Securing today and tomorrow

Entering the Community After Incarceration — How We Can Help

Social Security and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits are suspended when people are confined to jail or prison.

- For Social Security beneficiaries, benefits remain suspended until the inmate is released.
- For SSI beneficiaries, benefits are terminated when the person is incarcerated for a year or more.

People need funds to cover living expenses when they're released from prison. To help them make a successful transition back into the community, benefits need to be started as soon as possible.

How soon can benefits be started after release?

The amount of time it takes to start benefits depends on the person's situation:

- If Social Security benefits were only suspended, Social Security can usually restart them without much delay;
- If benefits were terminated, benefits can take a few months to resume; and
- If the inmate wasn't previously entitled or eligible for benefits, and is alleging a disability, or SSI benefits were terminated a new application and disability determination are required. In this situation, a decision about the

person's disability could take from three to five months.

Is there a way to expedite benefit payments?

By following a special procedure before release, we can pay benefits much sooner. We refer to this as the prerelease procedure.

How does the prerelease procedure work?

When an institution has a prerelease agreement with Social Security, we can:

- Begin processing an inmate's application up to several months before the inmate's scheduled release date;
- Make a prospective determination of potential eligibility and payment amount based on the inmate's expected circumstances after release; and
- Start paying benefits shortly after the inmate is released from the institution.

When notified by the institution, Social Security will follow this procedure if the inmate is likely to be eligible for benefits within 30 days of his or her scheduled release date.

How can institutions establish a prerelease agreement?

Either the local Social Security office or the institution may initiate a discussion about setting up a prerelease agreement.

The prerelease agreement:

- May be an informal verbal agreement; or
- May be a written agreement signed by both parties.

What are the responsibilities of each party?

Social Security's responsibilities

In a typical prerelease agreement, the Social Security office will:

- Provide guidelines about what evidence is needed;
- Provide a contact person to assist the institution and the inmate in applying the prerelease procedures;
- Process claims and reinstatements in a timely manner; and
- Notify the institution promptly when Social Security has made a decision about the inmate's eligibility for benefits.

Institution's responsibilities

The institution will agree to:

- Notify Social Security of people scheduled for release in the

near future who may be eligible for benefits;

- Provide available current medical evidence or nonmedical information for the inmate including a statement about the inmate's ability to handle funds;
- Provide Social Security with the anticipated release date; and
- Notify Social Security as soon as the inmate is released or changes that delay the release date.

What are the advantages of a prerelease agreement?

A prerelease agreement:

- Allows both parties to streamline the process for starting/restarting benefits promptly after an inmate is released; and
- Facilitates the inmate's return to the community by providing him/her with an adequate source of income.

Contacting Social Security

The most convenient way to contact us anytime, anywhere is to visit ***www.socialsecurity.gov*** where you can also take care of some business with an online *my* Social Security account.

Call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** or at **1-800-325-0778** (TTY) if you're deaf or hard of hearing. We can answer your calls from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., week days. Or use our automated services via telephone, 24 hours a day. We look forward to serving you.

Social Security Administration
Publication No. 05-10504
ICN 382004 | Unit of Issue — Package of 25
June 2018 (August 2017 edition may be used)
Entering the Community After Incarceration — How We Can Help
Produced and published at U.S. taxpayer expense

Printed on recycled paper