How to Apply for a Social Security Number

Guidelines for International Students

Details about procedures for getting a social security number are on the SEVIS website: https://www.ice.gov/sevis/students and the Social Security Administration (SSA) website: http://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber (F-1 visas go to: http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10181.html; J-1 visas go to: http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10107.html)

You should be in the US more than ten days before going to the SSA office to apply for a social security number so that data from the port-of-entry has a chance to be entered in the SSA computer system. SSA will also verify your status and eligibility to get a social security number by checking information in the SEVIS/SAVE systems, so you must check in with an Immigration Advisor in the Center for International Programs (CIP), to be sure your information is in those systems at least 48 hours prior to going to the SSA office.

Employment or the written offer of employment is mandatory for eligibility of a social security number.

The following items are required to apply for a Social Security Number:

- Passport with visa
- A second type of identification (HSU identification card)
- I-94
- I-20 or DS-2019
- Letter of "prospective/confirmed employment" from employer to include the following information: identity of the student employee, job description, anticipated or actual employment start date, number of hours the student is expected to work, employer identification number, employer contact information, including the telephone number, the name of the F-1/J-1 student's immediate supervisor, original signature, signatory's title, and date (see Sample A). Bring this letter to an Immigration Advisor in the CIP.
- Letter from the Immigration Advisor, verifying eligibility for employment (This letter can only be issued after the letter of "prospective/confirmed employment" from employer (see above) has been received)
- SS-5 form. Download the form from: http://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber or visit the local Social Security Office (on #3 check "Legal Alien Allowed to Work")

Once you have read and completed the SS-5 and gathered the documents listed above, take them to the local Social Security Office. The local office is located at:

Social Security Administration
3144 Broadway
Eureka, CA 95501

Office hours are 9:00 to 4 p.m. Monday - Friday. The local phone number is 445-9610. For general information and services or to schedule an appointment call 800-772-1213 between the hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Once the application process is complete you will be given a receipt for a social security number. The actual card will be mailed to you and it could take up to four weeks for the process to be complete.

Please contact the Social Security Administration directly if you have need of a replacement social security card.
Sample Letter

To: Social Security Administration  
RE: Social Security number for student in F/J-1 visa category  
Date: CURRENT DATE

This is evidence of on-campus employment for: STUDENT NAME  
Nature of student’s job:  
DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION OF TYPE OF WORK  
Start date: ENTER DATE  
Number of hours/Week: ENTER HOURS  
Employer contact information:  
EIN#: ENTER NUMBER  
(If employer is HSU, the EIN# is 68-0282413).  
Employer telephone number: ENTER PHONE NUMBER  
Student’s immediate supervisor: ENTER SUPERVISOR NAME  
Employer signature (original): _________________________  
Signatory’s Title: _____________________________________

Working While Awaiting an SSN

An F-1 or J-1 student may work while the Social Security number application is being processed. Employers may wish to reference SSA’s fact sheet, Employer Responsibilities When Hiring Foreign Workers. This fact sheet contains information on how to report wages for an employee who has not yet received an SSN and is available online at http://www.socialsecurity.gov/employer/hiring.htm.