

entitled (or deemed entitled) on your earnings record have excess earnings (as described in § 404.430), your excess earnings are charged first against the total family benefits payable (or deemed payable) on your earnings record, as described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section. Next, the excess earnings of a person entitled on your earnings record are charged against his or her own benefits remaining after part of your excess earnings have been charged against his/her benefits (because of the reduction in the total family benefits payable). See § 404.441 for an example of this process and the manner in which partial monthly benefits are apportioned.

*(c) Earnings test applicability.*

Public Law 106-182 eliminated the Social Security earnings test, beginning with the month in which a person attains full retirement age (as defined in §§ 404.409), for taxable years after 1999. In the year that you reach full retirement age, the annual earnings test amount is applied to the earnings amounts of the months that precede your month of full retirement age. (See § 404.430). The reduction rate for these months is \$1 of benefits for every \$3 you earned above the earnings limit in these months. The earnings threshold amount will be increased in conjunction with increases in average wages.

10. Section 404.435 is revised to read as follows:

**§ 404.435 Excess earnings; months to which excess earnings can or cannot be charged; grace year defined.**

(a) *Monthly benefits payable.* We will not reduce your benefits on account of excess earnings for any month in which you, the beneficiary—

- (1) Were not entitled to a monthly benefit;
- (2) Were considered not entitled to benefits (due to non-covered work outside the United States or no child in care, as described in § 404.436);
- (3) Were at full retirement age (as described in § 404.409);
- (4) Were entitled to payment of a disability insurance benefit as defined in § 404.315; (see § 404.1592 and § 404.1592a(b)) which describes the work test if you are entitled to disability benefits;
- (5) Are age 18 or over and entitled to a child's insurance benefit based on disability;
- (6) Are entitled to a widow's or widower's insurance benefit based on disability; or
- (7) Had a non-service month in your grace year (see paragraph (b) of this section). A non-service month is any month in which you, while entitled to retirement or survivors benefits:

(i) Do not work in self-employment (see paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section);

(ii) Do not perform services for wages greater than the monthly exempt amount set for that month (see paragraph (e) of this section and § 404.430); and

(iii) Do not work in non-covered remunerative activity on 7 or more days in a month while outside the United States. A non-service month occurs even if there are no excess earnings in the year.

(b) *Grace year defined.* (1) A beneficiary's initial grace year is the first taxable year in which the beneficiary has a non-service month (see paragraph (a)(7) of this section) in or after the month in which the beneficiary is entitled to a retirement, auxiliary, or survivor's benefit.

(2) A beneficiary may have another grace year each time his or her entitlement to one type of benefit ends and, after a break in entitlement of at least one month, the beneficiary becomes entitled to a different type of retirement or survivors benefit. The new grace year would then be the taxable year in which the first non-service month occurs after the break in entitlement.

(3) For purposes of determining whether a given year is a beneficiary's grace year, we will not count as a non-service month, a month that occurred while the beneficiary was entitled to disability benefits under section 223 of the Social Security Act or as a disabled widow, widower, or child under section 202.

(4) A beneficiary entitled to child's benefits, to spouse's benefits before age 62 (entitled only by reason of having a child in his or her care), or to mother's or father's benefits is entitled to a termination grace year in any year the beneficiary's entitlement to these types of benefits terminates. This provision does not apply if the termination is because of death or if the beneficiary is entitled to a Social Security benefit for the month following the month in which the entitlement ended. The beneficiary is entitled to a termination grace year in addition to any other grace year(s) available to him or her.

*Example 1:* Don, age 62, will retire from his regular job in April of next year. Although he will have earned \$15,000 for January-April of that year and plans to work part time, he will not earn over the monthly exempt amount after April. Don's taxable year is the calendar year. Since next year will be the first year in which he has a non-service month while entitled to benefits, it will be his grace year and he will be entitled to the monthly earnings test for that year only. He will

receive benefits for all months in which he does not earn over the monthly exempt amount (May-December) even though his earnings have substantially exceeded the annual exempt amount. However, in the years that follow, up to the year of full retirement age, only the annual earnings test will be applied if he has earnings that exceed the annual exempt amount, regardless of his monthly earnings amounts.

*Example 2:* Marion was entitled to mother's insurance benefits from 1998 because she had a child in her care under age 18. Because she had a non-service month in 1998, 1998 was her initial grace year. Marion's child married in May 2000 and her entitlement to mother's benefits terminated in April 2000. Since Marion's entitlement did not terminate by reason of her death and she was not entitled to another type of Social Security benefit in the month after her entitlement to a mother's benefit ended, she is entitled to a termination grace year for 2000, the year in which her entitlement to mother's insurance benefits terminated. She applied for and became entitled to widow's insurance benefits effective February 2001. Because there was a break in entitlement to benefits of at least one month before entitlement to another type of benefit, 2001 will be a subsequent grace year if Marion has a non-service month in 2001.

(c) *You worked in self-employment.* You are considered to have worked in self-employment in any month in which you performed substantial services (see § 404.446) in the operation of a trade or business (or in a combination of trades and businesses if there are more than one), as an owner or partner even though you had no earnings or net earnings resulting from your services during the month.

(d) *Presumption regarding work in self-employment.* You are presumed to have worked in self-employment in each month of your taxable year until you show to our satisfaction that in a particular month you did not perform substantial services (see § 404.446(c)) in any trades and businesses from which you derived your annual net income or loss (see § 404.429).

(e) *Presumption regarding services for wages.* You are presumed to have performed services in any month for wages (as defined in § 404.429) of more than the applicable monthly exempt amount in each month of the year, until you show to our satisfaction that you did not perform services for wages in that month that exceeded the monthly exempt amount.

11. Section 404.437 is revised to read as follows:

**§ 404.437 Excess earnings; benefit rate subject to deductions because of excess earnings.**

We will further reduce your benefits (other than a disability insurance benefit) because of your excess earnings