

Work Incentives and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

Work Incentives Connection Fact Sheet #1.2

January 2020

Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)

After you complete your Trial Work Period, your SSDI payment may stop if you earn more than \$1,260 per month (\$2,110 if blind). Social Security calls this limit Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA). **You may be able to use an SSDI work incentive to reduce the amount of earnings Social Security counts.** The following work incentives could allow your SSDI payments to continue even if you are earning more than SGA.

Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE)

If you pay for items or services related to work and a serious medical condition, the costs may be a deduction from your gross earnings.

Examples: medication co-pays, service animal costs, some special transportation, (including mileage for modified vehicles), medical and adaptive equipment.

How IRWE reduce earnings for SSDI:

Joe pays \$50 per month in medication co-pays, \$150 for special transportation and \$50 for his service animal. Social Security approves this \$250 as IRWE for Joe.

Joe's Gross monthly earnings:	\$1,350	(over SGA - no SSDI payment)
Minus approved IRWE:	<u>-\$250</u>	
Earnings counted by Social Security	\$1,100	(under SGA - gets SSDI payment)

How to ask Social Security for IRWE:

- Get a letter from your doctor that includes:
 - List of possible IRWE expenses
 - A note that doctor sees these expenses as necessary in order for you to work
- Submit a letter with an estimate of IRWE costs to your local Social Security office.
- Keep receipts for expenses and submit to Social Security.

Subsidy

If you have Subsidy, Social Security may be able to count less of your earnings. You may have subsidy if you receive disability related accommodations, such as:

- Extra support or assistance on the job from a job coach, supervisor, or coworkers
- Extra time to complete work
- Extra breaks
- Fewer job duties than others with the same job

How Subsidy reduces earnings for SSDI:

Mary's employer completes the SSA Subsidy and Special Conditions form and determines Mary receives disability related accommodations 10% of her work days. With the SSA approved subsidy, Social Security disregards 10% of Mary's wages.

Gross monthly earnings:	\$1,300	(over SGA - no SSDI payment)
Minus approved Subsidy:	<u>-\$130</u>	
Earnings Counted by Social Security:	\$1,170	(under SGA - gets SSDI payment)

How to ask Social Security for Subsidy:

- Your employer (or job coach) will need to complete the SSA Subsidy and Special Conditions form and submit to the local Social Security office.

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For more information, call the Work Incentives Connection:
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