

MANAGING EXTRA PAY AND BONUSES DURING COVID-19

SSI BENEFICIARIES

Overview

During Covid-19, many essential workers have been rewarded with a higher hourly rate of pay or one or more bonuses. While this is certainly well-intentioned, it may affect individuals with disabilities who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). If you believe your benefits may be affected, consider accessing benefits counseling to learn more about work incentives. Contact your prior work incentive benefits counselor or call the Ticket to Work Help line: 1-866-968-7842 or 1-866-833-2967 (TTY)

Important: Beneficiaries are required to report changes in earnings to Social Security. This includes both earned income (wages) and bonuses. Those who receive SSI payments must also report all forms of unearned income. Changes in monthly income should also be reported to the RI Department of Human Services and housing offices as applicable.

Will my SSI be affected if I received an increase in my hourly rate of pay?

Yes! Generally speaking, every \$2.00 of increased earnings a person is paid in a month will cause a \$1.00 reduction in the SSI payment he or she receives 2 months later. In some cases, higher rates of pay may actually cause a person's SSI payments to stop (be suspended) while the increased earnings continue.

Do I need to report a bonus to Social Security, and will it impact my cash payment?

Yes, you must report bonuses and they are also likely to cause your SSI payments to be reduced or suspended as described above. Social Security generally counts bonuses as earned income if the bonus can be attributed to the productivity of the employee.

Will my Medicaid benefits be affected because of higher earnings?

No. Medicaid benefits will continue during the Pandemic emergency period. Even if higher earnings continue after this, most SSI recipients in RI can keep Medicaid until they are earning more than \$33,557 (2020 figure).

Are there other things I should be aware of?

Additional earnings or bonuses will more than make up for any reductions in or temporary suspensions of SSI cash payments; therefore, most SSI recipients will experience some degree of financial gain. This financial gain may be offset, however, by changes in other benefits such as SNAP and FIP and individuals living in subsidized housing may be required to pay higher rents.

I haven't reported changes in my earnings; is that a problem?

Yes, if SSI recipients fail to report increased earnings or bonuses to Social Security, they may be overpaid and they may later be required to repay these funds to Social Security. Remember, the RI Department of Human Services also requires that changes in earnings be reported for SNAP, FIP, etc.

For updates or more information, visit the Social Security Administration website at <https://www.ssa.gov/coronavirus/>.



The Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities is the Rhode Island resource for benefits counseling and work incentives information. Learn more at www.sherlockcenter.org or contact Jeanne Fay at jfay@ric.edu or 401-456-4733.