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In its effort to improve and expedite the disability determination process, the Social Security Administration (SSA) has announced that it will add early-onset Alzheimer's disease to its Compassionate Allowances Initiative.

The initiative identifies debilitating diseases and medical conditions that meet the SSA's disability standards for Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Inclusion in the initiative allows for faster payment of Social Security benefits to individuals with Alzheimer's disease.

The Alzheimer's Association applauds Social Security commissioner Michael Astrue and the SSA for understanding that the cognitive impairment caused by Alzheimer's disease leaves individuals unable to maintain gainful employment and deserving of an expedited disability determination.

Since 2003, the Association has been advocating on behalf of individuals with early-onset Alzheimer's as they navigate the Social Security disability determinations process, and we welcome the SSA's decision. Until now, individuals with early-onset Alzheimer's disease have faced myriad challenges when applying for SSDI or SSI, including a long decision process, initial denials and multiple appeals. Today's decision will simplify and streamline the SSDI/SSI application process and decrease the wait time for benefits, which for some has lasted as long as three years.

Click here to send a thank note to Commissioner Astrue of the Social Security Administration: <http://alz.kintera.org/ssa>

Follow this link for more information about the Compassionate Allowances Initiative and Social Security Disability:

http://www.alz.org/living_with_alzheimers_social_security_disability.asp?type=homepage

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More than 5.3 million Americans are now living with Alzheimer's disease. Someone new is added to those ranks every 70 seconds. Become an Alzheimer's Champion in the fight against Alzheimer's. OPEN your mind and learn the facts. VOICE your support. Help spread the word about this disease. MOVE the cause forward. Donate. Advocate. Volunteer. Visit www.alz.org/maryland



Re: Social Security Disability Decision to Add Early-Onset (Younger-Onset) Alzheimer's Disease to Compassionate Allowance List of Conditions

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has decided to add early-onset (younger-onset) Alzheimer's disease to the list of conditions under its Compassionate Allowance Initiative. Below please find some questions and answers that help explain the importance and details of this decision.

What is the Compassionate Allowance Initiative?

Under this initiative, SSA will find individuals with certain diseases/conditions eligible for Social Security disability (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits by the nature of the disease. While applicants would still have to meet other SSDI criteria and/or SSI criteria, when it comes to the disability criterion, they would be considered eligible by virtue of the disease and fast-tracked for a favorable decision about their eligibility for SSDI and SSI benefits.

What is Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)?

Social Security disability benefits (SSDI) are paid to individuals who have worked for enough years and who have a condition that is so severe that they are not able to work. Administered by the SSA, SSDI makes monthly payments to eligible disabled individuals and is a significant benefit for individuals with early-onset (younger-onset) Alzheimer's disease. In addition to the monthly payment, it is the entry to Medicare benefits for the under 65 population. Family members (for example, spouses and minor children) may also be eligible for benefits on the applicant's work record.

What is Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?

Supplemental Security Income benefits (SSI) are paid each month to individuals who are aged, blind or **disabled** and have limited income and resources (assets). The "disability" criteria for SSI are the same as for SSDI benefits. Unlike SSDI, eligibility for SSI is not based on prior work experience. In addition, in most states, individuals who receive SSI are also automatically eligible for Medicaid (medical assistance) benefits.

Who does this Compassionate Allowance affect?

It only affects individuals with early-onset (younger-onset) Alzheimer's disease and related dementias; generally, **those individuals who are diagnosed under 65 years old**. It does not affect individuals who are currently receiving full Social Security retirement benefits.

Why is this important to individuals with early-onset (young-onset) Alzheimer's disease and related dementias?

Social Security disability benefits are very important to individuals with early-onset (younger-onset) Alzheimer's and related dementias who are often initially denied benefits but usually win on appeal. By adding Alzheimer's disease to the list of "Compassionate Allowance" conditions, it will simplify and streamline the SSDI/SSI application process and should result in them receiving SSDI/SSI benefits faster.

When applying for SSDI and/or SSI, the applicant will have to submit to SSA objective medical records that confirm that the applicant has been diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease.

When is the effective date of the change? What if someone applied for SSDI or SSI benefits before Alzheimer's disease was added to the Compassionate Allowance list of conditions?

The effective date of the addition of early-onset Alzheimer's disease to the Compassionate Allowance list is February 27, 2010. The Compassionate Allowance fast-tracking process should be used for all Alzheimer's disease cases at the initial application or at the reconsideration, hearing or Appeals Council levels.

Is there a difference between early-onset and younger-onset Alzheimer's disease?

No, there is not a difference and the terms are used interchangeably.

Are there any "related dementias" currently on the Compassionate Allowance list?

Yes. In addition to early-onset (younger -onset) Alzheimer's disease, there are four "related dementias" on the Compassionate Allowance List. They are: frontotemporal dementia (FTD) – Pick's disease, Creutzfeldt - Jakob disease, mixed-dementia and primary progressive aphasia. Again, this initiative only applies to individuals who are not receiving full Social Security retirement benefits and have these specific "related dementias."

How do I apply for SSDI or SSI?

To apply for SSDI or SSI benefits, you will need to submit an application and other documents at your local SSA office. The Alzheimer's Association has prepared a checklist to assist individuals with the application process. See *Checklist for Applying for Social Security Disability and Supplemental Security Income Benefits due to Early-Onset (Younger-Onset) Alzheimer's Disease*. In addition, SSA has a wealth of information on its disability programs at www.socialsecurity.gov including a special section on disability planner at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/dibplan/>

Should I apply for SSDI if I am receiving early retirement benefits from Social Security?

Yes, if you are receiving early retirement benefits, you should apply for SSDI because your benefits should increase and you may become eligible for Medicare before you turn 65.

More information about the Compassionate Allowances Initiative can be found at <http://www.ssa.gov/compassionateallowances/>



Checklist for Applying for Social Security Disability and Supplemental Security Income Benefits due to Early-Onset (Younger-Onset) Alzheimer's Disease

(Effective February 27, 2010)

Both programs provide for monthly benefit checks and are administered by the Social Security Administration.

- **Social Security Disability Programs (SSDI)** - An applicant must have sufficient work credit, be unable to work and meet the disability criterion for early-onset (younger-onset) Alzheimer's disease. Family members (for example, a spouse or minor child) may also be eligible to receive benefits under these programs based on the applicant's work record.
- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** – An applicant must be aged, blind or **disabled** and have limited income and assets.
- While the programs are different, SSA uses the same criterion for determining whether an applicant is disabled due to early-onset (younger-onset) Alzheimer's disease.

How to Apply –

- In person at your local SSA office. **(Strongly Recommended)** Applicants should call 1-800-772-1213 to schedule an appointment. Do not walk-in for service without an appointment.
- By telephone by calling SSA's toll-free telephone number 1-800-772-1213. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you can call SSA at TTY 1-800-325-0778.
- Online at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/applyfordisability/adult.htm>

Important Tips When Applying -

- Do not delay applying for SSDI benefits. You should apply for benefits if you have early-onset (younger-onset) Alzheimer's disease and are unable to work. You may lose substantial benefits by waiting to apply.
- When asked by the SSA claims representative what the disabling condition is, specify "early-onset Alzheimer's disease," not just Alzheimer's disease.
- Many applicants receive help with the application process from their families, close friends or professionals.

Information Needed - In order to apply for SSDI or SSI benefits, the following information needs to be obtained and documents completed, either in person or online:

Revised February 2, 2010

- Application for SSDI benefit (attach link to SSA)
 - There is no online SSI application at this time
- Medical Release Form (SSA-827) (attach link to SSA)
- Adult disability report (attach link to SSA or document)
- Medical and Job Worksheet – optional but very helpful for interview (attach link to SSA or document)
- Original or certified copy of your birth certificate
 - If born in another country, proof of age, and U.S. citizenship or legal residency
- Original or certified copy of military discharge papers, if you were in the military
- If you worked, a copy of the W-2 from last year or if self-employed, a copy of the federal tax return with Schedules C and SE
- Workers' compensation information, if applicable
- Social Security numbers for spouse and minor children, if applicable
- Your checking and/or savings account numbers, if you have them
- Name, address and phone number of a person SSA can contact if unable to reach you

Medical Information Needed - to prove that you have been diagnosed with early-onset (younger-onset) Alzheimer's disease:

- You will need the name, address and telephone number of your health care providers, including primary physician, neurologist, neuropsychologist and/or psychiatrist.
- You will need the name and dosage information for all the medications that you are taking or have taken, especially for the early-onset Alzheimer's disease.
- If you can, you should collect medical records from your health care providers, including primary physician, neurologist, neuropsychologist and/or psychiatrist. It is very helpful and important for the health records to show that there is progressive decline in function or test scores over time.
 - If you do not have the medical records, SSA will help obtain them for you but this may delay the determination process.
- Pertinent clinical information which should be included in the medical records, if available, includes: history of onset (approximate time when symptoms began); description of cognitive and functional impairments at home and at work; results from neurological, cognitive or neuropsychological examinations; and results from neuroimaging.
- Activities of daily living report or similar report completed by a relative or caregiver
- Documentation of dementia by standardized testing, such as Clinical Dementia Rating (CDR) with a score of ≥ 1 , Mini Mental State Exam (MMSE) of ≤ 24 , or equivalent test, is helpful.

After You Apply –

The Social Security office will assist you in filing the application for benefits, but the actual medical decision is made by a disability case examiner in your state, usually working for an agency called the "Disability Determination Service" or "Disability Determination Bureau." If

you receive written correspondence or a phone call from a disability examiner, that person is working on your claim and requires your cooperation.

Helpful Resources

The Alzheimer's Association www.alz.org

The SSA has a wealth of information on its webpage at www.socialsecurity.gov

Specifically, there is a Social Security Disability Planner at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/dibplan/index.htm>