



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT of CHILD SAFETY

June 10, 2024

What are SSI Benefits?

- SSI, or Supplemental Security Income, is a Social Security Administration (SSA) program that provides monthly benefits to people, including children, who have a qualifying disability and meet SSA's income and asset requirements.

What are RSDI Benefits?

- RSDI, or Retirement, Survivors, Disability Insurance benefits, are payable to a child of a deceased, disabled, or retired parent under the parent's Social Security record.

Preserving Childrens Benefits Program

Description of Service

The Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) Social Security Benefits program is a child-centered approach to connecting children and youth living in foster care to economic supports that enhances permanency and contributes to family stability. Studies show that supporting families to access and receive adequate and effective economic supports can prevent family separation, decrease time to permanency for children who have been removed from their parents, decrease the risk of subsequent abuse or neglect, and enhance child and family wellbeing.¹

Eligibility

The program works by identifying children and youth that are eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Retirement, Survivors, Disability Insurance (RSDI), and Veterans Administration benefits and completing and filing applications for benefits with the Social Security and Veterans Administrations, and then managing those SSI, RSDI, and/or Veterans Administration benefits while the child resides in foster care. The Social Security Benefits Program manages SSI, RSDI, and Veterans Administration benefits using two financial tools: 1) Personal Needs Accounts (PNA), and 2) Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Accounts.

A PNA is readily accessible to a child for any qualified personal expenses not already covered by DCS. For SSI recipients, a PNA can maintain a balance of up to \$2,000 while there is no limit for RSDI and Veterans Administration benefits recipients.

An ABLE account will be used for children eligible for SSI and can have a balance of up to \$100,000. These accounts are used to save a child's SSI benefits while they live in foster care and will transition with the child when they leave DCS' care and custody. ABLE accounts are one of the few tools that allow individuals with disabilities to save money while maintaining eligibility for federal and state programs that have income and resource limits.

Benefits

Since July 1st, 2023, DCS has conserved Social Security funds for children in DCS custody, where DCS is their representative payee for SSI or RSDI benefits. With these benefits in mind, DCS has a partnership with Public Consulting Group (PCG) to manage each child's Social Security benefits.

¹ Weiner, D., Anderson, C., & Thomas, K. (2021). System transformation to support child & family well-being: the central role of economic and concrete supports. Chapin Hall Policy Brief.

Program Requirements:

In compliance with Arizona law A.R.S. 8-468, children must be assessed for SSI, RSDI, and Veterans benefits eligibility within sixty (60) days of entering DCS care and again after twelve (12) months of being in DCS care.

To be eligible a child must meet the following criteria:

- Be in the legal care and custody of DCS.
- Be a resident of the state of Arizona.
- Meet the criteria for one or more SSA programs, SSI or RSDI (described further, below) or Veterans Administration benefits.

Supplemental Security Income:

Children may be eligible for SSI benefits if they are not functioning at the same level as their peers or if they are disabled. If a child on your caseload has a history of receiving psychiatric services, special education services, severe learning problems or developmental delays, physical limitations, intensive medical services or treatments, residential placements with diagnosed impairments; or if a child has been diagnosed with:

- Legal blindness (in both eyes).
- Cerebral palsy, or other neurological disorders.
- Mental health diagnosis, such as anxiety, depression, bipolar, or mood disorder.
- Diabetes, kidney disease, liver disease, or other disorders.
- Low birth weight, or failure to thrive.
- Down syndrome, low IQ, or low intellectual functioning.

If a child on your caseload meets these criteria or you think they meet these criteria, you should make a referral to the DCS SSA Benefits Unit for further assessment.

Retirement, Survivors, Disability Insurance:

Children may be eligible for RSDI benefits if they have a parent who is retired or has a disability and is entitled to Social Security benefits or has a parent who died after having worked long enough in a job where they paid Social Security taxes. A child on your caseload may be entitled to RSDI, if:

- They are under age 18
- They are age 18-19 and a fulltime student
- They are age 18 or older with a disability that began before age 22.

And their parent is:

- Entitled to SSA disability, SSA retirement; or is deceased and was insured by SSA.

Veterans Administration Benefits:

Children may be eligible for Veterans Administration benefits if they have a parent who has served in the armed forces. Benefits may include healthcare insurance, education and training through the Post-9/11 GI Bill, or a survivors pension if the parent served in the armed forces and is deceased. A child on your caseload may be entitled to Veterans Administration benefits, if:

- They are under age 18, or
- They are under age 23 and attending a VA-approved school, or
- They are unable to care for themselves due to a disability that happened before the age of 18.

If a child on your caseload meets these criteria or you think they meet these criteria, you should make a referral to the DCS SSA Benefits Unit for further assessment.

How to submit a referral for SSI, RSDI, or Veterans Administration benefits:

If you believe that a child on your case load may be eligible for SSI, RSDI, or Veterans Administration benefits, follow the steps below to make a referral:

- Send an email to SSABenefitsUnit@azdcs.gov
- Each email should contain:
 - ▶ Child’s full name
 - ▶ Child’s Date of Birth
 - ▶ Child SSN
 - ▶ Parent’s full name (if applying for RSDI or Veterans Administration benefits)
 - ▶ Parent’s DOB (if applying for RSDI or Veterans Administration benefits and if known)
 - ▶ Parent’s SSN (if applying for RSDI or Veterans Administration benefits and if known)
 - ▶ Reason for referral

For SSI, RSDI, of Veterans Administration benefits referrals, please contact:	For questions about PNA or ABLE accounts, please contact:
The SSA Benefit Unit at 602-255-2975 or SSAbenefitsunit@azdcs.gov	Public Consulting Group at 1-855-563-6700 or AZDCSABLE@pcgus.com

Child Discharge & Transition of Benefits

Upon identification of discharge from DCS care, or as early as 6 months prior to discharge, the DCS Specialist should notify the PCG SSA Benefits Advocate of the child’s transition from care plan which will allow PCG to coordinate the transition of benefits to the child/care giver (see the SSA Benefits Practice guide for additional information about how to support a child exiting foster care with SSA benefits).