

Blind Work Expenses (BWE)

Fact Sheet 2021

What are BWEs?

A Blind Work Expense (BWE) is an SSI work incentive available to working individuals who receive SSI due to statutory blindness. Specifically, BWEs are out-of-pocket expenses that individuals incur to be able to work successfully. Unlike other SSI work incentives, BWEs do not have to be related to an individual's statutory blindness.

How can BWEs help you?

Social Security will not count any work income that you have used to pay for BWEs when they determine your new monthly SSI payment. This results in you receiving a higher SSI payment than you otherwise would receive.

What are some examples of BWEs?

- Guide dog related expenses i.e. food, veterinary services, etc.
- Public or alternative transportation costs to and from work e.g. taxi services, Uber, etc.
- Mileage usage of, or vehicle modifications to, an individual's car
- Professional association dues, unions dues, licenses, and/or mandatory pension contributions
- Federal, state, and local income taxes, as well as Social Security taxes
- Visual/sensory aids or Braille translations
- Meals consumed during work hours

How do BWEs work?

When Social Security calculates your new SSI payment due to work earnings, they will apply income exclusions, including a \$20 General Income Exclusion and a \$65 Earned Income Exclusion. After applying these exclusions, they will count half of your remaining earned income to the SSI monthly calculation, unless you have any approved BWEs. If so, then these BWEs are deducted from that portion of your earned income, which will effectively reduce the overall impact on your SSI cash benefits.

Note: You must keep track and report BWEs to Social Security when you report your earnings each month. If a specific BWE expense occurs monthly, you should report and verify this with your local Social Security office every 12 months.

A Blind Work Expense is a work incentive for individuals receiving SSI cash benefits due to statutory

For more information about **Work Without Limits Benefits Counseling** contact

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