

Qualifying for Disability Benefits with GBS/CIDP

Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) and Chronic Inflammatory Demyelinating Polyneuropathy (CIDP) are both rare and diseases. Whether you're recovering from the rapid onset of GBS or are coping with the life-long effects of CIDP, it can be extremely difficult to return to your normal life after being affected by these disorders.

For those affected by GBS/CIDP, Social Security disability benefits may be able to help. The Social Security Administration offers Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to provide monthly financial benefits to people in need.

Medical Requirements for SSDI or SSI

To qualify for Social Security benefits, the Social Security Administration (SSA) must make sure that your disability is severe enough to either A) Keep you out of work for at least 12 months, or B) be terminal. Normally, this is done by comparing an your diagnosis to its corresponding illness in the "[Blue Book](#)," the SSA's list of approved disabling disorders.

People with GBS/CIDP experience a variety of symptoms from their disorder — while some are lucky enough to recover and live a typical life after a diagnosis, others are hit harder and are forced to greatly adjust the way they live. This means that GBS/CIDP are not listed in the Blue Book, so the SSA cannot award benefits purely on a diagnosis. This doesn't mean that people with these diagnoses cannot receive benefits, though — it only means that more paperwork is required to prove the severity of your disability and how it keeps you from working.

Paperwork that can aid in showing your disability may include:

- **Test results.** Current tests results can help to show the SSA the severity of your current condition. While spinal fluid analysis and EMG tests can show a relapse of the painful chronic disorder (CIDP), other tests such as motor function tests, breathing tests, and nerve conduction tests can be used to show the severity of lasting effects.
- **Physician's notes.** Physicians are well versed in their patients' history and can provide useful information to the SSA on the abilities of a patient. They can also fill out Residual Functional Capacity (RFC) forms to officially attest to your ability to work and perform daily tasks. Those with lower RFC scores are more likely to receive benefits. You can [download an RFC](#) for your physician to fill out on your behalf online.
- **History of hospitalization.** Those with repeated hospital visits, especially within close proximity to each other, are also more likely to receive benefits. This is because hospitalization does not show an ability to function properly, especially in a work environment that requires reliable attendance.

- **Medication lists.** This can inform the SSA of both your current health and your health history, especially if your medication list includes multiple medications that failed to help you with your symptoms and pain. What will also be important is your reaction to treatments—If you can prove that pain medication does not improve your well being, you could qualify.
- **Work history.** This includes anything from past job history to absence lists to testimonials from former bosses or coworkers. This provides the SSA insight into activity that physicians and doctors don't get to see and further helps to establish the severity of your disability.

Some indicators of an easy approval include:

- Inability to walk
- Inability to stay in one position for more than two hours
- Inability to perform dexterous movements
- Tremors in two or more limbs that keep you from moving

Qualifying for SSDI/SSI

If you believe you may medically qualify for Social Security benefits, it is then best to decide what type of benefits may be best for you. Depending on your age, past work history, and current income, you may qualify for either SSDI, SSI, or even both in rare cases.

For those who are either unemployed, under 18, have no prior work history, or have very low income, SSI may be the only option. These disability benefits require no work history and are awarded based solely on income. For the SSA to conclude that you qualify, your income must be equal to or lower than the Federal Benefit Rate (FBR), which is currently \$735/month for individuals and \$1,103 for couples. However, depending on what kind of income you receive, some applicants can make more than this amount and still qualify for SSI. Children under 18 may also qualify for SSI — however, their income is evaluated using their parent's earnings instead of their own. This income chart can be [found online](#).

Those who have contributed money to Social Security in the past by working may qualify for SSDI. This program is reserved for citizens who have earned enough “work credits” (up to four per year) in comparison to their age to qualify for benefits. [This chart](#) is also available online. The **vast** majority of disability applicants will qualify for SSDI. So long as you've worked even part-time throughout adulthood, you will be eligible for SSDI. In some cases, those who have enough work history and low enough current income may qualify for both SSDI and SSI.

Applying for Social Security Benefits

Applications for SSDI can be found [on the SSA's website](#). FAQs and other important information can also be found here if you have any questions about the application or the process. If you need help to fill out the application, you can call your [local Social Security office](#) to either have a worker assist you over the phone or to make an appointment to submit the forms in person.

Applications for SSI are currently not available online — they can be filled either by calling your local Social Security office to set up an appointment at 1-800-772-1213. However, it is recommended that applicants fill out the Online Application for Disability Benefits before completing the official form in person. This will help to start the process and assess your qualifications before you begin.