



WHAT IS A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER?

Social Security Numbers (SSNs) are used to report a person’s wages to the U.S. government and to determine a person’s eligibility for Social Security and other government services. For more information, see the Social Security Administration’s (SSA) publication: <https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10096.pdf>

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER?

SSA issues SSNs to people lawfully admitted to the U.S. on a temporary basis who have authorization to work by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In general, international students and scholars must have an authorized, paying job to be eligible for an SSN.

HOW DO I OBTAIN A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER?

In order to obtain an SSN you must submit an application to a Social Security Administration (SSA) office. The contents of your application will depend on your specific immigration status, as described below. International students, scholars, and employees working at UIC should consult with your department administrator or Human Resources contact for additional guidance before starting this process.

When should I go to the SSA office?

OIS strongly recommends that you wait at minimum one business day from the date you arrive to the U.S. to apply for your SSN. SSA must verify your immigration status in order to accept your application and it takes one business day for federal databases to communicate information about your arrival and status to SSA. *Applying early may result in significant delay of receiving your SSN.*

Where is the SSA office?

While you may visit any SSA office location, the offices nearest UIC campuses are familiar with processing the applications of UIC students, scholars, and staff.

SSA Office nearest UIC’s Chicago Campus

605 West Washington Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60661
1-800-772-1213

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- (A) Student Services Building (SSB), 1200 West Harrison Street
- (E) Social Security Administration (SSA), 605 West Washington Boulevard

Directions to SSA from UIC Campus

- A) Take Bus #60 Randolph/Harbor Dr (stop is outside SSB at the southeast corner of Racine & Harrison.)
- B) The bus will make a left-hand turn on Canal.
- C) Get off the bus at Canal & Madison.
- D) Walk north on Canal and then take a left onto Washington, heading west.
- E) Walk two blocks until you reach 605 West Washington Blvd.





What should I bring to the SSA office?

1. Passport
2. I-94 record
3. Address where your card can be successfully delivered to you 2-6 weeks from your application date
4. Additional documentation
 - F-1 sponsored by UIC and working on-campus – Form I-20 and completed *Social Security Support Letter for F-1 International Students* (download form at ois.uic.edu > current students > forms).
 - F-1 status on CPT – Form I-20 with current CPT authorization and employer’s job offer letter
 - F-1 status on OPT – Form I-20, USCIS issued EAD, and employer’s job offer letter
 - J Exchange Visitor (student or scholar) sponsored by UIC – Form DS-2019 and completed *Social Security Support Letter for J-1 Exchange Visitors* (download form at ois.uic.edu > current students > forms).
 - J-1 status sponsored by IIE Fulbright – Form DS-2019 and Social Security Support Letter issued by IIE
 - J-2 status – Form DS-2019, USCIS issued EAD, and employer’s job offer letter

What happens after I submit my application?

Once you apply, SSA will process your application and, if approved, mail you a card containing your unique and permanent Social Security Number (SSN). It can take 2-6 weeks from the date of application for the card to arrive by mail. After you receive your card, please submit a copy directly to your employer.

Most likely you will receive a Social Security card that has the notation, “VALID FOR WORK ONLY WITH DHS AUTHORIZATION.” SSA issues this type of card to people lawfully admitted to the United States on a temporary basis who have authorization to work by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

HOW SHOULD I HANDLE MY SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER?

Your Social Security Number (SSN) is sensitive, personal identification information. In general, you should not carry your Social Security card in your wallet on a daily basis. It may help to memorize your number and only carry the card when you know it will be needed for a specific purpose. Common scenarios in which your SSN will be requested are:

- When an employer is setting up payroll and tax paperwork at a new job.
- When setting up a new bank account, opening a credit card, or applying for a loan.
- When a business needs to check your credit in order to apply for an apartment, sign up for utilities, or get a contract-based mobile phone plan.

However, since SSNs are commonly used in identity theft scams, it’s a good idea to ask questions before deciding to share your number in-person, on a form, or online. For example if someone wants you to share your or your child’s SSN, you can ask:

- Why do they need your SSN?
- How will your SSN be used?
- How will they protect your SSN and other personal information?
- What happens if you don’t share your SSN?
- Is there other identifying information you can provide in place of the SSN?

If you don’t feel comfortable with the answers to these questions, or you are being asked to share your SSN over public Wi-Fi to a non-encrypted website, it may be best to protect your SSN and not share it.

Information adapted from the Federal Trade Commission’s site, [How to Keep your Personal Information Secure](#).