

SSI

When and how should my client apply for SSI?

If the client does not want his/her parents' income to be considered in determining eligibility, the client should apply for SSI in the month after their 18th birthday, unless the birthday is on the 1st of the month, in which case the client can apply in the same month. The Social Security Administration only considers the client to be age 18 if s/he was age 18 on the 1st of the month.

The client, the client's parent, an advocate, a guardian or any other interested person can apply for SSI on the client's behalf. If the client has no one to assist him then a staff member from Social Security Administration (SSA) can help the client apply.

Applications must be submitted in person at the nearest SSA office. To locate the office closest to the client's home call (800) 772-1213 or go to **www.socialsecurity.gov**. This website is available to Counselors from their desk top computer. It is highly recommended that an appointment be made. Often the wait without an appointment can be as long as 3 hours. Paper applications can be requested from the local office prior to the appointment, or can be completed at the SSA office.

Remember when the client becomes eligible for SSI, Medi-Cal is automatically set up for the client. No separate Medi-Cal application is needed.

How long does the determination take?

The Social Security Administration does not have deadlines to meet when processing the client's application or when processing an appeal. Eligibility determinations are not made at the local Social Security office and, on average, take 3-6 months. Providing clear documentation of the client's disability (see Question 'Documentation Needed for SSI) can expedite this process. The time frame can vary depending on how long it takes for medical records to be received and reviewed. This is why it is important to have the names, addresses, etc. of all pertinent doctors that the client currently sees or has seen in the past.

What happens if the SSI application is denied?

Once a determination is made, the client will receive a letter informing them of the decision. If the application has been denied the client has the right to appeal. The Social Security Administration will send a brochure along with the decision titled "The Appeals Process" which explains the applicants' rights in regards to the appeals process. If the client does decide to file an appeal, and if that first appeal is denied, the client can then request a hearing before an administrative law judge. HRC can assist the client with the appeals process if needed.