

Social Security Number Information

A **Social Security Number (SSN)** is a U.S. Federal government number issued by the Social Security Administration (SSA). The number is used to keep a record of an individual's earnings for the purpose of government retirement and disability programs. It is also used for tax reporting purposes. All non-immigrants who will earn income in the United States **must** obtain a number for the employer to properly report earnings and tax withholdings. Visit <http://www.ssa.gov/> for additional information.

When should I apply for a Social Security Number?

Because the Social Security Administration (SSA) must verify your non-immigrant status with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), our office recommends that you wait to apply until **3 days AFTER** your arrival to the United States. If you apply sooner, the SSA will be unable to verify your status (because the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has not entered your name in its database) and issuance of the number may take months.

How do I apply for a Social Security Number?

You will need to complete an application for a Social Security Card (Form SS-5) and must visit a local SSA office with the application and documents that prove your age, identity, and lawful non-immigrant status. Follow the guidance in the following questions.

What documents do I need to apply for a Social Security Number?

- 1) You will need the Form SS-5. The form can be obtained at a local SSA office or available online at <http://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber/>.

***NOTE:** When completing the form, clearly write your name as it appears on your **passport**. Do not use a shortened version of your name or a "nickname" on the application form.

- 2) You will need evidence of your **age, identity and lawful non-immigrant status**.

Age: Original Birth Certificate or valid Passport

Birth Certificate options:

Expired passport

OR

Religious record made before you were three (3) months of age

OR

Original hospital record of birth made before the age of five (5)

Identity: Valid Passport (**note:** *it is helpful to bring an expired passport if your current passport was issued less than one [1] year ago*)

Lawful non-immigrant status:

Print-out of Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record (access record at www.cbp.gov/I94)

AND

Original Form DS-2019, if J-1 Exchange Visitor

OR

Original Form I-797 approval notice, if applicable (for example, H-1B or O-1)

OR

Employment Authorization Document, if applicable (for example, J-2 or F-1 Practical Training)

In addition: Copy of your NIH award, appointment, or assignment letter

NOTE: It is important that your name appears consistently as per your passport, Form I-94, and immigration document (for example, Form DS-2019). Please alert DIS if there are errors in your name. When applying for the SSN, your name **must** match how it appears on these documents.

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Where do I apply for the Social Security Number?

There are many SSA offices in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. We recommend that you apply at the office nearest to the NIH in Bethesda, Maryland. This office is located at:

315 N. Washington Street
Rockville, Maryland 20850
Telephone: 1-800-772-1213

Office hours: Visit the SSA's online Office Locator to learn office hours:
<https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp> (enter "20850" as the "Zip Code")
SSA offices are closed on Federal Holidays

Directions:

- Take the Metro (Red Line) towards Shady Grove to the Rockville Station
- Walk west three blocks to Washington Street
- Walk north four blocks to 315 N. Washington Street
 - The Social Security Office is on the right-hand side of the street

Other offices in the metropolitan area, as well as throughout the United States, can be located by entering the U.S. postal service's five-digit "**Zip Code**" of your city in the SSA's online Office Locator, available at <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>. Below is a listing of common cities and zip codes for those near NIH facilities:

- Silver Spring, MD – zip code: 20902
- Frederick, MD – zip code: 21701
- Baltimore, MD – zip code: 21201
- Washington, DC – zip code: 20037
- Arlington, VA – zip code: 22209
- Research Triangle Park, NC – zip code: 27709
- Hamilton, MT – zip code: 59840
- Phoenix, AZ – zip code: 85014

IMPORTANT: Do not fax or email this number. You must safeguard this number at all times, as it is often targeted for identify theft. Do not disclose this number (or any personal details) without verifying the source. For further details on identify theft, go to <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/>

Can my dependents apply for a Social Security Number?

Dependents that are not authorized to work in the U.S. are **not** eligible for a SSN. For tax purposes, however, they can apply for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). ITIN information can be found at <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=96287,00.html> and in the DIS Income Tax Handbook for Visiting Foreign Scientists at http://dis.ors.od.nih.gov/advisories/05_workshops.html#tax3.