 (but not "disabled" if earn over $1,350) (2022)	None (if not exited Trial Work Period)
Health Insurance	MediCAID	MediCARE

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Medicare

- **Medicare is NOT Medicaid**
- **Health Insurance Program for:**
  - People 65 years of age and older.
  - Some people with disabilities under age 65.
- **Medicare has Four Parts:**
  - Part A (Hospital Insurance)
  - Part B (Medical Insurance)
  - Part C (Medicare Advantage Plan)
  - Part D (Prescription Drug Coverage)

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Medicare

- **Medicare is not means-tested**
- **You are eligible if:**
  - You worked 40 quarters and are 65 or older (don't have to retire)
  - You are receiving SSDI (after 24 month waiting period)
  - CDB recipient (after 24 month waiting period)
  - Under 65 but have end stage kidney disease or ALS and you, your spouse or parent has put in enough qualifying quarters
- **If dually Medicare/Medicaid qualified, Medicaid pays the Part B premium**

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28

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