

How to Guide: Social Security Work Incentive Programs

Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE)

How to Apply

Individuals receiving SSI or SSDI can apply for the Impairment-Related Work Expense (IRWE) program through their local Social Security Office. Applicants should bring proof of disability, receipts for expenses, and documentation that the items or services were necessary for work. Applications can be submitted in person or by calling 1-800-772-1213 for guidance. A directory of Kansas Social Security Offices is available at https://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/RS/Pages/SS_Offices.aspx.

Information Needed

To apply for or report IRWEs, you will need:

- Your Social Security number and proof of disability.
- Documentation of work-related expenses (receipts, invoices, etc.).
- Proof that expenses were paid by you (not reimbursed by insurance).
- A statement showing how the expense is related to your ability to work.
- Proof of employment and income for the months in which expenses occurred.

Helpful Tips

- Expenses must be directly related to your disability and necessary for work.
- Examples include assistive devices, mobility aids, home or vehicle modifications, or attendant care.
- You can deduct these expenses from earnings to remain eligible for SSI or SSDI.
- Keep all receipts, prescriptions, and verification from doctors or employers.
- IRWEs can reduce countable income, helping you maintain benefits while working.

Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS)

How to Apply

The PASS program allows individuals with disabilities to set aside income or resources to reach a specific employment goal while keeping SSI eligibility. Applications must be completed on Form SSA-545 (<https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-545.html>) and submitted to

your local Social Security Office. Each PASS plan is reviewed and approved by a PASS Cadre (specialist).

Information Needed

When applying for a PASS, include:

- Your Social Security number and proof of disability.
- A written plan describing your work goal and how it will lead to self-support.
- A detailed breakdown of income and resources to be set aside.
- Specific timelines and steps for reaching your goal.
- Cost estimates for items or services needed (education, tools, transportation, assistive technology, etc.).
- Proof that funds will be kept separate from other money.

Helpful Tips

- Work with a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, Independent Living specialist, or WIPA representative when creating your plan.
- A PASS can fund assistive technology, business startup costs, tuition, or home modifications related to employment.
- Funds must be used for new work-related expenses tied to your goal.
- Keep receipts and progress reports—your PASS will be reviewed regularly.
- Expensive items like vehicles may only be covered for down payments, not installment payments.
- Additional resources: SSA PASS Overview (ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass.htm) and Kansas SSA Offices (dcf.ks.gov/services/RS/Pages/SS_Offices.aspx).

Blind Work Expenses (BWE)

How to Apply

Blind individuals receiving SSI can report Blind Work Expenses to their local Social Security Office or online at <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/ssi/>. You can also apply or update your records by calling 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778). Provide receipts for work-related expenses and proof of blindness as defined by the SSA.

Information Needed

To report BWE, you will need:

- Proof of blindness or visual impairment meeting SSA's definition.
- Proof of current SSI benefits.

- Documentation of work-related expenses such as receipts, invoices, or mileage logs.
- Proof of employment and income.
- A description of how each expense relates to your work activities.

Helpful Tips

- BWE allows individuals who are blind and working to deduct work-related expenses from income when calculating SSI benefits.
- Allowable expenses include assistive technology, guide dog costs, transportation, meals during work, and taxes.
- Keep detailed records of expenses and payments to ensure they qualify.
- SSA's Blind Work Expenses Fact Sheet provides examples and updates:
<https://choosework.ssa.gov/library/fact-sheet-work-incentives-for-people-who-are-blind>.