

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER ELIGIBILITY AND ENUMERATION

BACKGROUND

- 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.
- 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

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 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.

THE ENUMERATION PROCESS

- An individual can obtain an SSN, or become enumerated, in one of three ways: applying in person at a field office, or through Enumeration at Entry, Enumeration Beyond Entry, or Enumeration at Birth processes.
- Before enumeration, an individual must provide proof of age, identity, and one of the following: citizenship, work-authorized immigration status, or valid non-work need for an SSN.

Application Method	Who Can Apply	Process and Timing
In Person at a Field Office	Generally, non-immigrants applying for an SSN must visit a Social Security office in person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A field office employee collects the necessary enumeration information.▪ An SSN is usually issued within ten business days from the date the application is processed.
Enumeration at Entry (EAE)	Non-citizens applying for lawful permanent resident status.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Department of State and DHS collect enumeration information from immigrants applying for lawful permanent resident status as part of the visa application process.▪ This information is then transmitted to the SSA on the immigrant's behalf to eliminate the need to visit a Social Security office.▪ Generally, EAE applicants will receive their SSN card three weeks after arrival in the U.S.
Enumeration Beyond Entry (EBE)	Non-citizens applying for lawful permanent resident status before arriving in the United States.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Department of State and DHS collect enumeration information from immigrants applying for lawful permanent resident status as part of the visa application process.▪ This information is then transmitted to the SSA on the immigrant's behalf to eliminate the need to visit a Social Security office.▪ Generally, EBE applicants will receive their SSN card 7 days after work authorization is granted by DHS.
Enumeration at Birth (EAB)	Parents on behalf of their newborn children born in the U.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ EAB allows parents to complete applications for SSNs for their newborns as part of the hospital birth registration process in the U.S.▪ About 96 percent of SSNs for infants are assigned through this process.▪ The time between registration for EAB in the hospital and receipt of the SSN card varies from state to state, ranging from one to six weeks. The average processing time is two weeks.¹

¹ SSA.gov, *How long does it take to get my baby's Social Security Card that I applied for in the hospital?*, August 2017, available at: <https://faq.ssa.gov/link/portal/34011/34019/Article/3747/How-long-does-it-take-to-get-my-baby-s-Social-Security-card-that-I-applied-for-in-the-hospital>