

Returning to Work: Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE)

2021 Tip Sheet

If you receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits; you should learn about your Extended Period of Eligibility

What It Means to You:

During the **Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE)**; you have 36 months of protection for your **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits**. The Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE) begins the month **following** the end of your Trial Work Period (TWP). If your TWP ends in July; your EPE begins in August. If your TWP ends in December; your EPE begins in January. The Extended Period of Eligibility months pass whether or not you are employed.

How It Works:

Once your Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE) begins; the Social Security Administration will compare your monthly gross (before taxes) earnings to the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level. For 2021; the SGA is \$1,310 per month if you are **not** blind and \$2,190 per month if you **are** blind. The first month Social Security determines you are earning the Substantial Gainful Activity amount; you will receive your SSDI benefits check for that month and the next 2 months. This is called your **Grace Period**.

Once you have used your Grace Period; any month in which you earn the SGA level or more; you will **not** be entitled to that month's benefits. You receive your SSDI a month behind; if you are not entitled to a benefit for the month of **July**; you should not receive SSDI funds in the month of **August**. If you are not entitled to benefits for the month of **December**; you should not receive SSDI funds in the month of **January**. Should your earned income become less than the SGA level (for any reason) your benefits will begin again. **No paperwork is required**. You still will need to report your wages to the Social Security Administration to make sure that your Extended Period of Eligibility is accurately recorded.

Timeline of the Trial Work Period and Extended Period of Eligibility:

Trial Work Period	36 months Extended Period of Eligibility	Extended Eligibility continues until you begin to earn over SGA
Receive Benefits While Working	Receive Benefits; if Gross Earned Income is under SGA \$1,310 (non-blind) \$2,190 (blind)	Eligibility for SSDI ends if you are consistently earning over SGA

Once you have used your Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE); you have additional work incentives such as the Expedited Reinstatement Period (EXR).

If you have questions about if you have used your EPE, how many months you have remaining or any other questions regarding how work impacts your SSDI benefits or the Ticket to Work program; contact the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 or Brian Dennis at 515-725-3666 or via email Brian.Dennis@iwd.iowa.gov.