



Replacing Social Security Cards Fact Sheet

Introduction

You can replace your Social Security (SS) card for free if it is lost or stolen. However, you may not need to get a replacement card. Knowing your Social Security Number (SSN) is what is important. You are limited to three replacement cards in a year and 10 during your lifetime. Legal name changes and other exceptions do not count toward these limits. For example, changes in immigration status that require card updates may not count toward these limits. Also, you may not be affected by these limits if you can prove you need the card to prevent a significant hardship.

Types

Originals

To apply for an original card, you must provide at least two documents to prove age, identity, and either U.S. citizenship or current lawful, work-authorized immigration status. If you are not a U.S. citizen and do not have Department of Homeland Security (DHS) work authorization, you must prove that you have a valid non-work reason for requesting a card.

Replacements

To apply for a replacement card, you must provide one document to prove your identity. If you were born outside the U.S., you must also provide documents to prove your U.S. citizenship or current, lawful, work-authorized status.

Changing Information

If you need to change the information on your SSN record (correcting your name, citizenship, or date of birth) you must provide documents to prove your identity, support the requested change, and establish the reason for the change. A document supporting a name change must be recent and identify you by both your old and new names.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) may accept these as proof of a legal name change:

- a marriage document
- a divorce decree
- a certificate of naturalization showing the new name
- a court order approving the name change

If the document you provide as evidence of a legal name change does not give enough information to identify you in the SS records, or if you changed your name more than two years ago (four years ago if you are under 18 years of age), you must show

an identity document in your prior name (as shown in their records). The SSA will accept an identity document in your old name that has expired.

If you do not have an identity document in your prior name, the SSA may accept an unexpired identity document in your new name, as long as they can properly establish your identity in their records.

Applying

You will need to complete Form SS-5. You can obtain form SS-5 on the SS online Website at [socialsecurity.gov](https://www.socialsecurity.gov) or by visiting your local SS office. If you are not sure where your local office is located, call 1-800-772-1213.

All documents submitted must be either originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. The SSA cannot accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents.

Take or mail the signed form SS-5 to the nearest SS office. Be sure to take or mail the originals or certified copies of your supporting documents along with the form. They will return your original documents right away. Generally, you will get your card within 10 business days from the date your application is processed.

Providing Proof

Of Age

In general, you must present your birth certificate. If one exists, you must submit it. If a birth certificate does not exist, the SSA may be able to accept your:

- religious record made before the age of five showing your date of birth
- U.S. hospital record of your birth
- U.S. passport
- final adoption decree

Of Identity

The SSA can accept only certain documents as proof of identity. An acceptable document must be current (not expired) and show your name, identifying information (date of birth or age), and preferably a recent photograph.

Documents proving identity:

- a U.S. driver's license
- a state-issued non-driver identity card
- a U.S. passport



If you do not have one of these specific documents, or if you cannot get a replacement for one of them within 10 work days, the SSA will ask to see other documents. Any documents submitted, including any one of the following, must be current (not expired) and show your name, identifying information (date of birth or age), and preferably a recent photograph.

- an employee identification card
- a school identification card
- a health insurance or Medicaid card
- a certificate of naturalization
- a certified copy of your medical record
- a U.S. military identification card

Of Citizenship

In general, you must provide your U.S. birth certificate or U.S. passport.

Other documents proving citizenship:

- a consular report of birth
- a certificate of citizenship
- a certificate of naturalization

This fact sheet is a collaboration of the Center for Arkansas Legal Services and Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc. These nonprofit organizations provide free legal assistance to eligible Arkansans who meet income, asset, and other guidelines. Legal assistance may also include advice and counsel, brief services, or full representation depending on the situation. For more information about civil legal aid in Arkansas, please visit arlegalservices.org. For information specific to Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc., visit arlegalaid.org. Apply for services online or by calling 1-800-9-LAW-AID (1-800-952-9243).

The information and statements of law in this fact sheet should not be considered legal advice. This fact sheet is provided as a broad guide to help you understand how certain legal matters are handled in general. Courts may interpret the law differently. Before you take action, talk to an attorney and follow his or her advice. Always do what the court tells you to do.

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