**Social Security Column**

SOCIAL SECURITY SUPPORTS RURAL COMMUNITIES

**By <Name>**

**Social Security <Title> in <Place>**

A child looking at cows behind a fence

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Social Security touches the lives of nearly every American. Millions count on us — retirees, people no longer able to work due to disability, dependents, and survivors. As a member of the Rural Partners Network, we want to continue reaching out to rural communities.

We make it easy for you to access our programs and services. Our website offers a convenient way to apply online for benefits. Visit [www.ssa.gov/applyonline](http://www.ssa.gov/applyonline) to learn how to apply for:

* **Retirement or Spouse’s Benefits** – You must be at least 61 years and 9 months and want your benefits to start in no more than 4 months.
* **Disability** **Benefits** – Our disability program pays benefits to workers who are insured and certain family members. This means that they worked long enough – and recently enough – and paid Social Security taxes on their earnings.
* **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** – SSI provides monthly payments to adults and children with a disability or blindness, or people 65 or older**,** who have low income and resources. After you begin your application online, we will review the information you submit and contact you by mail or phone if we have questions.
* **Medicare** – Medicare is a federal health insurance program for people who are 65 or older or have a disability or end-stage renal disease. If you are not receiving Social Security benefits and not covered under an employer group health plan, you may want to consider applying for Medicare 3 months before turning age 65.
* ***Extra Help* with Medicare Prescription Drug Costs** – *Extra Help* assists with monthly premiums, annual deductibles, and co-payments related to Medicare prescription drug coverage for people with limited income and resources. Apply at [www.ssa.gov/extrahelp](http://www.ssa.gov/extrahelp).

Rural community leaders should encourage others to sign up for a personal *my* Social Security account at [www.ssa.gov/myaccount](https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount/). With a personal *my* Social Security account, they can request a replacement Social Security card, verify earnings, get future benefit estimates, and obtain benefit verification letters.

If they are not able to use our online services, they can speak with a representative by calling our National toll-free number at 1-800-772-1213, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. If an office visit is required, we can make an appointment.

In addition, our automated phone services are available 24 hours a day, so they may not need to wait for a representative. Learn more at [www.ssa.gov/agency/contact/phone.html](http://www.ssa.gov/agency/contact/phone.html).

We remain committed to helping maintain the well-being of the people we serve—including those in rural areas. Please share this information with others in your local community.

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