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## **COULD YOU OR YOUR FAMILY MEMBER BENEFIT FROM AN ABLE ACCOUNT?**

Many Americans receive means-based benefits from the government, such as Supplemental Security Income [SSI] and/or Medi-Cal [Medicaid]. A person on such government aid is not allowed to have more than \$2,000 in the bank without becoming disqualified from these important benefits. This is where the important tool of an ABLE account comes into play.

### **WHAT IS AN ABLE ACCOUNT?**

The 2014 **A**chieving a **B**etter **L**ife **E**xperience Act was passed to allow qualified individuals the ability to place earnings and gifts into a special bank account without becoming ineligible for means-based assistance programs. Now, persons receiving such aid can hold up to \$100,000 in an account without being disqualified from public benefits. The account funds are to be used to supplement, but not replace items paid for with SSI and Medicaid.

### **WHO CAN HAVE AN ABLE ACCOUNT?**

Any person who receives SSI and was diagnosed with his or her disability before age 26 qualifies to have an ABLE account. If the individual does not receive SSI, he or she may still have an ABLE account if the disability would otherwise render him or her eligible for SSI and the disability onset was prior to the 26<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **WHAT CAN AN ABLE ACCOUNT BE USED FOR?**

An ABLE account can be used to pay for any qualified disability expense. This is a broadly-defined category. Examples of allowed expenses include education, housing, transportation, employment, training, assistive technology, personal support services, health care expenses, financial management, legal fees, and basic living expenses. It is further defined as any expenditure to improve health, independence, or quality of life of the person with a disability.

### **WHAT LIMITATIONS ARE THERE ON AN ABLE ACCOUNT?**

An ABLE account cannot hold more than \$100,000 if the participant wishes to remain eligible for needs-based benefits. No more than \$15,000 per year may be deposited into the account, whether from the participant's own earnings or in the form of a gift from a friend or relative. When the participant dies, the government may make a claim against the remainder in the account to offset state Medicaid benefits received during the participant's lifetime.

### **HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?**

ABLE programs are state-operated programs, and currently available in more than 30 states. At the time of this writing, California's ABLE program is still in development, but Californians may open ABLE accounts in other state programs. For more information and to find out which states offer ABLE accounts, visit the ABLE National Resource Center website: [www.ablenrc.org](http://www.ablenrc.org).

*The content herein is for general information only and should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion. You are urged to consult with your own attorney on any specific legal questions you may have.*

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