
NONFINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY FACTORS

BLINDNESS AND DISABILITY

A. BACKGROUND

Under the provisions of sections 1902(a)(10) and 1905(a) of the Social Security Act, individuals who meet certain income and resource requirements and other general eligibility requirements and who are disabled, as defined under the Social Security Act, are eligible for Medicaid. The law requires that the SSI definition of disability set forth in section 1614 of the Social Security Act must be satisfied, at a minimum, in order for an individual to be eligible for Medicaid based upon disability.

**B. DEFINITION OF
DISABILITY
(20 CFR 416.905)**

The law defines disability as the inability to do any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months. This means an individual unable to do his/her previous work or any other substantial gainful activity which exists in the national economy. In making this determination, an individual's residual functional capacity, age, education and work experience are considered.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-193) changed the definition of childhood disability to specify:

1. An individual under the age of 18 shall be considered to be disabled under SSI if that child has a medically determinable physical or mental disability, which results in marked and severe functional limitation, and which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months, and
2. No individual under the age of 18 who engages in substantial gainful activity may be considered disabled.

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In addition to the new definition of disability for children, the law mandates two changes to current evaluation criteria in SSA/SSI regulations:

1. The discontinuation of individualized functional assessment (IFA) for children, and
2. The elimination of maladaptive behavior in the domain of personal/behavioral function in determining whether a child is disabled.

The new definition applies to all applications filed on or after August 22, 1996 (and to applicants whose claims were not finally adjudicated as of that date) and to all redeterminations of childhood disability.

**C. DEFINITION OF
BLINDNESS**

Statutory blindness is central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the use of a correcting lens. An eye which has a limitation in the field of vision so that the widest diameter of the visual field subtends an angle no greater than 20 degrees is considered to have a central visual acuity of 20/200 or less.

An individual's ability to work will not affect eligibility based on blindness.

Note: Blindness alone precludes eligibility under the Poverty Level Aged and Disabled coverage group. An individual must be determined "disabled," as described above, in order to qualify for coverage under the poverty level group. (Blindness does not meet the medical criteria for disability under the PLAD coverage group.)