

# CASA ADVOCACY FOR SSI BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN



## BE INFORMED

- Review the [SSI Benefits for Children FAQ](#) and seek additional information and resources as needed in your CASA advocacy.
- Review medical, educational, and therapeutic evaluations and records for information to support a recommendation for a referral to the DFPS Regional SSI Coordinator (SSI Coordinator).

## STAY CURIOUS

- Ask older youth and family about prior SSI eligibility.
- Ask the child's case worker about present SSI eligibility.
- Remember, the application process and redetermination process for SSI eligibility for children and youth turning 18 can be complicated and takes time. Don't jump to conclusions, instead ask questions and continue to advocate for a timely process.
- Discuss with the case worker whether SSI funds from a *lump sum dedicated account* are available to cover disability related expenditures not covered by Medicaid or DFPS.

## DOCUMENT

- Include the child or youth's SSI eligibility status (pending/eligible/suspended/referred to SSI Coordinator) in your OPTIMA notes and Court Report.
- Include whether the child has an SSI *lump sum dedicated account* available for their disability related needs in your OPTIMA notes and Court Report.

## ADVOCATE IN PERMANENCY PLANNING

- Before a child returns home, moves to a relative placement, or ages out of foster care:
  - » Advocate for referral to the SSI Coordinator, if DFPS has not applied for SSI on behalf of a disabled child, based on medical diagnosis and youth/family income.
  - » Advocate for reinstatement, if SSI benefits have been suspended by DFPS.
  - » Advocate for redetermination of eligibility, if SSI benefits have been suspended by DFPS for more than 12 months.
- Before an older youth turns 18 or ages out of foster care:
  - » Advocate for referral to the SSI Coordinator, if the youth has never received SSI and appears to meet eligibility criteria.
  - » Advocate for a portion of SSI to go into a dedicated savings account for the youth's transitional needs.

## SUPPORT THE CHILD & FAMILY

- Help to ensure the family is aware that DFPS will become the Representative Payee while the child or youth is in foster care if the child was already receiving SSI.
- Review SSI paperwork and Representative Payee changes with youth 16 years old or older.
- Inform youth and caregivers that they can request prior SSI applications and support documentation from the case worker or PAL worker.
- Invite PAL or adoption workers, or the SSI Coordinator, to family meetings to answer questions.
- Inform youth, family and caregivers that in some circumstances they can inquire about requesting a change in Representative Payee by contacting the SSI Coordinator by contacting the SSI coordinator and/or the Social Security Administration (SSA).