

# Supplemental Security Income (SSI) For Noncitizens



## Who can get Supplemental Security Income?

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

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

**Important:** *If you entered the United States on or after August 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 qualifying 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; and
- Cuban/Haitian entrants under the Refugee Education Assistance Act.

There are other noncitizens who may be eligible for payments. If you are a noncitizen and want to apply for SSI benefits, it is best to contact us to see if you are 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 will send you a letter telling you when your seven-

year period ends. We will send you another letter explaining your rights to appeal before we stop your payments.

If you are a current or former SSI recipient subject to SSI eligibility under the seven-year time limit, 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 your application.

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 are 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 are a current or former SSI recipient. To learn more about fee waivers, call USCIS at the toll-free number shown above, contact your local USCIS office or visit the USCIS website at [www.USCIS.gov/feewaiver](http://www.USCIS.gov/feewaiver).

## 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 get a maximum of four credits per year. This limit on credits does not apply to SSI benefits for noncitizens. A noncitizen can also receive up to four additional credits per year from a spouse's or parent's work.

Work credits remain on a person's Social Security record indefinitely. The extra work credits are not posted on a noncitizen's work record and do not count towards Social Security benefits. For more information, see

(over)

*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 have served in the U.S. armed forces also may 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 or I-551 from the Department of Homeland Security (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 are not an eligible noncitizen, you can apply again. Contact us right away if you become a U.S. citizen, your immigration status changes and you think you qualify, or you have 40 credits of work. You will need to bring us your naturalization certificate or other documents that show your 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 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 what they mean to you.

### Social Security numbers

If you are 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 the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (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](http://www.uscis.gov).

### Contacting Social Security

For more about SSI for noncitizens, see our “additional information” page online at [www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/11051-sup.html](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/11051-sup.html).

Our website is a valuable resource for information about all of Social Security's programs. There are a number of things you can do online.

In addition to using our website, you can call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213**. We treat all calls confidentially. We can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. We can provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day. (You can use our automated response system to tell us a new address or request a replacement Medicare card.) If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you may call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**.

We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some telephone calls.