

V. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

SOCIAL SECURITY

Eligibility for Social Security is authorized by Title II of the Social Security Act. The official name is Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI). The amount of monthly income you may obtain from Social Security is determined by how much you have contributed to Social Security. It is not based on your financial need. In other words, if you have worked for a certain number of quarters and paid into the Social Security fund, you will be able to collect payments based on your contributions.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has a toll-free number that operates from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Please have your social security number handy when you call. The contact information for SSA is:

(800) 772-1213 (Voice)

(800) 325-0778 (TTY)

Website: www.ssa.gov

There is a SSA website for frequently asked questions which is located at:

<https://faq.ssa.gov/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=34019&referrer=>

If you still need additional help, you may write to the Office of Public Inquiries:

**Social Security Administration
Office of Public Inquiries**

1100 West High Rise
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Contact the Social Security office nearest your residence to get more information about the various Social Security programs. To locate the office nearest your residence, you can access the online Social Security Office Locator at: <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp>.

SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY INSURANCE

Eligibility for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is also based on your earnings, those of your spouse or your parents. If you have worked for a certain length of time and become visually impaired, you may be eligible for SSDI. The SSA provides several pamphlets and brochures about its programs. You may want to contact the Social Security office nearest you to request these materials. A general overview of SSDI, as well as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), can be found at: www.socialsecurity.gov/redbook/index.html.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME

Eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) authorized by Title XVI of the Social Security Act, is based on financial need. The SSI program makes cash assistance payments to aged, blind, and disabled individuals (including children under age 18) who have limited income and resources. The amount that you may receive will depend on your income and resources. You may apply in person or over the telephone. A Social Security representative will complete the application for you and mail it to you for your signature. You should inquire at the Social Security office nearest you.

Telephone numbers for Social Security offices are listed under United States Government, Department of Health and Human Services, in your telephone directory. A general overview of SSI qualifications can be found at: www.socialsecurity.gov/redbook/index.html.

SSI and SSDI programs share many similar concepts and terms, but there are also several, very important differences in the rules affecting eligibility and benefit payments. Individuals may apply to both programs and some people are eligible for benefits under both SSI and SSDI. The term “concurrent” is used when individuals are eligible for benefits under both programs. Examples of concurrent benefits can be found at: www.socialsecurity.gov/redbook/eng/supportsexample.htm.

TAX BENEFITS

People who are legally blind are eligible for a special deduction on their income taxes in addition to the standard deductions they may be entitled to. You will need a statement from your doctor affirming your visual impairment and it must be attached to your tax return. The amount of these fixed deductions depends on your filing status and the amount may vary from year to year. You may also be entitled to additional deductions based on your visual impairment. To view possible deductions, consult the Internal Revenue Service's "Tax Highlights for Persons with Disabilities" (Publication 907) at: www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p907.pdf.

FREE POSTAGE

The U.S. Postal Service allows visually impaired persons to send and receive books, recorded material, certain types of equipment and other mail free-of-charge if they are registered at the local post office. In the right top corner of the envelope, you will need to place the words "FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND OR HANDICAPPED".

You may send for a copy of the pamphlet, "Mailing Free Matter for Blind and Visually Handicapped Persons" from the Office of the Consumer Advocate. The contact information for this office is:

Consumer Advocate

United States Postal Service
Customer Service Support
475 L'Enfant Plz Sw, Rm 5621
Washington, DC 20260-2200
Customer Service: (800) ASK-USPS or (800) 275-8777

The publication may also be downloaded at the following website:

<http://about.usps.com/publications/pub347/welcome.htm>

DISABLED PARKING PLACARD

The DMV will issue a disabled parking placard to a visually impaired person. This placard is transferable from vehicle to vehicle whenever the person with sight loss is a passenger. It is usable in specially marked disabled parking spaces and will enable the driver to park free at parking meters. Permanent parking placards for permanent disabilities are valid for two years and there is a substantial penalty for misuse. There is no fee for a permanent parking placard, its replacement, or for a travel placard. Additional information about placards for disabled persons may be found at:

www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/brochures/fast_facts/ffvr07.htm.

You may obtain a copy of the "Application for Disabled Person Placard or Plates" (Form REG 195) at the following website:

www.dmv.ca.gov/forms/reg/reg195.htm.

Contact your local DMV office for information or to schedule an appointment at (800) 777-0133.

REDUCED BUS AND RAIL FARES

Most national rail and bus companies offer discount fares to persons with disabilities and their travel companions.

Almost always, proof of vision loss and a picture ID card are required. Photo ID's can be obtained from DMV.

Many local Transit Agencies offer their own reduced fare card for disabled persons. For a listing of all Transit Agencies with the local links listed by county and city, refer to the website below which is provided by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA):

www.apta.com/resources/links/unitedstates/Pages/CaliforniaTransitLinks.aspx.

DISCOUNTS AT STATE PARKS AND OTHER RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

California State Parks offer a Disabled Discount Pass. For a small fee, a lifetime pass is issued to applicants who are eligible.

The pass entitles you to a 50 percent discount on basic facility use fees including day parking, camping and boat/day parking. The pass may be used at all parks and recreation sites operated by the State of California except Hearst Castle at San Simeon. Applications may be downloaded for the California State Parks Disabled

Discount Pass Program at:

http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=27241

If you wish to receive the application by mail or have additional questions, you may contact the California State Parks Pass Sales. The contact information for this program is:

California State Parks

Attn: Disabled Discount Pass Program

P.O. Box 942896

Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

(800) 777-0369 ext. 2 or

(916) 653-8280

E-mail: passinfo@parks.ca.gov

**DISCOUNTS AT U.S. GOVERNMENT NATIONAL
PARKS AND OTHER RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

Similar to the State of California, the U.S. Government also offers a discount pass. This is known as the America the Beautiful – National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass – Access Pass. This lifetime pass, for persons with permanent disabilities, allows access to use of national parks, campgrounds and other federally operated recreational facilities either free or at reduced rates. Documentation of disability is required to obtain the pass. The Access Pass must be obtained in person at a participating Federal recreation site or office. Many local tourist attractions such as museums, amusement parks and reserves also offer discounts to persons with

disabilities. Always remember to ask if the attraction you are visiting has a special rate for persons with disabilities.

ASSISTANCE DOG SPECIAL ALLOWANCE PROGRAM

The Assistance Dog Special Allowance (ADSA) program provides a monthly payment to eligible persons who use a guide, signal or service dog to help them with needs related to their disabilities. The allowance is to help pay the cost of food, grooming and health care for the dog.

To be eligible for the ADSA program, an individual must meet all four of the following criteria:

- 1) Live in California.
- 2) Be blind, deaf, hard of hearing or disabled.
- 3) Use the services of a guide, signal or service dog.
- 4) Receive benefits from one or more of the following programs:
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
 - State Supplementary Payment (SSP)
 - In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)
 - Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) (SSDI recipients must also meet federal poverty guidelines)
 - Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI)

Should you need to obtain an application or have additional questions, the contact information for the ADSA program is:

**California Department of Social Services
Office of Services to the Blind**

744 P Street, MS 8-16-94

Sacramento, CA 95814

(916) 657-2628

(916) 653-7651 (TTY)

Website: www.dss.ca.gov/CDSSWEB/PG82.htm

E-mail: ADSASUser@dss.ca.gov