

SSI for Children — Application Document Checklist (California)

Everything to gather before you call SSA or walk into a field office.

SSI for a child is awarded based on financial need and proof of a qualifying disability. Gathering these documents before you call the SSA can cut weeks off your decision timeline. Tip: scan everything into one folder so you can email or fax quickly when SSA requests documents.

Your Child's Documents

- Original birth certificate (or certified copy)
- Child's Social Security card (or SSN printout)
- Proof of U.S. citizenship, lawful permanent residency, or qualifying immigration status
- Most recent school records, report cards, and attendance records
- IEP, IFSP, or 504 Plan (if applicable)
- Any hospital discharge paperwork from the last 12 months

Medical Documents (the Heart of the Application)

SSA evaluates childhood SSI using the 'functional equivalence' standard across six domains. Documentation wins cases.

- Complete diagnostic report from the diagnosing physician (with ICD-10 codes and date of diagnosis)
- Pediatrician summary letter describing functional impact on daily activities
- Reports from every specialist seen (neurology, developmental pediatrics, genetics, cardiology, etc.)
- Psychological or psychoeducational evaluation (if applicable)
- Occupational therapy (OT) evaluation and recent progress notes
- Speech-language pathology evaluation and progress notes
- Physical therapy (PT) evaluation and progress notes
- ABA assessment and progress reports (if applicable)
- Current medication list with dosages, prescriber, and dates started
- Names, addresses, and phone numbers of all treating providers (past 12 months minimum)
- Hospital records for any inpatient stays in the last 2 years

Parent & Household Documents

- Government-issued photo ID for each parent/guardian
- Social Security numbers for everyone in the household
- Marriage certificate (if married)
- Divorce decree, custody order, or legal separation paperwork (if applicable)
- Documentation of any other adult living in the home and their relationship to the child

Financial Documents

SSI is means-tested. Every working adult in the household counts toward parental 'deeming' until the child turns 18.

- Pay stubs for the last 2 months for every working adult in the household
- Most recent federal tax return (all pages and schedules)
- Bank statements for the last 3 months — every checking, savings, and money-market account
- Retirement account statements (401k, IRA)
- Current rent receipt or mortgage statement
- Current utility bills (gas, electric, water)
- Child support received or paid (court order + proof of payment)
- Title/registration for every vehicle owned by the household
- Proof of ownership of any other real estate
- Life insurance policies with cash value
- Documentation of any gifts, inheritances, or lawsuit settlements received in the last 12 months

Living Arrangement Evidence

- Lease or rental agreement showing who lives at the address
- If you share housing: a written statement explaining the arrangement and how food/rent are shared
- If the child lives in two households: custody schedule showing nights per month at each home

During the Application Call — Questions SSA Will Ask

Be prepared to answer on the phone. Have your binder open.

- Exact date your child's disability began
- All doctors, clinics, and hospitals seen in the past 12 months
- Whether your child has ever received SSI, SSDI, or Medicaid in another state
- Every job held by every adult in the household in the last 12 months
- Total value of all bank accounts today
- Whether anyone else provides financial support to the child

If asked about your income: answer honestly, state gross (pre-tax) numbers, and do not guess. If you are self-employed, use your most recent tax return's Schedule C. It is fine to say 'I will follow up with exact numbers by email.'

After Filing — What to Expect

- You will receive a written receipt and a claim number — keep these at the front of your binder.
- Medical review is usually done by the California DDS (Disability Determination Services) — expect 3-5 months.
- SSA uses 'Functional Equivalence' across 6 domains: acquiring information, attending and completing tasks, interacting with others, moving about and manipulating objects, caring for self, and health and physical well-being.

- You may be asked to attend a consultative exam (CE) — free, paid by SSA. Attendance is usually mandatory.
- First Continuing Disability Review (CDR) is typically scheduled 3 years after approval for children.
- Track status online at ssa.gov/myaccount or by calling your local SSA field office.
- If denied, you have 60 days to file a Request for Reconsideration. Many initial denials are overturned at the appeal stage.

Where to Apply

You can start the process in any of these three ways:

Method	Details
Phone	1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778) — 8am to 7pm, Mon-Fri
In person	Visit ssa.gov/locator to find your local office. Appointments strongly recommended.
Online	Start the Child Disability Report at ssa.gov/applyfordisability — the final SSI application is still completed by phone or in person.