



## Can I Get Services from SSB?

### What is SSB?

The federal Rehabilitation Act says money has to be used for vocational rehabilitation services for people with disabilities. These services can help you get or keep a job. In Minnesota, State Services for the Blind (SSB) offers services to people who are blind or visually impaired who want to work.

### Can I get services?

In general, you are eligible to get services from SSB if:

1. You have a visual disability. This is defined as:
  - a visual acuity of 20/60 or less in the better eye with best correction
  - the absence of at least one full quadrant of binocular vision **or**
  - a physical condition or progressive loss that will likely result in legal blindness

**and**

2. You need vocational rehabilitation services to get ready for, find, or keep a job

**and**

3. You can benefit from vocational rehabilitation services.



You are automatically eligible if you get Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) because of your vision loss.

If SSB decides you can't benefit from services because your disability is too severe, they must prove this "by clear and convincing evidence."

### Does everyone who's eligible get help?

Unfortunately, SSB does not usually have enough funding to serve every eligible person. They decide who they can help first using an "Order of Selection." This means some people get services sooner than others. It depends on how bad their disability is.

The Order of Selection puts people with the most severe disabilities ahead of those with less severe disabilities.

People with the least severe disabilities may not get services at all unless there is enough funding in the SSB program to serve everyone.

### **What is a severe disability?**

You have a **severe disability** if:

1. your disability makes one or more of the following things very hard:
  - getting from one place to another
  - talking and listening to others
  - taking care of yourself
  - making or carrying out plans
  - work tolerance (you need changes at work to do a job)
  - having the skills to have a job
  - getting along with others

**and**

2. you need more than one service over a long time to get ready for, find or keep a job.

**and**

3. along with your visual disability you have a physical or mental disability or combination of disabilities that cause serious functional limitations.



### **Order of Selection**

SSB's Order of Selection is made up of 3 categories. They look at your limitations in terms of job outcome. People in category A get services first.

– **Category A:**

This is people with the most significant disabilities. You are in this group if you have a serious limitation in **5 or more** of the things listed above.

– **Category B:**

You are in this group if you have a serious limitation in **3 or 4** of the things listed above.

– **Category C:**

You are in this group if you have a serious limitation in **2 or less** of the things listed above.

Depending on funding, people in Category A are served first. In each category people are served on a first-come first-serve basis, based on the application date.

Once SSB decides you are eligible, you are put in the highest category you qualify for based on the information SSB has about you. SSB has to give you an explanation in person and in writing, of why you were put in your category and which categories are currently being served.



Once you are put in a category, you can't be moved unless there are changes in your disability that would put you in a higher category. If you think your medical condition is getting worse, let SSB know as soon as possible so that you may be moved to a higher priority category if possible.

Anyone who does not meet the Order of Selection can use SSB's information and referral system. For information on the status of SSB's Order of Selection or any waiting list, contact SSB.

### **How do I apply?**

1. You have to apply by writing a letter or sending a completed application form to SSB. To get an application, call:

- Metro Area Voice: (651) 539-2300
- Toll Free Voice: 1(800) 652-9000

Ask to speak with someone in the Workforce Development Unit.

You can also use the online information request at:

<https://mn.gov/deed/ssb/about/contact/locations/ssbinfoform.jsp>.

You have to sign a "release of information" form. This will let SSB get your medical records to prove you have a visual disability.

2. In most cases, an SSB counselor meets with you within a month of your application. The counselor explains the rehabilitation process and the different programs offered by SSB. You may also need to go to an information session about SSB's services.

The counselor asks you for any other information they need to figure out your eligibility. It might be things like your past work history, education and training, abilities and interests, rehabilitation needs, and possible career goals.

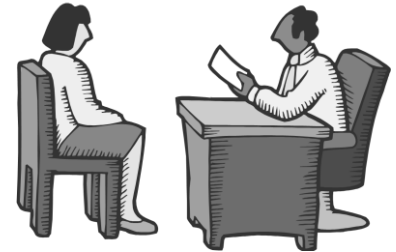
When gathering the information, SSB looks at existing information as much as they can. If that is not enough to decide if you are eligible for services, they work with you to get other information they need. If there is a cost to get that information, you can ask SSB to pay for it.

Most decisions are made within 60 days of the date you hand in your application. If more time is needed, SSB has to talk to you so you both reach an agreement about an extension of time.

## If You are Denied Services

If SSB denies your application for rehabilitation services or assigns you to a priority category lower than those being currently served, they have to send you a letter that tells you:

1. Why you were denied or assigned to a certain priority category
2. What your legal rights are and remedies **and**
3. about the Client Assistance Project (CAP) and how CAP may be able to help you



If SSB decides your disability is too severe to make you eligible, they have to give you a chance to have a full consultation before they deny you. If you are denied for this reason, you have 2 basic rights:

1. SSB reviews your application every year to see if you become eligible at a later date, or
2. You can appeal the denial immediately.

If SSB finds you are not eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, they must check to see if you are eligible for one of their other programs like independent living, self-care, or child rehabilitation services.

### Client Assistance Project (CAP)

If you are a client or an applicant of VRS or SSB, you can call the Client Assistance Project (CAP) for help if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your vocational rehabilitation services. CAP **does not** provide direct vocational rehabilitation services, like education, training or equipment. See our fact sheet [Client Assistance Project \(CAP\)](#).



For more information about CAP or to apply for CAP services, call:

- (612) 334-5970 (metro area)
- 1-800-292-4150 (statewide)
- (612) 332-4668 (TDD)

**Fact Sheets are legal information NOT legal advice. See a lawyer for advice.**

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