

eral court. You need a lawyer to do this.

### **DO I NEED A LAWYER TO GET SSI?**

You may be able to do this, but it is not recommended. Getting SSI based on disability is hard. You may lose income or other rights if you don't know the law.

### **WHAT OTHER BENEFITS SHOULD I CONSIDER APPLYING FOR WHEN I APPLY FOR SSI?**

When you apply for SSI, you also can apply for Food Stamps at the same time. Do this by telling the worker at the SSA office you want to apply for Food Stamps.

You also may be eligible for Medicaid. However, you must make a separate application for Medicaid. You must do this at your local Department of Social Services (DSS) office. You should apply for Medicaid as soon as possible after you apply for SSI. You should make sure the DSS worker knows you have applied for SSI. You also should make sure the DSS worker lets you apply for Medicaid. Usually, you will not be found eligible for Medicaid until you become eligible for SSI.

**CENTRAL VIRGINIA LEGAL AID SOCIETY, INC.  
101 WEST BROAD STREET, SUITE 101  
P.O. BOX 12206  
RICHMOND, VA 23241**

# **Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Benefits**

This pamphlet contains general information about your rights. Consult a lawyer if you have specific questions.

**CENTRAL VIRGINIA LEGAL AID  
SOCIETY, INC.  
101 WEST BROAD STREET,  
SUITE 101  
P.O. BOX 12206  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23241  
1-804-648-1012  
1-800-868 1012  
WWW.CVLAS.ORG  
WWW.VALEGALAID.ORG**

CVLAS is a non-profit organization providing free legal advice, and representation to low income or elderly people in Central Virginia. Contact us Monday - Thursday 9-12 to see if you qualify for services.

This project financially assisted by the Virginia Law Foundation.



SSI is a federal program that pays monthly payments to aged (65 or older), blind (legally blind) and disabled people. You must have low income and low resources or property. The Social Security Administration (SSA) runs the program. Unlike the Social Security program, SSI is like a welfare program. You don't need to have worked or paid Social Security taxes to get SSI.

### **WHO CAN GET SSI BENEFITS?**

To get SSI, you must be aged (65 or older) blind (legally blind), disabled and you must have low resources. This means less than \$2,000 in countable resources for one person or less than \$3,000 in countable resources for a couple. Your home and all property next to it, a motor vehicle, household goods, furniture, and clothing are not counted. You also must have low income.

### **WHO CAN GET SSI BENEFITS BASED ON DISABILITY?**

To get disability benefits, you must have a serious physical or mental impairment, or combination of impairments. You must show with medical evidence that your impairment (s) keeps you from working at your old job or any other job. You also must show your disability has lasted or will last for at least 12 months in a row. You can apply for disability benefits at any age. It is harder for people under the age of 50 to get disability benefits

unless they are very severely disabled.

### **ARE THERE OTHER RULES TO GET SSI?**

Because SSI is based on need, you must apply for all other benefits for which you might be eligible. This includes Social Security, Veterans' benefits, and private pensions. You must live in the United States. You also must be a citizen, a legal permanent resident, or in the country under "color of law".

### **HOW MUCH ARE SSI BENEFITS?**

In 2003, the most you can get from SSI is \$552 a month for one person and \$829 a month for a couple. These amounts change each year when the government makes a "cost of living adjustment." This is a change that accounts for inflation. You can get both Social Security and SSI. However, your Social Security check must be less than the SSI amount. In this case, you get both Social Security and SSI. Your total will be \$20.00 a month more than the SSI amount.

### **HOW DO I APPLY FOR SSI BENEFITS?**

You apply for SSI at your local SSA District Office.

### **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I APPLY FOR SSI BENEFITS?**

There are five steps in an SSI case. The steps are:

1. *Initial decision.* This is a paper review of your medical evidence and work history. Most people are denied at this step.
2. *Reconsideration.* This also is a paper review of your medical evidence and work history. Almost everyone is denied at this step.
3. *Hearing before an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ).* This is your first and only chance for a face-to-face meeting with the person who will decide your case. About half of the people who get to this step are approved.
4. *Appeals Council.* This is a paper review of all the evidence and testimony before the ALJ. Almost everyone is denied at this step.
5. *Federal court.* This also is a paper review of all the evidence and testimony before the ALJ. You have a better chance to win here than before the Appeals Council, but not as good a chance as before the ALJ.

You may appeal a denial at each step. Your appeal must be in writing and within 60 days of getting the decision. You file your first three appeals with SSA. Your fourth appeal is filed with your local fed-