

# The Disability Insider

News from the Genex Social Security Disability Division

Fall 2020

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## 2021 Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Rates & Limits

In October 2020, SSA announced the new 2021 Old Age, Survivor, and Disability Insurance rates and limits effective January 2021:

### Substantial Gainful Activity

Non-Blind	\$1,310
Blind	\$2,190

### Trial Work Period Month

\$940

### Maximum Taxable Earnings

Social Security	\$142,800
Medicare	No limit

### Earnings Required for Work Credits

One Work Credit (One Quarter of Coverage)	\$1,470
Maximum of Four Credits a Year	\$5,880

### Maximum Social Security Benefits

\$3,148

### Maximum SSI Benefit

Individual	\$794
Couple	\$1,191

[Further information can be found here.](#)

## 2021 Cost of Living (COLA) Increase

On October 13, 2020 the Social Security Administration announced the 2021 annual cost of living increase will be 1.3%. The benefit increase will be reflected in the December 2020 payment, which will be received in January 2021. COLA determinations are based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), which is calculated by Bureau of Labor Statistics. The 1.3% increase is down from the 1.6% increase in 2020 and 2.8% in 2019. There are more than 64 million people who receive Social Security retirement, disability and survivors' insurance programs, which pay over one trillion dollars annually.

[Further information can be found here.](#)

## Final Rule Allowing AAJs to Hold Hearings

On November 16, 2020 the Social Security Administration published a revision to their rules seeking to clarify when and how Administrative Appeals Judges (AAJ's) may hold hearings and issue decisions. "The Appeals Council already has the authority to hold hearings and issue decisions under our existing regulations, but we have not exercised this authority or explained the circumstances under which it would be appropriate for the Appeals Council to assume responsibility for holding a hearing and issuing a decision." The Agency believes the more effective use of resources will allow them to "quickly optimize our hearings capacity, which in turn will allow us to issue accurate, timely, high-quality decisions." This final rule will be effective 12/16/2020.

[Further information can be found here.](#)

## Final Approval Requested for CDR Regulations

On November 10, 2020 the Social Security Administration (SSA) asked the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to give final approval to proposed regulations on Continuing Disability Reviews (CDR's). The proposed regulations revise when, and how often, CDR's are conducted. A fourth category would be added titled Medical Improvement Likely (MIL) to go along with Medical Improvement Expected (MIE), Medical Improvement Possible (MIP), and Medical Improvement Not Expected (MINE). "The revised changes would ensure that we continue to maintain appropriate stewardship of the disability program and identify medical improvement (MI) at its earliest point." The proposed changes would account for an additional 1.1 million expected reviews per year.

[Further information can be found here.](#)

## Genex Staff Spotlight

### Amber Blunt Lead Claims Developer

Amber started with Genex in 2009 as a Claims Assistant and throughout her years at Genex, has held various other positions. She has been a Lead Claims Developer since March of 2015 and since her promotion, has been vital in assisting with the development of various workflows and holding various trainings that pertain to the Developer team. Amber holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from West Chester University. When not working, Amber enjoys traveling with family and friends.



## Emergency Message Addresses Statutory Benefits Continuation

On September 10, 2020 SSA issued Emergency Message (EM) 20040 to address how field office and teleservice staff handle late requests for Statutory Benefits Continuation (SBC). SBC is possible when a continuing disability review results a medical cessation of benefits. When a cessation occurs, a claimant has 15 days to request statutory benefits continuation. The emergency message states, "Due to the many limitations and closures resulting from the COVID-19 national public health emergency and as we resume processing CDR cessations, there may be unusual or unavoidable circumstances in which individuals may find it difficult to submit a written statement for electing SBC timely." Therefore, when beneficiaries appeal within the 60-day period but the SBC request is received after the 15-day deadline, "the FO can approve a late request for payment continuation when it finds there was good cause for submitting the late request."

[Further information can be found here.](#)