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IN BRIEF | CHILDREN'S SSI DISABILITY AND CHILDREN AGES 0-3

Children may qualify for SSI childhood disability benefits if they meet household income and resources rules; are United States citizens or otherwise eligible noncitizens, and satisfy the SSI childhood disability standard.

There are two pathways for a child age 0-3 to show disability.

First, the child must meet the criteria for a medical condition that is listed in Social Security's Listing of Impairments. The Listing of Impairments describes, for each of the major body systems, medical conditions that are considered severe enough to cause marked and severe functional limitations—the statutory standard for SSI childhood disability.

The Listings are set forth here: <http://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/ChildhoodListings.htm>.

An alphabetical guide to different medical conditions contained in the Listing of Impairments is set forth here: <http://bit.ly/kidsSSI>

Second, if a child does not satisfy the medical criteria in the Listing of Impairments, he or she can be found disabled if the child has functional limitations that meet the SSI functional equivalence standard. Under functional equivalence, SSA considers how a child is functioning in six domains:

- Acquiring and using information (for more information, see http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OP_Home/rulings/ssi/02/SSR2009-03-ssi-02.html);
- Attending and completing tasks (for more information, see http://ssa.gov/OP_Home/rulings/ssi/02/SSR2009-04-ssi-02.html);
- Interacting and relating with others (for more information, see http://ssa.gov/OP_Home/rulings/ssi/02/SSR2009-05-ssi-02.html);
- Moving about and manipulating objects (for more information, see http://ssa.gov/OP_Home/rulings/ssi/02/SSR2009-06-ssi-02.html);
- Caring for yourself (for more information, see http://ssa.gov/OP_Home/rulings/ssi/02/SSR2009-07-ssi-02.html); and
- Health and physical well-being (for more information, see http://ssa.gov/OP_Home/rulings/ssi/02/SSR2009-08-ssi-02.html).

Children age 0-3 who receive Early Intervention (EI) therapy services often may qualify for SSI childhood disability based on their EI assessments. The controlling federal regulation -- 34 CFR §303.16 -- provides that infants and toddlers with disabilities (from birth to attainment of age three) can qualify for EI services if they:

- (1) Are experiencing developmental delays, as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures, in one or more of the following areas:
 - (i) Cognitive development.
 - (ii) Physical development, including vision and hearing.
 - (iii) Communication development.
 - (iv) Social or emotional development.
 - (v) Adaptive development; or
- (2) Have a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay.

The following chart shows the relationship between SSA’s domains and those defined in IDEA for infants and toddlers. Since eligibility for Early Intervention services is based on functioning in these five domains, EI reports and IFSPs use these domains to list and summarize developmental information. By looking at this chart, you can compare the information in EI records (including IFSPs) to the SSA domains.

Comparison Between Early Intervention Domains and SSA Domains

	SSA Domains					
	Acquiring & Using Information	Attending & Completing Tasks	Interacting & Relating With Others	Moving About & Manipulating Objects	Caring For Yourself	Health & Physical Well-being
Early Intervention Domains	Cognitive Communication	Cognitive Social-emotional	Social-emotional	Physical (fine and gross motor)	Adaptive (self-help) Communication	Physical

To functionally equal the listings, SSA provides that an impairment or combination of impairments must result in “marked” limitations in two domains of functioning or an “extreme” limitation in one domain. For children age 0-3:

- “Marked” means, for children up to age three, functioning at a level that is more than one-half but not more than two-thirds of the child’s chronological age; or a limitation that is the equivalent of the functioning expected when standardized test scores are at least two, but less than three, standard deviations below the mean; and
- “Extreme” means, for children up to age three, functioning at a level that one-half or less of the child’s chronological age; or ; or a limitation that is the equivalent of the functioning expected when standardized test scores are three or more standard deviations below the mean.

For children’s born prematurely, Social Security will adjust a child’s chronological age to account for prematurity up to age two.

In addition, Social Security has defined some conditions as functionally equivalent. Among those are the following:

- (1) Documented need for major organ transplant (e.g., liver).
- (2) Any condition that is disabling at the time of onset, requiring continuing surgical management within 12 months after onset as a life-saving measure or for salvage or restoration of function, and such major function is not restored or is not expected to be restored within 12 months after onset of this condition.
- (3) Effective ambulation possible only with obligatory bilateral upper limb assistance.
- (4) Any physical impairment(s) or combination of physical and mental impairments causing complete inability to function independently outside the area of one's home within age-appropriate norms.
- (5) Requirement for 24-hour-a-day supervision for medical (including psychological) reasons.
- (6) Infants weighing less than 1200 grams at birth, until attainment of 1 year of age.
- (7) Infants weighing at least 1200 but less than 2000 grams at birth, and who are small for gestational age, until attainment of 1 year of age. (*Small for gestational age* means a birth weight that is at or more than 2 standard deviations below the mean or that is below the 3rd growth percentile for the gestational age of the infant.)
- (8) Major congenital organ dysfunction which could be expected to result in death within the first year of life without surgical correction, and the impairment is expected to be disabling (because of residual impairment following surgery, or the recovery time required, or both) until attainment of 1 year of age.