

Medical Assistance (MA) will pay for many of the behavioral health services your child may need. In order to become eligible for MA, you must first show proof that you applied for federal assistance (Social Security's program of Supplemental Security Income- SSI). "Proof" is in the form of either an acceptance letter or denial letter from SSI.

- Contact your local Social Security office and ask to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). You can begin the application process online at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov). Eligibility for SSI is income based.
- You will need to have
  - Child's social security number
  - Your social security number
  - Child's birth certificate
  - Income verification
  - And your child's psychological evaluation along with any other pertinent medical records
- If your child is accepted, ask for an introductory acceptance letter. It can take up to 90 days to start receiving SSI payments.
- **A denial of SSI (because of income) does not mean your child will be denied Medical Assistance (MA)/ACCESS.**
- If your child meets the disability criteria but is denied due to your income, request a copy of the denial letter to share with the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) County Assistance Office.
- Contact your local County Assistance Office (CAO) to begin the application process for medical assistance. Inform your CAO office that you are applying for a child with disabilities. If you have internet access, you can apply on-line at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us) or you can download the application.
- Fill out the form completely. Parental income must be listed, even though it is not considered when making a determination of the eligibility of the child. If your child receives income, such as SSI, that information also needs to be listed.

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- It is helpful to write on the top of the application and highlight the following: “MA FOR DISABLED CHILD HANDBOOK SECTION 355.4”. Commonly referred to as “loophole insurance”.
- If you need assistance completing the forms, contact your local County Assistance Office.
- You will need to mail the following information:
  - Completed application
  - A copy of your child’s social security card
  - A copy of your child’s birth certificate
  - A copy of written documentation of diagnosis from the doctor (evaluation)
- Within 5 to 7 days you should receive an eligibility notice. The notice will have your child’s ten digit MA/ACCESS recipient number. You will also receive your child’s MA card shortly thereafter.
- If you are enrolled in HealthChoices, you will receive a handbook in a pink envelope in the mail. This is your Value Behavioral Health-PA (VBH-PA) handbook. Value Behavioral Health-PA is the behavioral health managed care organization (MCO) for fourteen (14) western Pennsylvania counties.

Once you have applied for SSI and MA and you have your Access number, you are now ready to obtain services for your child.