

How a Child Can Qualify for SSD Benefits with Autism

When a child is diagnosed with autism or autism spectrum disorder it means parents have to swiftly adjust in order to make sure their child is getting the support and care they need. In many households this may mean that one parent will need to stop working to be the primary caregiver for the child. And that can cause financial difficulties for the household. The Social Security Administration has a benefits program, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which can help mitigate the financial impact when a child is diagnosed with a serious condition.

Qualifying for SSI Benefits

There are two steps involved in having a child qualify for SSI benefits. First, the child's medical condition needs to be documented. Every condition that qualifies a child to receive SSI benefits is listed in the Social Security Administration's [Blue Book](#) along with the specific requirements the child must meet in order to have their claim for benefits approved. The [listing for autism spectrum disorder](#) is very detailed and indicates that children must have:

1. Qualitative deficits in the development of reciprocal social interaction; and
2. Qualitative deficits in verbal and nonverbal communication and in imaginative activity; and
3. Markedly restricted repertoire of activities and interests.

AND

1. For older infants and toddlers aged 1-3, having no more than one-half the age appropriate level of functioning in one of the areas set forth in subparagraphs a-c below, OR having no more than two-thirds the age appropriate level of functioning for two or more of the areas set forth in subparagraphs a-c below:
 - a. Gross or fine motor development; or
 - b. Cognitive/communicative function; or
 - c. Social function.

OR

2. For children aged 3-18, marked age appropriate impairment in two of the areas set forth in subparagraphs a-d below:
 - a. Cognitive/communicative function; and/or
 - b. Social functioning; and/or
 - c. Personal functioning; and/or
 - d. Maintaining concentration, persistence, or pace.

Parents will have to submit [medical documentation](#) like age appropriate marker test results, cognitive skill test results, doctor's notes, psychologist's notes, statements from caseworkers or teachers, and any other documentation that might help prove that the child meets the listing requirements.

Financial Status

Parents must submit documentation that shows they meet the SSA's [income cap requirement](#). Because the SSA created these benefits to help low-income families they set an income cap on benefits. The entire income for your household must fall below the cap in order for your child to be eligible for benefits. You will have to submit copies of the W-2s or Federal tax returns for each adult in the household that works full-time to prove that the household income falls below the cap.

Filing a Claim

Parents who are filing a claim on behalf of their child who has autism will need to apply in person for benefits. Find your [local SSA office](#) and make an appointment. Bring all of the child's medical documentation as well as your financial documentation to the appointment and a staff member will help you submit a claim for SSI benefits on behalf of your child.

Resources:

Childhood Blue Book Listing: <https://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/ChildhoodListings.htm>

Autism Listing: <https://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/112.00-MentalDisorders-Childhood.htm> - 112 10

Medical Documentation: <https://www.disabilitybenefitscenter.org/glossary/acceptable-medical-source>

Income Limitations: <https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-child-ussi.htm>

SSA Offices: <https://www.disabilitybenefitscenter.org/state-social-security-disability>