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WHAT IS A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER?

Social security numbers (SSN) are primarily intended to identify participants in the federal government's social security program, which provides retirement and disability benefits to workers and their families. However, it should be noted that they are widely used for administrative and identification purposes. The SSN is issued by the Social Security Administration (SSA).

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER?

All fully enrolled F-1 students are eligible for a Social Security number.

WHO DOES NOT QUALIFY FOR A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER?

F-2 visa holders (dependents of F-1 visa holders) also do not qualify for a SSN.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER?

F-1 students must submit in person to the SSA the following documents in order to be considered for a Social Security Number:

1. Evidence of age and identity (...passport)
2. F-1 students must present the Certificate of Eligibility for F-1 student status, also frequently called the I-20 ID (Student) Copy. (The I-20 must have the notations stamped "F-1 D/S" by the INS)
3. A current I-94 card, also known as the "arrival / departure card." (This I-94 card should be stamped with the correct notation "F-1 D/S"

Warning: If your I-94 card or I-20 is not properly stamped, you will not be allowed to apply for a Social Security Number. You will need to go to the local USCIS (U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services) Office and request that your documents be corrected.

4. A letter issued by the Designated School Official (DSO). This letter will be issued by the International Student Services Coordinator. The form must be signed by your department certifying your enrollment and returned to the International Student Services Coordinator in order for the letter to be issued.

The letter must:

1. Contain original DSO signature.
2. Specify that the student is authorized to work on-campus.
3. Specify that the student is currently enrolled in a full course of study.

WARNING: In a response to "national security and fraud concerns," the SSA has implemented a new policy that will require verification of certain information on a BCIS database. The SSA must now check the BCIS's I-94 (arrival/departure card) database, so they are strongly suggesting that a student wait 10-12 days after arriving the United States to apply for the Social Security Number, this is so that they can verify the "visa status" in the system and issue the actual card in two weeks.

WHERE CAN I OBTAIN A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER?

Social security numbers are issued by the Social Security Administration (SSA) Office.

You must apply in person at the Social Security Office in our area:

San Rafael SSA:

1001 Loutens Place, 3rd Floor M-F 9:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.

Directions: US 101-Take Central San Rafael exit. Located between 4th and 5th Street on Loutens Place