

FINANCIAL PROFESSIONAL TIP SHEET: SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS



The 3 Biggest Mistakes Parents of Children with Special Needs Make when Applying for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

In the case of applying for SSI for a person with a disability, understanding the system is essential if a parent is to be successful in obtaining benefits. Getting these benefits can be crucial, even for high net worth families, since actually having benefits is often the precursor to being admitted to other government programs that could help the child.

Below are just three of the many mistakes that parents might make when applying for Social Security on behalf of a child with a disability that is 18 or more years of age. As a financial advisor, you should be aware of these mistakes so that you can understand the importance of proper filing and guide clients to the right resource that will get them the benefits they deserve.

- 1 Parents disclose their own financial situation when applying for social security benefits on behalf of their adult child with a disability.**
It is important to keep in mind that, once the “child” is 18, only the assets and income of that person are relevant to the application. If a parent were to disclose their own much greater income and assets, the adult child might possibly be declined.
- 2 Deadlines for forms and other materials are not met.**
This rule is simple in concept but is difficult in practice. There are always many forms and numerous deadlines. Failure to meet required due dates may cause the application to be declined. When applying for benefits, it is important to adhere to Social Security’s schedules although they are willing to grant extensions in some circumstances.
- 3 The disabilities of the child are not properly explained, making the person appear more capable than they truly are.**
Social Security will grant benefits to qualifying individuals, but one of their responsibilities is to identify those individuals who do not merit such benefits. It is important that parents reverse their thinking and consider what their child cannot do, rather than what they can do. This is an important distinction. Social Security is trying to understand what is stopping the individual from holding a consistent job. Parents must step back and say to themselves “if this were not my child, what would be his/her limitations?” For example, can this person perform simple functions independently, such as brushing his/her teeth? The reality may be that without reminders of each step or without additional assistance, the individual may not be able to do so. But if the facts are not clearly and fairly presented, benefits may be declined.