



Securing today
and tomorrow

Re-entering the Community After Incarceration— How We Can Help

[SSA.gov](https://www.ssa.gov)



We suspend Social Security disability and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits when people are confined to jail or prison for one month or more.

- For Social Security beneficiaries, benefits remain suspended until the inmate is released.
- For SSI recipients, payments stop when the person is imprisoned for a month and terminate when incarcerated for a year or more.

People need funds to cover living expenses when they're released from prison. To help them make a successful transition back into the community, benefits need to restart as soon as possible.

How soon can benefits restart after release?

The amount of time it takes to restart benefits depends on the person's situation:

- If the inmate's Social Security benefits were only suspended, we can usually restart them without much delay.
- If payments were terminated, payments can take a few months to resume.
- If the inmate wasn't previously entitled or eligible for benefits, and is alleging a disability, or SSI payments were terminated, they must file a new application and we'll make a new disability determination. In this situation, a decision about the

person's disability could take between three and five months.

Is there a way to expedite benefit payments?

By following a special procedure before release, we may be able to pay benefits much sooner. We refer to this as the prerelease procedure.

How does the prerelease procedure work?

When an institution has a prerelease agreement with Social Security, we can:

- Begin processing an inmate's application up to several months before the inmate's scheduled release date.
- Make a prospective determination of potential eligibility and payment amount based on the inmate's expected circumstances after release.
- Start paying benefits shortly after the inmate is released from the institution.

When notified by the institution, we'll follow this procedure if the inmate is likely to be eligible for benefits within 30 days of his or her scheduled release date.

How can institutions establish a prerelease agreement?

Either our local Social Security office or the institution may initiate a discussion about setting up a prerelease agreement.

The prerelease agreement:

- May be an informal verbal agreement.
- May be a written agreement signed by both parties.

Go to [**www.ssa.gov/locator**](http://www.ssa.gov/locator) to find the local Social Security's address, phone number, and fax number.

What are the responsibilities of each party?

Social Security's responsibilities

In a typical prerelease agreement, our local Social Security office will:

- Provide guidelines about what evidence is needed.
- Provide a contact person to assist the institution and the inmate in initiating the prerelease procedures.
- Process claims and reinstatements in a timely manner.
- Notify the institution promptly when we make a decision about the inmate's eligibility for benefits.

Institution's responsibilities

The institution will agree to:

- Notify us of people scheduled for release in the near future who may be eligible for benefits.
- Provide available current medical evidence or nonmedical information for the inmate including a statement about the inmate's ability to handle funds.
- Provide us with the anticipated release date.
- Notify us as soon as the inmate is released or if there are changes that delay the release date.

What are the advantages of a prerelease agreement?

A prerelease agreement:

- Allows both parties to streamline the process for starting or restarting benefits promptly after an inmate is released.
- Facilitates the inmate's return to the community by providing him or her with an adequate source of income.

Contacting Social Security

The most convenient way to do business with us from anywhere, on any device, is to visit **www.ssa.gov**. There are several things you can do online: apply for benefits; get useful information; find publications; and get answers to frequently asked questions.

Or, you can call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** or at **1-800-325-0778** (TTY) if you're deaf or hard of hearing. We can answer your call from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., weekdays. You can also use our automated services via telephone, 24 hours a day. We look forward to serving you.

Social Security Administration

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