

**Living on the edge: Assessing the economic impacts of potential disability benefit reductions for Social Security disability beneficiaries**

**ABSTRACT**

**BACKGROUND:** Although Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits are an important source of support to many people with disabilities, modifications to programs are under consideration given current and projected governmental fiscal constraints.

**OBJECTIVE:** To provide data about levels of safety net cross-participation among working age SSDI and SSI program participants and to estimate how changes to disability benefit levels might influence the economic security of beneficiaries.

**METHODS:** Data from the 2012 Current Population Survey is used to describe income and resources, program participation, and the share of family income and supplemental poverty measure resources received through public disability benefits. Hypothetical benefit reductions are estimated to assess economic impacts on the beneficiary population.

**RESULTS:** Cross-participation is high among beneficiaries. Reductions in disability benefit income would have the largest impact on those beneficiaries who are participating in other safety net programs, but may also influence the movement of a portion of the remaining beneficiaries onto additional programs.

**CONCLUSION:** Any modification of SSA disability programs will require careful consideration of how other public programs and services, including those provided within the field of vocational rehabilitation, can best support the economic security of persons with disabilities.