



Social Security numbers (SSNs) are a key element to many aspects of life in the U.S., but issuance of SSNs to foreign nationals is restricted and we are often asked questions about it. The following are answers and resources to provide you with information on this and related topics.

- **Q: How does a noncitizen obtain a SSN?**
- A: Noncitizens authorized to work in the U.S. by DHS can apply to obtain a SSN. Although, since the I-94 Automation in May 2013, the SSA has changed its 10-day wait policy. It is best if noncitizens wait for a few days after admission to apply. For first time applicants, the process involves completing an application, applying in person at a SS office and presenting at least two acceptable documents to prove identity, work authorization and age. It is taking about two to three weeks after application for the noncitizen to obtain the SSN.

- **Q: Can the employee work while the SSN is in process?**
- A: Yes. During that time, the employer should keep track of the employee's earnings using an identifier other than the SSN and once the number is issued, update the data.

- **Q. Can a dependent family member of an employee on a nonimmigrant visa obtain a SSN?**
- A: It depends. Certain dependent family members are able to apply to obtain an employment authorization document (EAD) and in those cases, once the EAD is issued, they can apply to obtain a SSN. These nonimmigrant categories include L-2, E and J-2 nonimmigrant spouses. However, dependent family members are generally not able to apply to obtain a SSN.

- **Q: How does an international student obtain a SSN?**
- A: Students should report to their schools upon arrival to the U.S. and prior to applying for a SSN. If the student is work authorized by DHS, the student follows the same process as other noncitizens to apply. If the student will be engaged in CPT (curriculum practical training), they should complete the application, apply in person and provide the SSA with an updated I-20 endorsed for practical training, passport and I-94 card reflecting the student status.

- **Q. Can someone that entered the U.S. as a visitor (B-1/B-2 status) obtain a SSN?**
- A: A person on B-1/B-2 status is not authorized to work in the U.S. and as a result it is extremely unlikely that the SSA will issue a SSN in this situation. The SSA has stated that "a noncitizen not permitted to work must show us a letter from a federal, state or local government agency that explains you need a number and meet all the requirements for a benefit."

- **Q: How do I obtain SS card replacement?**
- A: A SSN is issued to a specific person for life, and you rarely need to show the actual card, but it is important is to know your SSN. To obtain a replacement SS card, you must complete an application and present a document(s) to prove identity and U.S. citizenship or current work-authorized immigration status. In general, it takes about two to three weeks for the card to be issued. All documents must be either originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. The SSA does not accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents.

- **Q. May a nonimmigrant open a bank account in the U.S.?**
- Typically, yes. However, banks must comply with strict federal banking requirements which may require that the applicant has a SSN or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) to open an account.

- **Q. Can a nonimmigrant obtain an EIN for a business without a SSN?**
- A: Typically, yes. A foreigner who owns a U.S. company can apply to obtain an EIN for the company. The application process includes completing Form SS4 and calling or visiting an IRS office to complete the process. The applicant should provide the Articles of Incorporation or Organization and/or the Operating Agreement which describe the Ownership of the company.

For additional information on how to apply for a Social Security number, please visit www.social security.gov.

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