

Unsuccessful Work Attempt

Fact Sheet 2024

What does Social Security consider when working and receiving SSDI?

When a Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiary works and has completed their Trial Work Period (TWP), Social Security will compare their gross monthly earnings (before taxes) and work pattern, referred to as Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA), to a monthly threshold. In 2024, that threshold amount is \$1,550 or \$2,590 if statutorily blind. The SGA threshold usually changes annually. Generally, if gross monthly earnings are at or above the SGA threshold, the SSDI beneficiary *will not* be entitled to their SSDI cash benefits. However, if gross monthly earnings are *below* the SGA threshold, the beneficiary *will be* entitled to their SSDI cash benefits.

What is Unsuccessful Work Attempt?

Unsuccessful Work Attempt (UWA) is an SSDI work incentive Social Security can use when determining if an SSDI beneficiary is performing SGA. UWA can be considered when the beneficiary is:

- Earning at or above the SGA threshold, and
- Not able to earn this amount for more than 6 months, due to
 - their disabling condition, or
 - removal of a special condition (e.g., job coach, extra supervision).

How can UWA help?

If the SSDI beneficiary's gross monthly earnings are at or above the SGA threshold, but then within 6 months their earnings fall below *due to their disability* (whether stopped working or hours reduced), Social Security can declare this job a UWA. When this happens, Social Security will *not* count any income from that job. It is like the job never happened! In other words, a UWA can delay the case from closing and the SSDI beneficiary will likely receive retroactive cash benefits for months

payments weren't received within the established UWA timeframe.

When can UWA be declared?

UWA can only be declared after the TWP has ended.

Note: UWA cannot be used once the three-month grace period has occurred.

Can UWA be used more than once?

Yes. If the job lasted fewer than 6 months and ended due to the SSDI beneficiary's disabling condition.

Can a UWA be requested?

Yes, if Social Security decides that the SSDI cash benefits are ending due to earning at or above the SGA threshold. The decision can be appealed and the SSDI beneficiary can request that their job be re-evaluated and declared UWA. Remember, this job must have lasted no more than 6 months and stopped due to the disabling condition. Social Security will require proof that the job ended, or earnings were reduced below the SGA threshold, due to the disabling condition. Social Security will also contact the employer for confirmation.

Note: If the job lasted three months or less, Social Security may not need proof that work stopped due to the disability.

For more information about

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1-877-YES-WORK
(1-877-937-9675)

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