

## Social Security

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### **Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA)**

#### **Your Access To Social Security Administration Information**

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#### **SPECIAL NOTICE (as of 11/24/2020)**

The Office of Privacy and Disclosure at Social Security Administration (SSA) continues to process Privacy Act (PA) requests and complex Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for agency records during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, due to limitations imposed by the current pandemic, we are experiencing operational challenges that impact the processing of certain workloads. The agency is continuing to process FOIA and PA requests; however, portions of our operations are doing so with limited resources. Please view the agency's Coronavirus (COVID-19) Updates page for additional information about field office operations and SSA's online services.

#### **Requests for a Copy of Deceased Persons' Applications for a Social Security Card (SS-5) and Numident Records:**

Due to the pandemic, the time associated with processing physical mail and personal checks has increased; **therefore, we strongly encourage requesters to submit their requests for a deceased person's SS-5 and Numident record electronically via FOIAonline.**

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### **Guide to FOIA at SSA**

The FOIA allows members of the public to request records from Federal agencies. The Federal government established FOIA to promote transparency and prevent agencies from having secret policies.

This guide explains how to request information and records from us, information we cannot disclose, and fees involved with a request.

#### **How to Request Your Own Record**

## **Your Own Record**

To request information from your own file, please visit your local Social Security office. Your local office has jurisdiction over the records necessary to process your request. When you visit the office, please bring proper identification.

Original Application for a Social Security Card (SS-5)/Numident Record (computer extract of the SS-5) – If you are seeking a copy of your original SS-5 or Numident, we need you to provide the following information: Name; Address; Signature; Social Security number; and a signed statement that you are the individual to whom the record pertains and you understand there are criminal penalties for making a knowing and willful request for access to records concerning another individual under false pretenses.

You may submit your request using Form SSA-L996 . Please submit your request with payment to: Social Security Administration (SSA), OEIO, FOIA Workgroup, 6100 Wabash Ave, P.O. Box 33022, Baltimore, MD 21290-3022. The fee for a copy of the SS-5 is \$21.00. The fee for a copy of the Numident is \$20.00. We will not process your request without exact payment. We accept Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express, and Diner's Club. To pay by credit card, complete and sign the SSA-714 . Be sure to include your credit card number and expiration date. We also accept checks or money orders payable to SSA.

## **Request for Someone Else's Records**

The Social Security Act prohibits the disclosure of any file, record, report, or other information concerning a person obtained by SSA employees in the course of their duties, except as otherwise provided by Federal law and regulations. 42 U.S.C. § 1306.

If you are seeking SSA program records about a living individual, you must have the individual complete the Form SSA-3288 available at <https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-3288.pdf> or complete a consent that complies with our regulation at 20 C.F.R. § 401.100 to request the individual's records. If you obtain proper authorization, you may request this information from the individual's local Social Security office. Please visit our website at [www.socialsecurity.gov/locator](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/locator) to locate the individual's local office.

Original Application for a Social Security Card (SS-5)/Numident Record (computer extract of the SS-5) – If you are seeking a copy of a living individuals' original SS-5 or Numident, we need you to provide proper authorization. Please have the number holder complete the SSA-3288 . Please send your request with payment and proper authorization to Social Security Administration (SSA), OEIO, FOIA Workgroup, 6100 Wabash Ave, P.O. Box 33022, Baltimore, MD 21290-3022.

The fee for a copy of the SS-5 is \$21.00. The fee for a copy of the Numident is \$20.00. We will not process your request without exact payment. We accept Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express, and Diner's Club. To pay by credit card, complete and sign the SSA-714 . Be sure to include your credit card number and expiration date. We also accept checks or money orders payable to SSA.

#### SSA Employee Records

If you are seeking the records of a current SSA employee (regarding payroll, performance, leave, etc.), you should have the employee complete Form SSA-3465 and advise the employee to submit the form to his or her supervisor. When an employee resigns, retires, transfers, or otherwise terminates employment with SSA, Form SSA-3465 should be mailed to SSA's Office of the General Counsel, Office of Privacy and Disclosure at 6401 Security Boulevard, West High Rise, Room G-401, Baltimore, Maryland 21235.

Earnings Records - If you are seeking a living or deceased individual's earnings records, please follow the instructions to complete Form SSA-7050-F4 available at: <https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-7050.pdf> and mail it to the address on the form along with the applicable fee and other evidentiary documents, as required.

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

If you need your records regarding 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.

[Learn more about SSA's commitment to Privacy](#)

### **How to Request a Deceased Person's Records**

Earnings Records - If you are seeking a deceased person's earnings records, please follow the instructions to complete Form SSA-7050-F4 available at: <https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-7050.pdf> and mail it to the address on the form along with the applicable fee and other evidentiary documents, as required.

Original Application for a Social Security Card (SS-5) and/or Numident – Please view the instructions available at "Request a copy of Deceased Person's Original Application for a Social Security Card (SS-5) or Numident Record"

Claim File - To request a copy of a deceased person's claim file, please visit your local office. Please be aware that we ordinarily destroy claim files several years after the final decision on the claim. Sometimes we can recall a claim file from our program service center or a Federal Records Center. Documents in a claim file may include applications for benefits, military records, marriage records, and birth and death records. However, information about living individuals found in the claim file will be deleted. The field office will determine the applicable fees.

### **Information that is Already Publicly Available**

We prepare many documents for public distribution through our website. We provide:

- Leaflets about our benefits programs
- Press releases
- Reports
- Answers to frequently asked questions.

Please visit our Electronic FOIA Reading Room for information that might be responsive to your request.

Our Open Government portal helps point the public to our datasets and information to help answer your questions about our programs and operations.

#### **PLEASE NOTE**

Check these sources prior to making a FOIA request because we do not process requests for public information materials as Freedom of Information Act requests.

### **Records We May Not Release**

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

- Classified records;
- Information that is confidential by law;
- Internal personnel rules;
- Personal information about living people;

- Records of investigations; or
- Trade secrets or confidential financial information.

## The FOIA Process at SSA

### Tab 1

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

#### Normal

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

Requests that often require the receiving office to obtain more information from another SSA office.

#### Longest

Requests that require:

- More information or records from another SSA office or another government office;
- A voluminous number of records, or
- Additional decisions on releasing records from these offices.

These requests take the longest to answer.

- [Learn more about how we process your requests](#)

### Tab 2

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 and the records would cover actual or alleged Federal Government activity.

If you think we should expedite your request, 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.

### **Tab 3**

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.

If you would like further assistance with your request, you may contact our FOIA Public Liaison by email at [FOIA.Public.Liaison@ssa.gov](mailto:FOIA.Public.Liaison@ssa.gov); by phone at 410-965-1727, by choosing Option 2; or facsimile at 410-965-0869. Additionally, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road – OGIS, College Park, MD 20740-6001; email at [ogis@nara.gov](mailto:ogis@nara.gov); telephone at 202-741-5770; toll-free at 1-877-684-6448; or facsimile at 202-741-5769.

If you disagree with this decision, you may file a written appeal with the Executive Director for the Office of Privacy and Disclosure, Social Security Administration, 617 Altmeyer Building, 6401 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, Maryland 21235. Your appeal must be postmarked or electronically transmitted to [FOIA.Public.Liaison@ssa.gov](mailto:FOIA.Public.Liaison@ssa.gov) within 90 days of the date of our response to your initial request. Please mark the envelope or subject line with "Freedom of Information Ap0eal".







# New Request

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is a federal law that gives the public the right to make requests for federal agency records. Agencies may withhold information according to nine exemptions contained in the statute. The FOIA applies only to federal agencies. It does not apply to records held by Congress, the courts, or by state or local government agencies. Each state has its own public access laws that should be consulted for access to state and local records.

★ indicates a required field.

## Agency Selection

★ Agency

## Request Type

Request Type

## Contact Information

Salutation	<input type="text" value="--"/>
★ First Name	<input type="text"/>
Middle Initial	<input type="text"/>
★ Last Name	<input type="text"/>
Email Address	<input type="text"/>
Organization	<input type="text"/>
Phone Number	<input type="text"/>
Fax Number	<input type="text"/>
Mailing Address Location	<input type="text" value="United States/US Territories"/>
★ Address Line 1	<input type="text"/>
Address Line 2	<input type="text"/>
★ City	<input type="text"/>
★ State/Province	<input type="text" value="--"/>
★ Zip Code/Postal Code	<input type="text"/>

## Processing Fees

Why are fees required?

★ Will Pay Up To

## Description

★ 0/2000

## Request Expedited Processing

Under certain conditions, you may be entitled to have your request processed on an expedited basis. Please see agency specific regulations for the criteria that the agency uses to grant a request for expedited processing.

Make Request?

 

## Request a Fee Waiver

Any FOIA requester may request that all fees associated with the request be waived. Note: some agencies require that fee waiver requests be submitted with the FOIA request. Please see agency-specific regulations for instructions.

Make Request?

 

## Attach Supporting Files

No supporting files have been uploaded.

**Drag files here**

**Attach Supporting Files**