

# SSI Appeals: A General Overview

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a cash benefit program for individuals and families with low income and qualifying disabilities. Both children and adults may be eligible for this program if they meet income and resources eligibility requirements and have a qualifying disability that significantly impairs their functioning.

This brief describes the basic process of determining eligibility for the SSI program and appealing if an application is denied. Please see our longer fact sheet for additional context on the SSI program and appeals process, as well as a selection of policy options for expanding access to SSI for children with disabilities.

## How Does the SSI Application and Appeals Process Work?

When an individual applies for SSI, they must first demonstrate their income and resources eligibility. After the initial financial assessment, their application is sent to a Disability Determination Service (DDS) office, a federally funded state agency responsible for initially determining whether an applicant meets disability standards for SSI.<sup>1</sup> DDS analysts review an applicant's medical and educational records to assess the severity of the applicant's disabilities and how they impact an applicant's ability to function.

If an application is denied based on either financial or disability eligibility,<sup>2</sup> the applicant has a right to appeal. The application and appeals timeline is illustrated in the graphic at right.



If denied by the ALJ at the hearing, there are two more levels of appeals: Appeals Council and District Court Appeals. These are outside of the scope of this fact sheet.

<sup>1</sup> Disability. Social Security Administration. Accessed on September 16, 2022. [www.ssa.gov/disability/determination.htm](http://www.ssa.gov/disability/determination.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Understanding Supplemental Security Income SSI for Children – 2022 Edition. Social Security Administration. Accessed on September 16, 2022. [www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-child-ussi.htm](http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-child-ussi.htm).