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Social Security

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Social Security?An Overview

Social Security is a program that automatically deducts a portion of your earnings, denoted as FICA on your pay-stub, in order to provide certain benefits when you retire. The Social Security Number (?SSN?) enables the federal government to track these transactions.

Since the 9-digit SSN is unique to every individual, it has become an important means of identification, especially for banks, hospitals and many other agencies. For example, you may be asked for your SSN when you rent an apartment, buy a home, or apply for a credit card.

The following information is just a general overview and does not constitute legal advice. For specific information, please visit <http://www.ssa.gov/> ^[2]

Types of Social Security Cards

The Social Security Administration (SSA) issues three types of cards, depending on the individual's citizenship status and whether the Department of Homeland Security (?DHS?) has authorized the noncitizen to work in the United States. They include:

1. The first type of card shows the individual's name and SSN only. This is the card most people have, which reflects the fact that the holder can work in the United States without restriction. This card is issued to:

United States citizens; or

Noncitizens lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence and noncitizens with DHS? permission to work permanently in the United States (e.g., refugees and asylees).

2. The second type of card bears the individual's name, SSN, and the caption NOT VALID FOR EMPLOYMENT. This card is issued to lawful noncitizens who do not have DHS? permission to work, but are required to provide an SSN to get general assistance benefits they have qualified for.

3. The third type of card bears the individual's name, SSN, and the caption VALID FOR

WORK ONLY WITH DHS AUTHORIZATION. This card is issued to people with DHS? permission to work temporarily in the United States.

Obtaining a Social Security Card and Number

Applying for an SSN and card is free. There are two ways to apply:

You can visit a Social Security office in person; or

You can apply in your home country before coming to the United States by filing an immigrant visa application with the U.S. Department of State. In almost all cases, if you apply for an SSN and card with your immigrant visa application, you do not have to visit a Social Security office in the United States. For more information, see www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnvisa [3]

If you are not an immigrant or did not apply for an SSN on your immigrant visa application, you must have papers from DHS showing your immigration status and authorization to work. Then you should apply for an SSN and card by visiting your local Social Security office. SSA recommends you wait at least ten (10) days after arriving in the United States to apply for an SSN. This will make it easier for SSA to verify your DHS documents online, which will expedite processing of your application. To apply:

Complete an Application For A Social Security Card (Form SS-5);

Show at least two original documents proving your:

Identity and immigration status,

Work eligibility,

Age; and

Take your completed application and original documents to your local Social Security office.

Citizenship or Immigration Status

The center accepts only certain documents as proof of U.S. citizenship, including U.S. birth certificates, U.S. consular reports of birth, U.S. passports, and Certificates of Naturalization or Citizenship. If the applicant is not a U.S. citizen, the SSA officer will request the applicant's current immigration documents. Acceptable documents include:

Form I-551 or green card (includes machine-readable immigrant visa with the unexpired foreign passport);

I-94 with the unexpired foreign passport; or

Work permit card from DHS (I-766 or I-688B).

International students must present further documentation. For more information, see International Students And Social Security Numbers (Publication No. 05-10181).

Age: You must present your birth certificate if you have or can easily obtain it. If not, the center considers other documents such as the passport to prove age.

Identity: The center accepts only certain documents as proof of identity. An acceptable document must be valid and show the name, identifying information and preferably a recent photograph. SSA will ask for a United States driver's license, state-issued non-driver identification card, or United States passport as proof of identity. If the applicant does not have the requested documents, the center ask for other documents including:

Employee ID card;

School ID card;

Health insurance card (not a Medicare card);
U.S. military ID card;
Adoption decree;
Life insurance policy; or
Marriage document (only in name change situations).

All documents must either be originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. The center cannot accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents. The center may use one document for two purposes. For example, the center may use your DHS work permit as proof of both your identity and work-authorized immigration status. Your birth certificate or passport may serve as proof of age. However, you must provide at least two separate documents.

The center will mail the card as soon as it has all your information and has verified your documents with the issuing office.

Timeframe For Issuing a Social Security Card

Usually, the center can verify the documents with DHS online. If the documents cannot be verified online, it may take DHS several weeks to respond to the center's request. The center must verify the immigration documents with DHS before assigning an SSN. For questions regarding the status of your application, please contact the Social Security office where the application was filed. Take all documents originally presented as evidence.

The center also offers other assistance while waiting for a card, including:

- Issuing notices acknowledging filing of an application and verification of documents;
- Sending employers or interested third parties notices once the center assigns a number; and
- Notifying applicants of the number assigned to their application before sending the card in the mail.

Replacement Social Security Card

Since your Social Security Card is typically not needed daily, it should be safely kept with your other important paperwork. However, if you lose your card, a replacement card can be obtained by completing Form SS-5 and following the procedures detailed above. Your SSN remains the same.

Social Security's Telephone Services

The SSA can be contacted 24 hours a day, including weekends and holidays, by calling the toll-free number 1-800-772-1213 and speaking to a representative from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on business days. Services available include scheduling appointments, changing addresses, and signing up to send the Social Security check directly to the applicant's bank.

The center also provides automated services 24 hours a day to request services such as a replacement Medicare card or Social Security Statement, and a variety of other forms and publications.

The phone lines are busiest early in the week and month. So, if you are planning to file for

benefits, call the center as soon as possible. Having an SSN present with you when calling is advisable. People who are deaf or hard of hearing may call the "TTY" number 1-800-325-0778, between 7 a.m. and 7p.m. on business days. Pamphlets and other information can be faxed by calling the 24-hour fax catalogue number at 1-888-475-7000.

Agency:

SSA ^[4]

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Links:

[1] <https://immigration.com/social-security>

[2] <http://www.ssa.gov/>

[3] <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnvisa>

[4] <https://immigration.com/agencies/agency/ssa>