The Differences between SSI and SSDI

Although both Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) are administrated by the Social Security Administration, the two programs have different financial requirements.

SSI is a Means-Tested Program while SSDI is an Entitlement Program. SSI is narrowly tailored for individuals who have basic needs (food and shelter) and are elderly, blind or disabled. SSDI by contrast is an entitlement program that is available to anyone who has paid into the Social Security system for at least ten years, regardless of income or assets. A child or young adult with a disability, who has a parent that has paid into the Social Security system for 10 years, may qualify for SSDI.

In most cases, a person who receives SSI immediately qualifies for Medicaid benefits, which is a state and federally funded comprehensive health care program. On the other hand, SSDI recipients are eligible to received Medicare two years after they are deemed eligible for SSDI benefits.

Lastly, SSI and SSDI benefits vary widely when it comes to the amount of money provided. Since SSDI is based on the beneficiary's earnings over the years, SSDI recipients can receive much more than recipients of SSI. Usually the minimum payment standard for SSI is set at the federal level but most states supplement this minimum standard. In addition, SSI benefits are reduced by other income the beneficiary might receive or have (in excess of $2,000 individually and $3,000 for families) which includes some assets. So for instance, you *can* own a home or a car and not have these assets count toward the $2,000 threshold.

For current information and greater detail on both SSDI and SSI, check the SSA website.

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