SSI, SSD and Employment: What You Need to Know

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PART ONE

The Importance of and Barriers to Employment

Entering, remaining in, or returning to the workforce is an important goal for many people experiencing mental illness. In addition to the financial benefits of earning employment income, there are many other benefits to working. For many people, employment is a vital part of the recovery process.

Unfortunately, as they seek to join the workforce, some people find themselves confronted by a variety of barriers. One serious barrier is a fear of losing their employment.

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For many people, employment is a critical component of earning employment income. The Social Security Administration (SSA) provides several benefits based on employment income. Individuals who earn significant earnings may qualify for Social Security benefits, including Disability Insurance (DI) and Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI). These benefits are based on the individual's earnings history.

The SSA uses a complex formula to determine eligibility for Social Security benefits. The formula takes into account the individual's wage base, which is the portion of annual earnings subject to Social Security taxes. The maximum taxable earnings for each year are set by SSA. For example, in 2023, the taxable wage base is $141,400.

To qualify for retirement benefits, an individual must have earned at least $421,200 in 2023. This amount is adjusted annually for inflation. The SSA also considers the individual's age and the duration of employment when determining benefits.

In addition to retirement benefits, the SSA offers disability benefits to individuals who become disabled before age 65. Disability benefits are available to individuals who have worked and paid Social Security taxes for a sufficient period and meet specific medical criteria.

The SSA also provides survivor benefits to the dependent children and survivors of deceased Social Security beneficiaries. Survivor benefits are available to individuals who were married to the deceased beneficiary for at least 9 months and meet certain eligibility requirements.

To receive Social Security benefits, individuals must apply through the SSA. Applications can be filed online, by phone, or in person at a local SSA office. Individuals who are eligible for benefits will receive a benefit check each month.

The SSA uses a computer program to determine eligibility for benefits. The program considers the individual's earnings, age, and employment history to determine the appropriate benefit amount.

Understanding Social Security benefits requires knowledge of the SSA's complex eligibility and benefit calculation processes. Individuals who are unsure of their eligibility or benefit amounts should contact the SSA for assistance.