

## **TWP: Trial Work Period**

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### **What is a Trial Work Period?**

The Trial Work Period (TWP) was developed by Social Security to give SSDI beneficiaries a chance to try returning to work without jeopardizing their access to benefits. THE TRIAL WORK PERIOD PERTAINS ONLY TO SSDI. THERE IS NO TWP FOR SSI.

### **When Does the TWP Start?**

The TWP starts when a person receiving SSDI benefits starts working and earning more than \$620 in 2006 (see index for amounts from previous years) in gross wages per month. Any month in which the person earns more than \$620 counts as a TWP month. This income can be from any type of work (e.g. competitive, transitional, sheltered, self-employment, supported) and they do not have to be consecutive months. For people who are self-employed, 80 hours (increased--was 40 hours in the year 2000) of work per month or more is considered a TWP month. These amounts are automatically adjusted each year based on any increases in the national wage index.

### **How does the TWP work?**

During the TWP, the worker continues to receive her **full** SSDI check for each TWP month (remember that SSDI is not prorated) until she has worked for nine TWP months within a five year period. These nine months do not have to be consecutive.

As of January 1992, TWP months that occurred more than five years ago are no longer counted. This is called a five-year "rolling window". Note that people who used up all their TWP months before January 1992 are not entitled to this rolling window; while anyone who had at least one TWP month left as of 1/92 enjoys this protection.

### **When Does the TWP End?**

The TWP ends when the worker has accumulated nine TWP months within the five-year "rolling window". This happens automatically and the worker will not necessarily be notified that her TWP is used up.

Completing the ninth month of a TWP triggers a work activity evaluation and a Continuing Disability Review (CDR) if it is overdue.

**However, under TWWIIA, CDR's for a long term SSDI beneficiary (24 months or more) will be limited to scheduled medical reviews, so completing the ninth month of a TWP or any work activity will not trigger a CDR as of January 1, 2002.**

Also, the Extended Period of Eligibility automatically begins after the ninth month of TWP, the end of the TWP.

Note: Always verify a person's TWP status directly with SSA before beginning employment activities. Often times people may not accurately remember or portray their work history, or one may have been told that workshop activities may not count. Clarifying the TWP/EPE status will help you and your clients avoid unpleasant surprises once employment is obtained.

**Other information regarding the Trial Work Period:**

- If you work above SGA within the first 12 months of the onset of your disability, you will not be considered eligible for benefits **OR a Trial Work Period**. To meet SSA's definition of disability, you must not be able to earn \$860 (SGA) for at least 12 months. You may be considered medically recovered during the TWP, and your benefits would stop.