

## In Their Own Words—Benefits of SSI

❖ **R.L. is a two-year-old with bilateral retinoblastoma (cancer in both eyes).** When she was initially diagnosed, her doctors were unable to save her right eye, leaving her with one functioning eye. She continues to undergo extensive chemotherapy to save her remaining eye. In addition to limited vision and the far-reaching side effects of regular chemotherapy, she also suffers from serious cognitive and physical delays. R.L.'s single mother has sought to provide and care for her daughter since she was born, nearly ending up on the street due to the overwhelming investment of time and money that was required. Without SSI assistance, she doesn't know how she would provide for her severely disabled daughter. -- *Client of Community Legal Services of Philadelphia*

❖ **I am a grandparent raising a grandchild with illnesses that impede his development and intellectual functioning.** After many therapies and changes in his treatment, my family had to seek aid from SSI. Without the support from SSI, it is sad to say that I would have to think twice about helping even my own grandchild. We have expended all of our resources trying to help him. Without SSI, it would be impossible to care for such a high-needs child. He is well below grade level in school and functions emotionally at times like he is 7. The constant wear on the family emotionally caused us to seek and start a support group to help other families. Now we are educated about the level of care that is involved for my grandson, but it took almost five years to learn that. Caring for a child with special needs like his is not an easy task. -- *Deborah*

❖ **J.W. is a four-year-old girl with cerebral palsy.** She was diagnosed just a year ago, after years of unexplained delays and limitations. She is unable to sit up on her own, to reach with her dominant hand, or to hold objects. She can only walk with the help of braces. She suffers from severe delays in speech, as well as cognitive and physical development. Her mother suffers from end-stage renal disease, and her failing kidneys and overall poor health keep her from being able to work. Without SSI assistance, her family would be unable to provide for even her basic needs. -- *Client of Community Legal Services of Philadelphia*

❖ **The youngest of my three children receives SSI and Medicaid for multiple mental health disorders.** His father is now out of work and unable to pay child support, so SSI has been a lifesaver in getting treatment for my son. He is in day-treatment and summer programs at school which are partly funded by Medicaid, so if he didn't receive SSI, he wouldn't be eligible for these programs. He sees three counselors and a psychiatrist, so SSI helps with transportation expenses and my time off work to take him to appointments. SSI has also made it possible for me to attend parenting classes to learn behavior modification techniques, which have helped tremendously. My son goes to daycare after school while I'm at work but was expelled from a larger, more affordable daycare program. He now attends a more individualized daycare program, which I can only afford because of SSI. -- *Amy*

❖ **B.C. is a one-and-a-half year-old girl, born with a rare brain disorder known as *lobar holoprosencephaly*.** Due to this condition, she suffers from severe physical as well as developmental delays. The circumference of her head is more than 98% above normal size and continues to grow. B.C.'s mother finds that ensuring that her daughter receives the near-constant medical care she needs, and juggling constant trips to an array of developmental specialists, is a nearly full-time job that puts significant strain on the low-income family's finances. Despite her severe medical condition and resulting limitations, B.C. was initially denied SSI benefits. She was finally approved for benefits after waiting many months for an appeal hearing. -- *Client of Community Legal Services of Philadelphia*

❖ **My 12-year-old son** has received SSI since 2004, and it has been a major plus for his care and treatment. SSI helps my son go to programs he couldn't attend otherwise and covers the cost of his medicines, doctors, and counseling. Access to good medical treatment is the biggest benefit. He now has great health insurance through his school instead of Medicaid; many doctors in my state don't accept Medicaid patients, so his treatment options before receiving SSI were limited. He also now has one-on-one tutoring, and a counselor comes to school to meet with him there. I've seen a breakthrough in him because of that. SSI has been a tremendous blessing for my son and my family. -- *Rhonda*

❖ **I can't express how much it has helped to have SSI for my son.** It has relieved so much stress. I had medical coverage for him before getting SSI, but it only paid for limited treatment. Having SSI has opened doors to treatment options from other medical specialists and support services that he didn't have access to before. He's now on a medication that seems to work, and he's much happier--I can see the light in his eyes again. I can also afford good daycare that meets his needs, so I don't have to worry that I'm leaving him in an unsafe situation when I attend my college classes. Life is still a struggle because of my son's challenges, but having SSI has really taken the pressure off. -- *Suzanne*