

Social Security Payee Program

Social Security's Representative Payee Program helps you if you are not able to take care of your monthly Social Security or SSI payments. The program appoints someone to receive your monthly disability benefit. This person is called a representative payee (rep payee). The rep payee must use your monthly benefit to pay your expenses each month.

Why would Social Security say I need to have a rep payee?

There are many reasons why Social Security say you need a rep payee. Some reasons include mental illness, drug/alcohol issues, or cognitive issues.

Who can be my rep payee?

You have the right to ask for a person that you trust be your rep payee. The only limit is the rep payee cannot have a felony on their record. Social Security prefers family members as rep payees. However, a good friend or neighbor can serve as a rep payee. The payee should be someone who sees you on a fairly regular basis and whom you can contact should you need something.

What if I don't have family or friends to be my rep payee?

If family or friends cannot serve as your rep payee, Social Security will try to appoint an organization. For example, if you are treated at a mental health clinic such as Weber Human Services, the clinic may serve as your rep payee.

Does the rep payee receive a fee for being my payee and, if so, who pays it?

Your personal rep payees do not receive a fee for being your payee. If an organization is your rep payee, it can be paid a fee. The fee must be approved by Social Security. The fee is taken from your monthly disability benefit.

What if I believe my rep payee is misusing my funds?

You should speak with your rep payee. Your payee should show you how your money is being spent. If it looks like your payee is misusing your funds, contact the Social Security Administration as soon as possible. Social Security will look into the matter and decide if your funds have been misused. If misuse is found, Social Security may appoint you a new rep or pay directly to you. Social Security will take steps to recover the misused funds.

Can I be my own payee?

Yes. To be your own payee, you need to show Social Security that you are physically and mentally able to manage your money. Proof includes:

- A note from your doctor or psychologist stating that you should be able to manage your own money.
- If drugs and alcohol are an issue, then you must show proof that you have completed treatment. You might also show that you are involved in treatment, such as a support group or therapy.
- If your rights were taken away due to court order, you must show that your rights were returned to you by court order. You will need a certified copy of the order.
- Other sources of proof that you can manage your own money may include letters from people who know you, such as relatives or close friends.

What if I don't want to be my own payee?

You will need a doctor's note or a letter from someone you know that states you are unable to manage your own money and why.

Where can I find more info?

For more info on Social Security's Representative Payee Program, please visit your local Social Security office or the Social Security Administration's website at www.ssa.gov/payee/. You will find info on:

- Beneficiary Information
- Guide for Individual Payees
- Information for Organizational Payees
- Payee Publications
- Frequently Asked Questions for Representative Payees and for Beneficiaries who have a Payee

If you are not able to get the information or do not understand, please feel free to contact Utah Legal Services (801) 328-8891 in the Salt Lake area, or toll-free 800-662-4245.

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