SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER ELIGIBILITY

BACKGROUND

o   Initially created for the purpose of administering the Social Security programs, the Social Security number (SSN) has since had its use expanded to become a federal government identifier in both the public and private sectors.

o   While the Social Security Administration (SSA) still uses the SSN primarily for tracking workers' earnings information and the administration of its own programs, the expansion of the SSN as an identifier has made it a frequently used tool in the administration of other federal programs.

ELIGIBLE PERSONS AND SSN ISSUANCE

o   SSNs are primarily issued to work-eligible persons. U.S. citizens and people lawfully admitted to the U.S. on a permanent basis automatically have work-eligible status.

o   For non-immigrants, work-eligible status is determined by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and eligibility may change over time between non-work, temporary-work, and permanent-work status.

o   While the SSA verifies work-eligible status at the time of SSN application, DHS does not automatically notify the SSA if an individual's work-eligible status changes, so having an SSN is not necessarily a reflection on an individual's compliance with U.S. Immigration law.

o   In some limited cases, persons without work-eligible status can be issued an SSN if they need one to access a government benefit to which they are otherwise fully entitled.

Eligibility Category	Type of SSN Card
Permanently Work-Eligible	▪ U.S. Citizens, and people lawfully admitted to the U.S. on a permanent basis, including Permanent Residents, refugees, and asylees. ▪ Permanently Work Eligible persons receive an unrestricted SSN card.
Temporarily Work-Eligible	▪ Non-Immigrant Temporary Workers. ▪ Persons in this category are issued SSN cards reading, "VALID FOR WORK ONLY WITH DHS AUTHORIZATION" to differentiate from permanently work eligible SSNs.
Non-Work-Eligible with Valid Non-Work Need	▪ Under this category, a non-work-eligible non-immigrant must show that they have a valid need for an SSN in order to access a government benefit or service for which they otherwise fully qualify. ▪ Persons that receive SSN cards reading "NOT VALID FOR EMPLOYMENT" to differentiate from work eligible SSNs.

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