

Behaviorally informed intervention materials for “Increasing SSI Uptake Among a Potentially Eligible Population”



The Social Security Administration (SSA) identified over 4 million individuals aged 65-80 who were potentially eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), a monthly means-tested cash payment. These individuals were randomly assigned to receive either one of four letter variations encouraging SSI take-up, or to not receive any letter. SSA sent 100,000 letters for each variation.

All of the letters had a large and statistically significant impact on applications and awards. Of beneficiaries who received a letter, 6.0 percent applied for SSI in the nine months after the letters were sent out, compared with 1.0 percent of beneficiaries who did not receive a letter. SSA is currently replicating this evaluation with a new sample to better understand the generalizability of these effects.

The materials below provide the content of the letters sent to individuals potentially eligible for SSI and describe the best practices adopted in these designs for effective communications.

The letters were designed with four principles in mind: **make it personal**, **keep it simple**, **make it easy**, and **make it matter**. (More information on designing effective communications can be found [here](#).) The way these principles were applied to the letters is described below:

1

Make it personal

Highlight to recipients that SSA records indicate that they specifically may be eligible to receive SSI.

2

Keep it simple

Include essential information about the SSI program to raise awareness.

Provide simple guidance on how to apply.

3

Make it easy

Provide a phone number and web address that recipients can use to start the application process.

4

Make it matter

Highlight the value to the recipient of receiving SSI benefits.

For more information on this intervention or to start a conversation, please contact oes@gsa.gov.

Letter Encouraging SSI Take-Up



[Mailed on SSA letterhead]

Dear [Name of Person],

Our records show you may be able to get Supplemental Security Income (SSI) because you are aged 65 or older.

If you are eligible, you may be able to earn up to \$735 (single) or \$1,103 (married) per month in SSI benefits.

Applying is simple! Call to schedule an appointment to apply in person or by phone. A Social Security representative will help you apply.

What is SSI?

SSI is a monthly cash benefit that is an addition to regular Social Security retirement benefits.

How do you apply for SSI?

Call Social Security for more information on how to apply: toll-free at 1-800-772-1213, or call your local Social Security office at [number]. We can answer most questions over the phone.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you may call our TTY/TDD number [number]. For general information about Social Security we invite you to visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov on the Internet. If you do call or visit an office, please have this letter with you. It will help us answer your questions.

[Social Security Administration]

Show the recipient that the letter is specifically relevant to them.

Make the value of receiving SSI benefits salient.

Provide only essential program information and highlight the key action steps.

Provide the relevant information recipients need to start the application process.