

Five Things You Need to Know About ABLE Accounts

1 What is an ABLE account?

ABLE accounts are tax-advantaged savings and investment accounts that grow tax-free to help qualified individuals with disabilities, and their families, save for qualified disability expenses, or QDEs. Anyone can contribute to an individual's ABLE account; however, all contributions combined are not to exceed \$16,000 in any given tax year, though a working individual may be able to contribute more. Medicaid and other means-tested, federally-funded benefits are not affected by any amount of ABLE savings. An ABLE account can help you save \$100,000 without affecting monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. Please remember that earnings from employment are still subject to income counting rules for SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance) benefits and other means-tested benefits such as SSI, SNAP or HUD housing. Interest on ABLE savings grows tax-free. It is also important to note that a person can only own one ABLE account.

2 Why the need for ABLE accounts?

Millions of individuals with disabilities and their families depend on a wide variety of public benefits for income, health care and food and housing assistance. Eligibility for many of these public benefits (SSI, SNAP, Medicaid) require meeting a means or resource test. Individuals have to report more than \$2,000 in cash savings, retirement funds and other items of significant value. To remain eligible for these public benefits, often an individual must remain poor. The ABLE Act recognizes the extra and significant costs of living with a disability and provides a savings tool to address it.

3 Who is eligible to open an ABLE account?

The ABLE Act limits eligibility to individuals with disabilities with an age of onset of disability before turning 26. If you meet this age criteria, and are also already receiving benefits under SSI and/or SSDI, you are automatically eligible to establish an ABLE account. If you are not a recipient of SSI and/or SSDI, but still meet the age of onset disability requirement, you could still be eligible to open an ABLE account if you meet Social Security's definition and criteria regarding significant functional limitations and receive a letter of certification from a licensed physician. You need not be under the age of 26 to be eligible for an ABLE account. You could be over the age of 26, but must have had an age of onset before your 26th birthday.



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What can funds in an ABLÉ account be used for?

Funds in the account can be used for qualified disability expenses or QDEs. A qualified disability expense is any expense related to the designated beneficiary's blindness or disability that assists him/her in increasing and/or maintaining their health, independence and/or quality of life. These may include expenses related to education, housing, food, transportation, employment training and support, assistive technology, personal support services, health care expenses, financial management and administrative services and other expenses.

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What happens to the funds in the ABLÉ account when the beneficiary passes away?

Upon the death of the beneficiary, the state in which they lived may file a claim to all or a portion of the funds in the account equal to the amount in which the state spent on the beneficiary through their state Medicaid program. Medicaid payback is subject to the payment of outstanding qualified disability expenses including funeral and burial expenses and the reimbursement for any Medicaid buy-in payments made. This is commonly known as the Medicaid payback provision and the claim could recoup Medicaid-related expenses from the time the account was opened. Please note that if you are not receiving Medicaid services during the period of time in which you have an ABLÉ account, you would not be subject to the payback rule.

For more information related to ABLÉ and various ABLÉ programs, please visit the ABLÉ National Resource Center (ABLE NRC) website at ablenrc.org. The ABLÉ NRC is a collaborative that brings together the investment, support and resources of some of the country's largest and most influential national disability organizations in an effort to accelerate the design and availability of ABLÉ accounts to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities and their families.

