



Applying for Social Security Benefits for Your Child with a Gastrointestinal Disorder

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When a child is diagnosed with a severe gastrointestinal (GI) disorder, it can put financial strain on the family. Health threats like GI hemorrhage, inflammatory bowel disease, short bowel syndrome, or the need for parenteral feeding can result in one parent deciding to leave the workforce to care for the needs of the child. Such disorders can also result in costly medical care and high-priced qualified day care for the child. This can add to the financial struggle for many families. Fortunately, in some cases, Social Security Disability benefits are available to help offset the financial burden caused by a child's GI disorder.

SSI Benefits for Children with GI Disorders

The Social Security Administration is in charge of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. SSI is for people with disabilities who have not worked throughout their lives. This needs-based program can help families overcome the financial hurdles that can be caused by a child's GI disorder.

In order for your child to qualify for SSI benefits, you must be able to prove to the Social Security Administration that your child has a condition that is listed in the SSA's Blue Book or that your child suffers from a condition that meets one of the listings that are contained within the publication. For example, if your child suffers from short bowel syndrome, the specific condition would be covered in Section 105.07 of the Blue Book. This particular section of the Blue Book states that your child will qualify for disability benefits if you can prove that your child suffers from short bowel syndrome due to a surgical resection of more than one-half of the small intestine, resulting in dependence on daily parenteral nutrition via a central venous catheter.

There are a number of GI disorders covered in the SSA Blue Book. Before applying for benefits for your child, it is important that you become familiar with which Blue Book listing your child qualifies so you know what medical documentation you will need in order to support your child's Social Security Disability claim.

What kinds of disorders does the SSA consider in the digestive system?

Disorders of the digestive system include GI hemorrhage, hepatic (liver) dysfunction, inflammatory bowel disease, short bowel syndrome, and malnutrition. They may also lead to complications, such as obstruction, or be accompanied by manifestations in other body systems. Congenital abnormalities involving the organs of the GI system may interfere with the ability to maintain adequate nutrition, growth, and development.

Source: Section 105.00 of the Blue Book, Digestive System – Childhood

Financially Qualifying for SSI Benefits

It is important to note that not all children who medically qualify for SSI benefits will qualify financially for these benefits, as the SSI program is a needs-based program. When applying for SSI benefits for your child, you will need to prove that your household meets the SSA's financial criteria. The SSA has a process, called "deeming," of determining how much of your income and resources will count as being available to your child. While only a portion of your household income will be deemed to the child when applying for benefits, families with substantial income will likely not qualify for SSI benefits. You can learn more about monthly income limits and SSI online at www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-child-ussi.htm.

Applying for SSI Benefits for Your Child

When you apply for SSI benefits for your child, you must make an appointment and apply in person at your local Social Security office. Unlike adult applications for SSI benefits, SSI applications for children cannot be completed online. When you go to your appointment, bring your child's medical records along with proof of financial eligibility, such as bank statements and pay stubs or income tax returns. The SSA has a Child Disability Benefit Starter Kit that can help parents

prepare for their appointment. This can be found online at www.ssa.gov/disability/disability_starter_kits_child_eng.htm.

You will receive a notice regarding your child's application within two to four months of the application date. If for some reason your child is denied benefits, you have a right to appeal the denial.

About IFFGD

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