



**SOCIAL SECURITY  
& VETERANS DISABILITY**  
We Won't Take NO For An Answer®



JULY 2014

**SOCIAL SECURITY'S BENEFIT  
ELIGIBILITY SCREENING TOOL  
AND SSI INCOME UPDATE**

Applying for Social Security benefits can be a complex and confusing process--from beginning to end. The first step of course is to determine if you may be eligible for benefits and, if so, which ones. The first article in our latest newsletter includes a link to an online tool provided by Social Security that can help determine the types of benefits you may qualify for. I want to stress that this is not a way to apply for benefits, and isn't a "final" decision from Social Security. If you have questions about the online tool or the results you receive after answering the questions it asks, I encourage you to contact our office. Our team has the experience and the expertise in Social Security benefits to help you sort through the process and make sure that you apply for ALL of the benefits you may be entitled to receive.

Of course, there are plenty of questions that remain even after you apply for your benefits. One of the questions we are asked most frequently is how Social Security calculates the amount of benefits you will receive. Our second article here gives an overview of how your living arrangements can affect the amount of your SSI payments.

Again, this is just an overview. I hope you will take advantage of my invitation to contact us with any questions you may have about Social Security Disability and SSI benefits. We are always happy to help in any way we can, and we are always happy to hear from you!

Sincerely,

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**JAN DILS**  
Social Security Disability  
law blog

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## DID YOU KNOW ABOUT SOCIAL SECURITY'S BENEFIT ELIGIBILITY SCREENING TOOL (BEST)?

The Benefit Eligibility Screening Tool (BEST) is an online questionnaire that screens for eligibility for Medicare, Social Security Disability, Social Security Retirement, Social Security Survivors, Special Veterans and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.

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Request a copy of Jan Dils easy-to-understand plan on how to apply for and win your benefits

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Contact a Jan Dils Case Manager

Email Address by Last Name

A-D  
[AmberS@jandils.com](mailto:AmberS@jandils.com)

The Benefit Eligibility Screening Tool (BEST) helps you find out if you could get benefits that Social Security administers. Based on your answers to questions, this tool will list benefits you might be eligible for and give you more information about how to qualify and apply.

**BEST is NOT an application for benefits and:**

- does not know, or ask for, your name or Social Security number.
- does not access your personal Social Security records.
- will not give you an estimate of benefit amounts.

BEST will NOT screen for help with Medicare prescription drug plan costs. If you have Medicare, you might be eligible for this program.

BEST will ask if you already receive benefits. If you answer that you already get any of the benefits listed above, BEST will not screen for those same benefits again; however, it will screen for the other benefits.

**The questionnaire takes 5 to 10 minutes to complete, and will ask you for:**

- your (and your spouse's) date of birth, date of marriage(s) and earnings information.
- information about your personal finances to determine if you could be eligible for SSI or qualify for help with your Medicare premium.

If you have questions about the results you receive from the BEST tool or about benefits you may be eligible to receive, please give the Jan Dils team a call. We

[Julie@jandils.com](mailto:Julie@jandils.com)

**E-L**

[Danielle@jandils.com](mailto:Danielle@jandils.com)  
[Tricia@jandils.com](mailto:Tricia@jandils.com)

**M-R**

[Brooke@jandils.com](mailto:Brooke@jandils.com)  
[Joyce@jandils.com](mailto:Joyce@jandils.com)

**S-Z**

[KFritz@jandils.com](mailto:KFritz@jandils.com)  
[KCox@jandils.com](mailto:KCox@jandils.com)

**Team Leader:**

[Missy@jandils.com](mailto:Missy@jandils.com)

will be happy to help you through the process of applying for the Social Security benefits you deserve.

Source: <https://www.disability.gov/resource/benefit-eligibility-screening-tool-best/>



## HOW DO LIVING ARRANGEMENTS AFFECT YOUR SUPPLEMENTARY SECURITY INCOME (SSI)?

Where you live and who pays your living expenses will determine how much your SSI payment will be. If you live in someone else's house and don't pay for food or rent, your SSI payments may be reduced. If you are homeless, you can receive SSI and may be able to get subsidized housing, as well. Here are the answers to some of the most frequently asked questions to give you an idea of how your living arrangements can impact your SSI:

### **DOES WHERE I LIVE AFFECT HOW MUCH SSI I CAN GET?**

Yes, it can. If you live in your own place and pay your own food and shelter costs, regardless of whether you own or rent, you may get up to the maximum Supplemental Security Income (SSI) amount payable in your State. You also can get up to the maximum if you live in someone else's household as long as you pay your food and shelter costs. If you live in someone else's household and don't pay your food and shelter costs or pay only part of your food and shelter costs, your SSI benefit may be reduced by up to one-third of the SSI Federal benefit rate.

### **DO MY LIVING EXPENSES AFFECT MY SSI BENEFIT?**

Generally, they do not. Your SSI benefit amount depends on your income, not on your expenses.

### **WHAT IF SOMEONE ELSE HELPS PAY MY LIVING EXPENSES?**

Any food or shelter you get from someone else that you do not pay for may reduce your SSI benefit. However, Social Security does not reduce your benefit if your spouse who is living with you provides these items. Likewise, if you are a minor child, Social Security will not reduce your benefits if a parent or parents who live with you provide these items.

There is a limit on how much food and shelter Social Security may count. The limit is one-third of the maximum Federal SSI amount payable for a month, plus \$20.

Social Security does not consider items you receive that you cannot use for food or shelter as income. For example, if someone buys you a household or personal item, such as a small kitchen appliance, clothing, or a piece of jewelry of modest value, it will not reduce your SSI benefit.

**WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE IN INSTITUTIONS?**

Generally, people who live in institutions such as hospitals, nursing homes, prisons or jails are not eligible for SSI or are only eligible for a maximum of \$30 a month (some States supplement this \$30 benefit). However, there are some exceptions.

**WHAT ABOUT THE HOMELESS?**

Having a permanent residence is not a requirement for receiving SSI. If you are homeless, you may receive up to the maximum SSI amount payable in your State. In addition, if you are receiving SSI benefits, you may be able to receive subsidized housing. If you live in a public shelter, you can receive SSI benefits for up to 6 months out of any 9 months that you live there.

Source: <http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/spotlights/spot-living-arrangements.htm>

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*Jan Dils keeps you updated on Social Security disability benefits news and important issues that matter the most. We not only focus on Social Security Disability, we also provide legal assistance for Veterans Disability Benefits. We understand the claims process and specialize in making sure Veterans receive the proper representation needed for receiving benefits. For more information on our Veterans Disability services, please visit [www.fight4vets.com](http://www.fight4vets.com)*

**FIGHT4VETS.com**

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Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law, handles Social Security disability and Veterans' disability claims for clients throughout West Virginia with offices located in Parkersburg-Beckley-Charleston-Huntington-Logan-Morgantown as well as one additional office located in Charlotte, North Carolina. But regardless of where you are located we are able to serve you or a family member Nationwide.

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963 Market St  
Parkersburg, WV 26101

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Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law, L.C. | 963 Market Street | Parkersburg | WV | 26101