



Social Security Numbers

Who can get a Social Security Number?

All U.S. citizens can get a Social Security number (SSN). Many noncitizens can get an SSN if they work or go to school. Some noncitizens can get an SSN for a valid non-work reason.

Why do I need an SSN?

You need an SSN to:

- get a job
- report your wages to the government for tax purposes
- collect Social Security benefits and
- get certain government benefits



Your child needs an SSN to:

- be claimed as a dependent on your income tax return
- have a bank account opened for them
- get Medical Assistance or get coverage through an employer's insurance and
- apply for certain government services

You do not need an SSN to get a driver's license, register for school (K-12), get private health insurance, or apply for school lunch programs or subsidized housing, whether you are a citizen or not.

Non-Work SSNs: Noncitizens living in the US legally who don't have permission to work can sometimes get a non-work SSN. This happens if a government agency says you need one to get services. The government agency has to give you a letter to take to the Social Security Administration (SSA) saying you need a non-work SSN. **Note:** if you become eligible for work authorization in the future, you'll keep the same SSN.

What is an ITIN?

An Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) is a 9-digit number the IRS gives to people who are not U.S. citizens but are filing a tax return. It's for people who are not eligible for a Social Security number. An ITIN is for tax reporting purposes only. See our fact sheet [What is an ITIN?](#)

When can I or my child get an SSN?



The easiest way to get an SSN for your child is when you do your baby's birth certificate in the hospital. The hospital sends the information from the birth certificate to SSA. SSA uses the information on the birth certificate to link your child to you in their records. They link you through your SSN or your name if you don't have an SSN. Your child's SSN card is mailed to your home address.

Parents of citizen children under the age of 12 can apply for an SSN online. But sometimes they need you and the child to come to the office. See next section.

Citizens over age 12 need to appear in person if they are applying for their first SSN.

Noncitizens can apply for an SSN outside the U.S. on their immigrant visa application (Form DS-230 or DS-260).

If you are in the U.S. legally, fill in the section asking for an SSN on:

- USCIS Form I-765 (Application for Employment Authorization) or
- USCIS Form I-485 (Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status).

Your SSN card is mailed to the home address listed on your USCIS application.

Where do I go to get an SSN?

If you don't apply in the hospital or by using USCIS forms, you may need to go in person to a Social Security 'Card Center.' In Minnesota, **the Social Security Card Center is at 1811 Chicago Ave, Suite 2, in Minneapolis.**

Non-citizens who are lawfully present in the US, but who don't use one of the USCIS forms, need to go in person to do their SSN application.

Go to <https://www.ssa.gov/number-card/request-number-first-time> to start your SSN application online and find out what documents you need to bring to SSA.

There are other times you need to go in person to update your Social Security record and ask for a replacement SSN card. Your number stays the same. Things like:

- If you get married
- You legally change your name
- Your immigration status changes, like you now have a green card
- You become a US citizen

Social Security Number Myths



It costs money to get a Social Security number

SSNs are free, it doesn't cost anything to get an SSN. If someone offers to get you an SSN for a fee, report this to Social Security's Office of Inspector General hotline at 1 (800) 269-0271.



Social Security takes away your SSN when you leave the country or go to jail

Social Security can't take away your SSN if you:

- go to jail
- leave the country voluntarily
- are deported
- lose your legal authorization to work



Your SSN stays with you until you die. Then Social Security adds your SSN to their record of number holders that died. This keeps anyone from using the number illegally.



I'm a victim of domestic violence. Can my abuser use my SSN to get my personal information and find me?

No. The SSA protects the **privacy** of your SSN and other personal information. But if you are afraid of being found by an abuser, or fear for your safety, you may be able to get a new SSN. If you **plan** to change your name, apply for a new SSN *before* you change your name.

Protect your Social Security Number

- Memorize your SSN.
- Keep your SSN card in a safe place, don't carry it around with you.
- If you take a picture of your SSN card **don't** send the picture to anyone. And don't laminate it!
- Make a [mySSA account online](https://www.ssa.gov/myssa). Then you can check that your earnings are being recorded right. You can also check your paper statements that the SSA mails to you. If you find any issues let SSA know right away.

Where can I get more information or help?

Legal Aid is free and confidential, call 1(800) 292-4150 or 1(877) 696-6529.

You can also get information on the SSA website: <https://www.ssa.gov/>.

Fact Sheets are legal information NOT legal advice. See a lawyer for advice.

Don't use this fact sheet if it is more than 1 year old. Ask us for updates, a fact sheet list, or alternate formats.

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