



## **COVID-19 and SOCIAL SECURITY**

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**NOTE:** The Frequently Asked Questions below were written to help answer questions we have heard because of the COVID-19 emergency. It is important to have reliable information when dealing with a public health emergency. However, the situation is changing very rapidly and the information below may not be up-to-date. Under normal circumstances, many of the answers may be different. The information that follows is based on Illinois and US laws, regulations, and emergency orders. This information is intended only to be an overview of your rights. Since every case is different, you should not rely on this information as a substitute for an attorney.

#### **Is the Social Security office open to the public?**

No, but staff are available by phone and are working. Social Security is asking people to go to their website at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) to see if your question can be answered online. If not, you can call 1-800-772-1213 but the wait times are longer than usual.

#### **Do I still have to report changes (i.e. address, household changes, income)?**

Yes. You can call 1-800-772-1213 to report changes. You might have a long wait. If you have moved, you want to make sure Social Security knows your new address. Social Security is being flexible about deadlines.

#### **Will I still get my benefits?**

Yes. If you get your benefits by direct deposit, you will still get them. If you get a paper check, you should still get your check but you may have to check with the U.S. Post Office regarding any changes in their delivery of mail. If you want to sign up for direct deposit, you can do that at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov).

#### **I have a disability hearing scheduled in May 2020. Will it still take place?**

Right now, Social Security is only doing telephone hearings. If you agree to a telephone hearing, your hearing will still go on. If you do not want to have the hearing over the phone, you can ask to have the hearing postponed until it is safe to schedule in-person or video hearings again. That is not expected to occur until September 2020.

#### **I need to apply for disability. What should I do?**

You can apply for Social Security disability benefits online at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov), by calling 1-800-772-1213, or by calling your local Social Security office. Do not go to the Social Security office to apply in person because it is closed to the public.

**I have a disability application filed, but they want to me go see their doctor. What should I do?**

Due to the Covid-19 crisis, these appointments are cancelled and will be rescheduled when it is safe to do so. Social Security has said they will not hold it against you if you miss your appointment during this time.

**I was denied disability. Can I still file an appeal?**

Yes. You can file an appeal online at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov), or by calling 1-800-772-1213, or by calling your local Social Security office. Do not go to the Social Security office to file your appeal in person because it is closed to the public. Normally, appeals must be filed within 65 days of the date on your denial letter. However, if you miss your appeal deadline due to the COVID-19 emergency, Social Security has said they will be liberal in granting “good cause” exceptions if you file late.

**I have an emergency and really need to have my disability application approved. Is there anything I can do?**

Social Security is giving priority to claims that are likely to be approved such as if you have been diagnosed with a terminal illness or if you have had a stroke and are paralyzed. See [www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-expedite-ussi.html](http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-expedite-ussi.html) for a list of conditions that can be quickly approved. If you have this type of claim, let your local Social Security office know. Land of Lincoln may also be able to help you if you call us at the number below.

**I received a letter about an overpayment? What should I do?**

Social Security is not putting a priority on overpayments right now and are not collecting overpayments right now. If you disagree with the overpayment, you have 65 days from the date of the notice to file an appeal. If you miss an appeal deadline due to the COVID-19 emergency, Social Security has said they will be liberal in granting “good cause” exceptions if you file late.

**Are there other legal resources available besides Land of Lincoln?**

The Public Interest Law Initiative PILI has set up the COVID-19 Illinois Free Legal Answers Task Force. [Illinois Free Legal Answers](http://il.freelegalanswers.org) is a secure website (il.freelegalanswers.org) where low-income Illinoisans can ask a lawyer a question about a civil legal issue.

You can also call or email the Illinois Lawyer Finder Service. The telephone number is 800-922-8757 and the website is [www.isba.org/public/illinoislawyerfinder](http://www.isba.org/public/illinoislawyerfinder).

Illinois Legal Aid Online also has a lot of legal information at [www.illinoislegalaid.org](http://www.illinoislegalaid.org).

**Land of Lincoln Legal Aid  
Legal Advice & Referral Center  
Phone: (618) 394-7300  
1 (877) 342-7891**

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