

NC DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND POLICIES AND PROCEDURES VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Section:	S
Title:	Social Security Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) and Blind Work Expenses (BWE)
Current Effective Date:	02/08
Revision History:	Revised 08/05; 12/06

Social Security does not count any earned income that is used to meet expenses that are needed to earn that income in deciding Supplementary Security Income (SSI) eligibility and or payment amount.

To qualify an individual must be:

- Under age 65; or
- Age 65 or older and receiving SSI payments due to blindness.

The Blind Work Expenses (BWE) items do not have to be related to blindness (i.e., Social Security taxes, Union dues, etc.). When Social Security Administration (SSA) figures the recipient amount, it treats items as BWE instead of Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE). This always results in a higher SSI payment for the individual.

Some examples of BWE items are:

- Service animal expenses,
- Transportation to and from work,
- Federal, state and local income taxes,
- Social Security taxes,
- Attendant care services,
- Visual and sensory aids,
- Translation of materials into Braille,
- Professional association fees, and
- Union dues.

For more information on the requirements for a PASS, see ***Working While Disabled: A Guide to Plans for Achieving Self Support***

As referenced, each PASS form is for a specific individual and must be in writing (use form SSA-545-BK, revised 11/05, OMB No. 0960-0559).

As referenced, the PASS must be submitted and approved by the Social Security Office. To locate the appropriate SSA office: sorted by zip code or call 1-(800) 772-1213.

Additional information and assistance can be located by calling toll-free **1-800-772-1213** (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call our **TTY number, 1-800-325-0778**). SSA can answer specific questions and provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day.

Following is an example of the effect of BWE on SSI payment amounts:

Without BWE		With BWE	
\$361	Earned Income	\$361	Earned Income
-20	General Income Exclusion	-20	General Income Exclusion
\$341		\$341	
-65	\$65 Earned Income Exclusion	-65	\$65 Earned Income Exclusion
\$276		\$276	
-138	½ Remaining Earnings	-138	½ Remaining Earnings
\$138	Countable Income	\$138	
		-40	Blind Work Expenses
		\$98	Countable Income
\$603	Federal Benefit Rate (2006)	\$603	Federal Benefit Rate (2006)
-138	Countable Income	-98	Countable Income
\$465	SSI Payment	\$505	SSI Payment