



Disability Dispatch

Your Source for Social Security News
from the Law Office of Cathy L. Brackin

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Safe Link Provides Free Cell Phones

A telephone is a necessity, yet those who are living on a Social Security check or awaiting a decision on their disability might face difficult choices between paying for food, shelter or medications. Paying for wireless telephone service has become easier through a federal program administered by the **Universal Service Administrative Company**.



per month. To qualify, you have to be participating in one of the following programs: food stamps, general assistance, HEAP, Lifeline Utility Credits, Medicaid, PAAD, SSI, TANF or Work First NJ. My client, **Bill F.** of Newfield, says that his Safe Link phone “works great.”

Virgin Mobile has a similar program called “Assurance Wireless.” Additional minutes or texting can be purchased.

Safe Link is a program in which **TracFone Wireless** pays for free cell phones. The number of minutes a person receives depends on the state of residence. In New Jersey, individuals receive 250 free minutes

For more information about Safe Link go to www.safelinkwireless.com or call **1-800-977-3768**. Contact information for Assurance Wireless is www.assurancewireless.com or call **1-888-898-4888**. ❀

Youth With Disabilities: Transitioning to Adulthood

As their special needs youngsters enter the teen years, parents are asking, “What will happen to my child?” Transitioning from the IEP into the adult world need not be frightening, as there are several programs that can help.

SSI: Social Security’s rules for proving disability for adults are different from those for children. If a youngster is receiving child SSI, Social Security will re-determine his claim at age 18 using the adult rules. While approximately 40 to 60 percent of those reviews result in termination of benefits, the terminations may be appealed. A minor child’s entitlement to SSI depends on the parents’ income, but at age 18 Social Security uses the young adult’s income and assets

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Problems with Grocery Shopping? There is Help!



In interviews of clients regarding difficulties with daily activities, grocery shopping often comes up as a problem area. Supermarket shopping requires walking and lifting, which may be difficult for some. **EZ Pantry** is a grocery shopping and delivery service especially for senior citizens and the disabled. Customers phone in their orders, and the food is delivered directly into kitchens the next day.

Based in West Berlin, New Jersey, EZ Pantry has been serving the community since 1990. It offers more than 9,000 items, including fresh produce, dairy, meats, and frozen foods. Their catalog is available at www.myezpantry.com, or simply write out a grocery list and call **856.767.0555** before 3 p.m. EZ Pantry delivers to most of Camden County, and to parts of Gloucester and Burlington Counties. The minimum order is \$50. Delivery charge depends on the size of the order. Payment may be made in cash or by check. Manufacturer’s coupons are accepted, and satisfaction is guaranteed. EZ Pantry owner **Yvette Katogir** says that when placing your first order, ask for a \$10 coupon. ❀

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Become a fan of "Cathy Brackin - NJ Disability Law" to stay up-to-date with news you can use regarding Social Security Disability and S.S.I.

Earnings Statements Discontinued — for Now!

The Social Security Administration is no longer sending out annual earnings statements that usually arrive three months before our birthday. In light of the current budget situation, the mailings have been suspended. The statements enable workers to make sure they receive credit for the proper earnings and show estimated benefits. However, they cost the government \$70 million a year to mail, so those with birthdays in July or later will not get



statements this year.

Social Security Commissioner **Michael Astrue** said that the agency is working to provide the statements online, assuming that security concerns can be resolved. The problem with online statements is that not everyone

has computer skills or computer access. Presently, there is an estimator tool on Social Security's website, but it does not provide the same detailed information as the paper statement, such as estimates of disability and survivor benefits.

In the past few years the agency has been encouraging the public to use its website to conduct business. It recently launched a campaign with a *Star Trek* theme, starring **George Takei**, that promotes online filing for benefits.



Disability Dispatch is published by the Law Office of Cathy L. Brackin. It is not intended to give legal advice. You should consult an attorney for advice regarding your individual situation.

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YOUTH, continued

to decide financial eligibility. SSI applications may be filed after the 18th birthday.

Disabled Adult Child: This little-known Social Security program can yield more in benefits than SSI. If an individual can prove a disability that began before age 22 (and has been continuous until present), that person can collect on the parent's earning record, providing one parent is either (1) deceased, (2) collecting Social Security retirement, or (3) receiving Social Security disability. Inevitably one of those three events will occur at some point, so establishing an onset date before age 22 can make a big difference in the amount received.

Division of Developmental Disabilities:

This state agency offers

a wide array of services, which include day programs, group homes and respite care.

Vocational Rehabilitation: The **New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation** can provide job training, placement, and job coaching. Other services include therapies to improve physical or cognitive functioning.

Disability Services in College: Services similar to those provided through a child study team are available at the college level thanks to Section 504 and the *Americans with Disabilities Act*. These could include extended time for tests, copies of notes, and assistive technology. Most colleges have an office of disability services that can provide further information.