

You can be paid a Disability Grant if you are over the age of 18 years and are not able to work because of a mental and/or physical disability. It can only be awarded on the basis of a medical doctor's certificate. The Disability Grant varies but the maximum amount that can be awarded is R1140 a month (April 2011). The amount is calculated on a sliding scale, so that the more you earn, the less you will get from the grant. You get a permanent Disability Grant if your disability will continue for more than a year and a temporary Disability Grant if your disability is expected for a continuous period of not less than six months and not more than twelve months. A permanent Disability Grant does not mean you will receive the grant for life as it will need to be periodically reviewed. A permanent Disability Grant is usually given for more than a year. A temporary Disability Grant is usually given for a period of six months after which a review must be done. A temporary Disability Grant can be given to people suffering from AIDS if a doctor deems the person is unable to work.

How do I know if I can claim this grant?

You are eligible if:

- You are a South African citizen, permanent resident or refugee living in South Africa
- You are between 18-59 years if you are female or 18-64 years if you are male (if you are under 18 and need permanent care due to your disability your primary caregiver can apply for the Care Dependency Grant)
- You are not able to work because of your mental and/or physical disabilities
- You have a government hospital medical report describing your disabilities
- You will be disabled for six months or longer
- You are not receiving care in an institution that is funded by the state*
- You are not already receiving another type of grant (you can, however, receive Child Support and Foster Care Grants if you are able to function as the primary caregiver of a child or children)
- You and your spouse meet the requirements of the Means Test

*On 26 February 2009, the Department of Social Development amended the Social Assistance Regulations. These regulations set the conditions of eligibility for all recipients of social grants in the country. The amendment corrects the definition of an 'institution funded by the state' to exclude patients in hospitals. This means that patients who are in hospital are entitled to continue receiving their social grants, including patients who are isolated with multi-drug resistant (MDR) or extensively drug resistant (XDR) TB.

The Means Test

Ask your social worker or community organisation to help you work out if you meet the requirements of the Means Test, because it is more complicated than for the Child Support Grant. In terms of being 'in need', both your assets and income and that of your spouse are

assessed through a Means Test to see if you qualify. Assets are things that you own, such as a car, a television and an oven. If you own a house and live in it (you do not rent it out), then this house is NOT counted as part of your assets. For 2011, the asset threshold (maximum value of what you own) is set at R752 400 if you are a single person and R1 504 800 if you are married. And the income threshold is set at R3 740 per month if you are single (R44 880 per year) and R7 480 per month for a combined income of a married couple (R89 760 per year).

Documents required

Before you go to the Social Security (SASSA) office make sure that you have the following documents with you:

- Your Identity Document (ID) book (with the 13-number bar code)*
- Financial statements for the Means Test. You need to take proof of your income such as bank account statements for the last three months or pay slips, and papers about any savings you have
- Your UIF book or certificate, if you are unemployed
- Your previous medical reports. You will also be examined by the state doctor so that your disability can be assessed. The doctor will complete a medical report and will forward the report to SASSA. The report is valid for three months from the date you are assessed
- Papers about your marital status. If you are single, you need papers to say that you are single (these papers are called affidavits); if you are married, you need your marriage certificate; if you are divorced, you need your divorce order; if you are a widow or widower, you need to bring the death certificate of your partner

* If you don't have an ID you must provide the following:

- An affidavit completed in a standard SASSA format in the presence of a Commissioner of Oaths who is not a SASSA official
- A sworn statement by a reputable person (e.g. councillor, traditional leader, social worker, minister of religion) who knows the applicant
- Proof that you have applied for an ID and/or birth certificate at the Department of Home Affairs
- Temporary ID issued by the Department of Home Affairs, if applicable

If you do not have all of these papers, contact your social worker, local advice office or one of the NPOs in the AIDSbuzz directory that help with social grants. You can also phone the Department's free hotline **0800 601 011** or go to www.sassa.gov.za NOTE: A family member or friend can apply on your behalf if you are too old or sick to travel to the office. The person applying on your behalf should submit a letter from you and a doctor's note explaining why you cannot visit the office. A home visit may also be arranged.

Is the grant awarded to people living with HIV and AIDS?

Yes, many people living with AIDS qualify for and receive a temporary disability grant. There are no exact criteria on which to base the assessment, which is left up to the doctor. Usually, if your CD4 count falls below 200 you will usually qualify for the grant. However, some people with CD4 counts of less than 200 may still be assessed as fit enough to work. Equally some people with CD4 counts above 200 who are very sick with TB or pneumonia may qualify for the grant.

You will be initiated on antiretroviral treatment (ART) when your CD4 count falls below 200 (if you are pregnant or have TB you will start receiving treatment when your CD4 count falls below 350). If your CD4 count climbs above 200 with treatment and you are judged as fit for work by the doctor, you will no longer qualify for the disability grant.

How long is the grant awarded for?

The temporary Disability Grant is usually given for a period of six months at a time (permanent Disability Grants are awarded for much longer periods). After each six-month period you will need to be re-assessed and examined by a doctor to confirm whether you still qualify for the grant. When you turn 60 (if you are a woman) or 65 (if you a man), your Disability Grant will be automatically converted into an Older Persons' Grant, which provides the same amount of money.

How will you be paid?

A grant will be paid to you through one of the following methods:

- Cash at a specific pay point on a particular day
- Electronic deposit into your bank account, including Postbank (the bank may charge you for the service)
- Institution not funded by the state, e.g. a home for people with disabilities

You can change the way the money is paid at any time by filling in a form at the SASSA offices.

When can a grant be suspended?

The following may result in the suspension of your grant:

- When your circumstances change
- The outcome of a review
- If you fail to co-operate when your grant is reviewed
- If you commit fraud or misrepresent yourself
- If there was a mistake when your grant was approved

When will your grant

lapse?

The grant will lapse when you:

- Turn 60 at which point SASSA's electronic system will automatically convert your grant into an Old Person's Grant, which is set at the same amount
- Pass away
- Are admitted to a state institution (this excludes being admitted to a hospital for treatment)
- Do not claim for three consecutive months
- Are absent from the country

Note: If a beneficiary is admitted to an institution that has a contract with the state to care for and maintain such a beneficiary, the social grant is reduced to 25% of the maximum amount

with effect from the fourth month following the beneficiary's admission to that institution. The reduced grant is re-instated immediately from the date the beneficiary is discharged from the institution.

Other financial support

If you are receiving a Disability Grant you may also receive a Grant-in-Aid if you cannot look after yourself and need regular care at home. However, you may NOT also receive an Older Person's Grant or a War Veterans' Grant. Depending on how you became disabled, you could also receive benefits from the Road Accident Fund (RAF), the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) or the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Fund (COIDF).

Once a grant has been approved, people who have not yet received any money but are in desperate need of support can apply for temporary assistance in the form of Social Relief of Distress (SRD). SRD is normally issued as a food parcel but can also be a voucher or cash payment. If money has been paid, this amount will be deducted from the grant money you eventually receive.