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Social Security Online **FOIA | Freedom of Information Act****Freedom of Information Act**[Regulations](#)[Annual Reports](#)[Frequently Requested Documents](#)[Manuals and Instructions](#)[Privacy Impact Assessments](#)

The Freedom of Information Act allows members of the public to request records from various Federal government agencies. The FOIA was established to make the federal government accountable to the public for its actions and prevents agencies from having secret policies.



The [Guide to Freedom of Information Act Requests](#) ← explains how to request information and records from the Social Security Administration, details information that we can not disclose, and outlines the various fees that are involved with a request.

In addition, you may find information on SSA's implementation of [Executive Order 13392 on Improving Agency Disclosure of Information](#).

The links at the left are available to facilitate you in your search for information.



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Last reviewed or modified Monday Jan 14, 2008

# Social Security Online | FOIA | Freedom of Information Act

[FOIA Home](#)



## Guide to FOIA Requests

[Public Information](#)

The Freedom of Information Act allows members of the public to request records from various Federal government agencies. The FOIA was established to make the federal government accountable to the public for its actions and prevents agencies from having secret policies.

[Freedom of Information Act Requests](#)

[Records We Make Available](#)

### Public Information

SSA prepares many documents for public distribution - such as leaflets about our benefits programs, press releases and reports. Many of these documents are available on SSA's Internet site at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov). We encourage you to browse the site for documents that interest you. We do not process requests for public information materials as Freedom of Information Act requests.



[Making a FOIA Request](#)

[Frequently Requested Records and Fees](#)

### Freedom Of Information Act Requests

Members of the public can get documents from Federal agencies based on the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

[Records We Generally Can Not Disclose](#)

### Records We Make Available

[How the Privacy Act Affects Your Request](#)

Administrative staff manuals of the Social Security Administration and Instructions to staff personnel that contain policies, procedures, or interpretations that affect the public are available for inspection and copying.

[How We Process Your Request](#)

You can inspect and copy the following SSA records online, in any field office, at our headquarters in Baltimore, and at [SSA hearings offices](#) nationwide.

[Expedited Process](#)

[Program Operations Manual System \(POMS\)](#)

[Denials and Appeals](#)

Operating instructions for SSA personnel

### State and Local Coverage Handbook for the Social Security Administration and State Social Security Administrators

- Reference source for anyone who administers State Social Security coverage agreements.
- Available for inspection in SSA Regional Offices and SSA offices in State capitols.

The Handbook is also available online at:

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/slge/slch.htm>

**SSA Organizational Chart**

Shows reporting relationships within the Social Security Administration <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/org/>

**Compilation of the Social Security Law**

[http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OP\\_Home/ssact/comp-ssa.htm](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OP_Home/ssact/comp-ssa.htm)

**Social Security Administration Regulations**

[http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OP\\_Home/cfr20/cfrdoc.htm](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OP_Home/cfr20/cfrdoc.htm)

**Social Security Rulings and Acquiescence Rulings**

[http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OP\\_Home/rulings/rulings.html](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OP_Home/rulings/rulings.html)

**Hearings, Appeals and Litigation Law Manual (HALLEX)**

[http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OP\\_Home/hallex/hallex.htm](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OP_Home/hallex/hallex.htm)

**MAKE YOUR REQUEST ONLINE****Social Security Electronic Freedom of Information (eFOIA)**

Now you can make a request online.

You can request a copy of the following online:

- Social Security Number Application (Form SS-5) of a deceased person. You can use online Form [SSA-711](#).
- A computer extract of the Social Security number application. You can use online Form [SSA-711](#).

You can make payment online with a secure online payment via pay.gov. You can use these credit cards:

- MasterCard
- Visa
- Discover
- American Express, and
- Diner's Club

**Other Online FOIA Requests**

If you would like to make an online FOIA request for records other than a photocopy of an application for a Social Security Card (SS-5) or a computer extract of a Social Security Card Application, you may make your request online using the **eForm**. However, there may be a fee for the information you request. After we receive your

Takes user directly to the eFOIA request screen.

request we will let you know if there is a fee. This type of request cannot be paid for online.

## INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR REQUEST

### How Do I Get This Information?

1. Complete the [eForm](#) request to tell us what information you want. Please note that space is limited to 2000 characters.
2. Complete the requester's information.

### Is There A Fee For This Information?

- We will let you know if there is a fee for the information that you request before we start a search. The FOIA fees are based on the grade of the employees doing the work and the amount of time spent on your request, plus 10 cents per page for photocopying.

### **Online service is available (Eastern time):**

Our eFOIA service is available all the time, except for a brief period from 10:00 p.m. Saturday – 4:30 a.m. every Sunday.

### **Mail In Requests**

It is easy to make a written FOIA request by mail. No form is needed. We process FOIA requests in two locations, depending on the type of request. Mark both the envelope and its contents: "FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST" or "INFORMATION REQUEST." Be sure to include your name and address on your request. It is a good idea to include a daytime phone number or e-mail address in case we need to contact you about your request. Do not include a return envelope.

There is a form available to request copies of applications for a Social Security Number (Form SS-5) for people who are deceased. Form [SSA-711](#) (Adobe reader required to view) may be used for this purpose; however, you do not need to use the form. Address your request to:

Social Security Administration  
OEO FOIA Workgroup  
300 N. Greene Street  
P.O. Box 33022  
Baltimore, Maryland 21290-3022

You can use Form [SSA-714](#) (Adobe reader required) to pay by credit card.

Make checks or money orders payable to the Social Security Administration.

## DO NOT SEND CASH

### Frequently Requested Records and Fees

Requests for records of Social Security number (SSN) holders, claimants and wage earners, are covered by the fee schedule below.

Many numident records of older individuals, primarily those born in 1910 or earlier, are abbreviated records that do not contain the names of the individual's parents and may not contain the place of birth.

The Social Security Administration did not begin keeping records until November 1936.

We can not search for the SSN of anyone born before 1865.

<b>Fees For Processing Requests For Individual's</b>	
<b>Social Security Record</b>	
Request for copy of Original Application for Social Security Card (Form SS-5), SSN Provided (Printout from microfilm)	\$27
Request for copy of Original Application for Social Security Card (Form SS-5), <u>SSN Not Provided</u> (Printout from microfilm)	\$29
Request for Computer Extract of Social Security Number Application, SSN Provided (* <u>Numident</u> only requested)	\$16
Request for Computer Extract of Social Security Number Application, <u>SSN Not Provided</u> (* <u>Numident</u> only requested)	\$18
Search for Information about Death of an Individual, SSN Provided (SSA does <u>not</u> usually have place of death, burial, or cause of death)	\$16
Search for Information about Death of an Individual, <u>SSN Not Provided</u> (SSA does <u>not</u> usually have place of death, burial, or cause of death)	\$18
<a href="#">Forward a letter</a> to inform a person about	\$25

entitlement to money
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We can not search for the SSN of anyone born before 1865.

\*The Numident record is a computer extract of information from the original application for a Social Security card.

**Send all other FOIA requests to:**

Social Security Administration  
Office of Public Disclosure  
3-A-6 Operations Building  
6401 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, Maryland 21235

If you want to request a record which we don't publish or which we don't make available in one of our offices, mark your envelope and its contents "FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST" and include the following:

- Information you are requesting (include as many details as possible, for example: dates, subject matter, location)
- Your name
- Your address and
- Daytime phone number or e-mail address.

DO NOT INCLUDE A RETURN ENVELOPE

You can also write or give your written request to any Social Security field office.

There may be a fee for information you requested. We will let you know if your request will cost more than \$250 before we start a search. The FOIA fees are based on the grade of employees doing the work and the amount of time spent on your request, plus 10 cents per page for photocopying.

**The Hourly Fees for Search and Review Are:**

<b>Search by Grade:</b>	
GS-1 through GS-8	\$16.00
GS-9 through GS-14	\$33.00
GS-15 or above	\$59.00

**Records We Generally Can Not Disclose**

The FOIA does not require agencies to disclose all records. Some examples of records we may not disclose are:

- Classified records;
- Internal personnel rules;
- Confidential by law;
- Trade secrets or confidential financial information;
- Personal information about living people, or
- Records of investigations.

## How The Privacy Act Affects Your Request

### • Your Own Record

If you are requesting your own record(s), we will process your request under the Privacy Act first, instead of under the FOIA.

### • Someone Else's Records

If you are requesting another living person's record, you need the person's written consent to disclose the record to you. In these cases, send your request, with the signed consent, to your local Social Security office .

### • Records Needed for a Social Security Benefit Application

If you need your records in connection with your claim for Social Security benefits, or if you are a representative of someone pursuing a claim for Social Security benefits; send your request to your local Social Security office.

## How We Process Your Request

We try to handle your request within 20 days from the date we receive it. Sometimes it may take us longer depending on the difficulty of finding the record and how much other work we have. We process requests under a "first in" "first out" basis using the following categories:

### Normal

Simple requests where the receiving office has all the information it needs for the answer. These requests will take the least amount of time to process.

### Longer

These requests often require the receiving office to obtain more information from another SSA office(s).

### Longest

Requests that require:



- More information or records from another SSA office or another government office(s);
- a voluminous amount of records, or
- Additional decisions on releasing records from these offices.

These requests take the longest to answer.

### **Expedited Process**

We provide expedited handling when the request:

- Involves an imminent threat to a person's life or physical safety, or
- Is made by a member of the media to obtain information that the public has an urgent need to know. The records would cover actual or alleged Federal Government activity.

If you think your request should be expedited, please explain your reasons fully in your request. Within 10 days from the date of your request, we will decide whether we will expedite it and notify you of our decision.

### **Denials And Appeals**

Sometimes we cannot disclose some or all of the records you requested. When we cannot disclose some or all of the records you requested, we will send you a written denial, explaining our reason(s) and your appeal rights.



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Last reviewed or modified Friday Feb 01, 2008

## General Request for Social Security Records

### Request Description

### Requester's Information

Name:    First     Middle     Last  <>

Street address

City     State     Zip code

Telephone number     Fax number     E-Mail address

### **PAPERWORK/PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT**

**PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT:** This information collection meets the clearance requirements of 44 U.S.C. §3507, as amended by section 2 of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. You are not required to answer these questions unless we display a valid Office of Management and Budget control number. We estimate that it will take you about 3 minutes to read the instructions, gather the necessary facts, and answer the question. You may send comments on our time estimate above to: SSA, 1338 Annex Building, Baltimore, MD 21235-6401. Send only comments relating to our time estimate to this address, not the completed form. **READ THIS SECTION, BEFORE COMPLETING THE FORM.**

**PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT:** The Social Security Administration (SSA) has the authority to collect the information requested on this form under 5 U.S.C. § 552 and the applicable regulations at 20 CFR § 402.130. The information you provide will be used to respond to your request for information or records maintained by SSA. You do not have to give us this information. However, without the information we will be unable to respond to your request.

Although the information we obtain with this form is almost never used for any purpose other than the one stated above, the information may be disclosed by SSA without your consent if authorized by Federal laws such as the Privacy Act and the Social Security Act. For example, SSA may disclose to a Congressional office requesting information on your behalf; to the Department of Justice (DOJ) for use in representing the Federal Government; and to the General Services Administration and the National Archives and Records Administration to conduct studies. Disclosure of any information defined as "returns or return information" under 26 U.S.C. § 6103 of the IRC will not be disclosed unless authorized by a statute, the IRS, or IRS regulations.

Explanations about these and other reasons why information you provide may be used or given out are available in Social Security offices. If you want to learn more about this, you may contact any Social Security office.