

How to Qualify for Disability Benefits If You're a Non-Citizen

Did you realize that non-U.S. citizens could qualify for Social Security disability benefits?

The [Social Security Administration \(SSA\)](#) offers monthly resources for people of all ages who are unable to work due to a serious disability. While it can be challenging for non-citizens to qualify, it is possible to receive benefits to help pay for housing costs, childcare, food and utility bills, or any other daily living needs.

Qualifying for SSDI

[Social Security Disability Insurance](#), or SSDI, is offered to adults who have worked and paid US income taxes. If you're a legal resident and have earned around \$5,000 in taxable income every year, you may qualify for SSDI.

It's important to note that the older you are, the longer you'll need to have worked in the US and paid taxes to [qualify for SSDI](#). A 22 year old will only need to have worked for two years to be eligible, while a 60-year-old applicant will need at least 10 years in the US.

To be approved for SSDI you'll also need a Social Security number assigned to you on or after January 1st, 2004, OR a non-immigrant B-1, D-1, or D-2 visa.

Qualifying for SSI

There are a few more hoops to jump through in order to qualify for SSI benefits if you're a non-U.S. citizen. [SSI benefits](#) are only awarded to the most financially needy applicants, so there's a strict income limit you'll need to meet to be approved.

Any single applicant cannot have more than \$2,000 in savings or earn more than \$850 per month in 2018 and qualify. On top of financial eligibility (and being disabled, of course), you'll also need to be considered a ["qualified alien."](#)

There are seven categories of qualified aliens that may be eligible:

1. You're Lawfully Admitted for Permanent Residence (LAPR)
2. You've been granted conditional entry under Section 203(a)(7) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)
3. You've been paroled into the US under Section 212(d)(5) of the INA, and you've been in the US for at least one year
4. You're a refugee admitted to the US under Section 207 of the INA
5. You've been granted asylum under Section 208 of the INA

6. Your deportation is being withheld under Section 241(b)(3) of the INA
7. You're a "Cuban/Haitian entrant" as described in Section 501(e) of the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980.

It's important to note that a lot of legal residents will not qualify for SSI. For example, anyone admitted to the US under the provisions of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 will not be considered "qualified aliens." You'll still need a non-immigrant visa to qualify for SSI.

Starting Your Application

If you'd like to apply for either SSDI or SSI as a non-US citizen, your best option would be to call the SSA's toll free at 1-800-772-1213. A Social Security representative can answer any questions you may have regarding your eligibility. Schedule an appointment to [apply in person](#) at your local SSA office if you are looking to apply for benefits.

Resources:

- <https://www.ssa.gov>
- <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/disability/>
- <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/ssi/>
- <https://www.disability-benefits-help.org/ssdi/qualify-for-ssdi>
- <https://secure.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lnx/0500502100>
- <https://www.disability-benefits-help.org/social-security-disability-locations>