

## Helpful Agencies

There are a number of agencies that can provide additional information on the payee program:

- Justice in Aging – advocates for low-income seniors; [www.justiceinaging.org](http://www.justiceinaging.org)
- Alzheimer’s Association – a non-profit organization focused on Alzheimer’s care, support and research; [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)
- Disability Rights Ohio – advocates for the human, civil and legal rights of Ohioans with disabilities; [www.disabilityrightsohio.org](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org)
- The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland – advocates providing civil legal representation; [www.lasc.org](http://www.lasc.org); telephone intakes at 888.817.3777
- Social Security Administration – [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov); 800.772.1213 (TTY 800.325.0778)



The  
**Legal Aid Society**  
of Cleveland  
*Since 1905*

*This brochure was prepared by Legal Aid, which serves low-income residents of Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake and Lorain counties in Northeast Ohio.*

### Intake Line for New Legal Cases

Toll Free: 888.817.3777

### Tenant Information Line

Call for info related to tenants’ rights and rental housing.  
(This line does not provide legal advice.)  
216.861.5955

Learn more about Legal Aid and  
upcoming brief advice clinics:

[www.lasclev.org](http://www.lasclev.org)

### Legal Aid Offices:

#### Cleveland & Administrative Offices

1223 West Sixth Street, Cleveland, OH 44113

#### Elyria Office

1530 West River Road, Suite 301, Elyria, Ohio 44035

#### Jefferson Office

121 East Walnut Street, Jefferson, OH 44047

#### Painesville Office

8 North State Street, Suite 300, Painesville, OH 44077

*If you have a communications limitation, contact Legal Aid through the Ohio Relay Service at 800.750.0750.* 

*Legal Aid offers interpretation and translation services so those with limited English proficiency can communicate with Legal Aid staff in their dominant and/or preferred language.*

*The information in this brochure cannot take the place of advice from a lawyer. Each case is different and needs individual legal advice. You should contact a lawyer if you need representation or if you have questions.*



10/19

# What I Should Know If I Have a “Rep Payee”?



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## What is a Rep Payee?

A representative payee (“rep payee”) is a person appointed by the Social Security Administration (SSA) to manage your Social Security or SSI benefits. SSA will only appoint a rep payee if they believe that you are not able to manage your money so that all of your food, clothing and housing needs are met.

## Who Will Be My Rep Payee?

Almost anyone can be a payee. Most importantly the rep payee has to be willing to act in your best interests. Social Security looks to see if the potential payee has ever abused or neglected anyone, has been convicted of specific crimes, or ever had been a rep payee before and it was taken away. Because the rep payee should really be someone who cares about what is best for you, Social Security always tries first to appoint a family member as your rep payee. If you do not have a family member who can be your payee, Social Security can appoint a friend or other person you trust. Sometimes Social Security will appoint a public or nonprofit agency or institution (such as a nursing home) or members of community groups who are willing to act as a rep payee. If you are under 18 years old, the rep payee is usually a parent or guardian.

## What is my Rep Payee Supposed to Do For Me?

Your rep payee must use all of your benefits in your best interest. That means the rep payee must pay your rent, utilities, medical bills, and other bills that are necessary for you to be stable. Social Security encourages payees to meet with you on a regular basis to understand what you needs may be. The rep payee must keep your money in a bank account separate from the rep payee’s own personal account, save any of your unspent benefits for later needs, and keep accurate and detailed records. **You are entitled to a copy of the records of how your benefits were spent.** If the rep payee is an organization, they can charge a small monthly fee for managing your benefits. Your payee must keep records of all the money they have received and spent on your behalf. They have to always tell SSA of any changes that would affect whether you are eligible for benefits.

## What If I Want to Change my Rep Payee?

If you want someone else to be your payee, you have to let Social Security know and explain why. You may have to go to your local office and fill out an application. It is usually better if you have someone already in mind who agrees to be your payee. That person must tell Social Security that they are willing to be your payee and be able to prove who they are.

## What If I Think I Do Not Need a Rep Payee?

If you think that you no longer need a payee and that you are able to manage your benefits on your own, you have to contact Social Security. You absolutely have a right to receive your own benefits, but you’ll have to show Social Security that your condition has improved enough that you can manage your own money.

## What if My Rep Payee is Not Paying my Bills or is Misusing my Benefits?

If you think your payee or someone else is taking your money, but not spending it on you, tell Social Security. You can go to your local office, or call 800.269.0271 (TTY 866.501.2101) or submit a report online at <http://oig.ssa.gov>.

You need to ask Social Security to investigate the misuse of your benefits. Be prepared to explain why you think your benefits are being misused. To help Social Security, you should:

- **Share as much information as you can**, including the contact information for your payee and anyone else who might be helpful
- **Share your documents.** Give Social Security receipts, bank statements, and other documents that help to show what happened. Keep copies of these documents for yourself too.
- **Write things down.** It might take a long time for Social Security to investigate your payee. Write down what happened, including dates, names of those who were there, and anything else you want to remember. If new problems happen with your payee, write them down, and tell the Social Security right away.