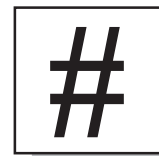




Social Security Number



what it is, eligibility, & how to apply

Please note: *This handout provides general information on the Social Security Number. When you check in at the ISSO, B-50 Caldwell Hall, an advisor will provide you with more specific information on the Social Security Number application process and location.*

What is a Social Security Number?

The Social Security Administration issues Social Security Numbers to all who are work-eligible as a way to identify participants, including taxpayers, in the federal government's social security program, which provides retirement and disability benefits to workers and their families. Although the Social Security Administration states that the SSN is intended only for employment purposes, some public and many private institutions, such as banks, phone companies, and utilities (gas and electric) have adopted the SSN as a unique identifier for its customers. There is no charge for a Social Security number and card.

Do I need an SSN?

If you are going to work in the United States, either on-campus or with off-campus work authorization, you **must** obtain a Social Security Number. Your employer will withhold Social Security taxes from your paycheck and submit them to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), which credits each payment to your Social Security account. You may start working on-campus at Cornell without a SSN, but you must provide your SSN to your department and the University Registrar upon receiving your card.

Am I eligible for an SSN?

If you hold J-1 visa status, you may apply for an SSN.

If you hold F-1 visa status, you are eligible to apply for an SSN if you meet at least one of the following criteria, and can provide proof of employment (see ISSO advisor for details).

- you are currently working on campus
- you have been offered an on-campus job (*and are within 30 days of your employment start date*)
- you have obtained off-campus work authorization (*and are within 30 days of your authorization start date*)

If you hold any other visa status, please consult with an ISSO advisor or the Social Security Administration about your eligibility to apply for an SSN.

How do I apply?

To apply for a Social Security number, please:

1. Come to the ISSO to talk with an advisor about your eligibility for a SSN. If you are eligible, the ISSO advisor will provide you with a letter certifying that you have the necessary immigration status and work authorization to be eligible for an SSN. The Social Security Administration requires this letter when you apply for your SSN.
2. After you have been in the U.S. for **AT LEAST 10 days**, take the documents listed below to the Social Security Administration Office at 127 W. State Street. (When you come to the ISSO for your certification letter, the ISSO advisor on duty will provide you with directions to this office.)
 - ISSO Certification of your immigration status and work authorization (F-1 or J-1)
 - Proof of employment (F-1 students only)
 - Passport
 - I-94 (small, white arrival/departure card)
 - I-20 (F-1) or DS-2019 (J-1) Certificate of Eligibility for Visa
3. You will receive your number and card in 4-8 weeks. **Once you receive your card, please take it to the University Registrar's Office** at B-07 Day Hall, to update your SSN in the university information system and inform the administrator in the department that is employing you.

Not eligible for a SSN? See the next page!

What if I am not eligible for an SSN?

As mentioned above, some other government agencies (e.g., the state departments of motor vehicles) and private institutions (e.g., banks, phone companies, utilities) now use the SSN for administrative and identification purposes. Below is some information on how to access these services without an SSN.

New York State Driver's License

The New York State Department of Motor Vehicles requires all applicants for driver's licenses to provide a Social Security card, or a letter from the U.S. Social Security Administration stating that you are not eligible for a Social Security Number. The SSA Letter must have been issued within the last 30 days. You can obtain a letter from the local SSA office.

Banking

You do not need a Social Security Number (SSN) in order to open up a bank account. You will need to show your passport and a copy of either your bill from Cornell University or your student identification card. You will also be asked to complete a W-8BEN form (for tax withholding).

When opening up a checking account, you can apply for a check card. This VISA or MASTERCARD check card can be used to make purchases. The amount of your purchase is debited, directly from the checking account.

A credit card is available by applying for a Secure Credit Card (minimum is between \$500 and \$1000). The funds have to be in an account at the bank. This is necessary because there is no credit history or SSN to do a credit history report. The advantage to the Secure Credit Card is that it helps to establish credit. Several local banks have the secure credit card.

Utilities

Students applying for gas and electric utilities through NYSEG are not required to have a SSN. You will be asked to provide a Cornell ID, passport, biographical information, address etc., as well as a lease. If lease is for less than a year, then you are required to pay a deposit.

Phones

Verizon Land Phone: (For those living off campus in non-cornell housing.)

You can set up an account without a SSN. Call (607) 890-1350 to initiate the order and you will then be transferred to the Welcome Center. Because you do not have a SSN, you are asked to verify your identification by faxing them 2 forms of ID, which should include your passport and I-20. Four hours after faxing the information, and after they have had time to process the fax, you are asked to call the original number (607) 890-1350, to set up your account. There is no advance payment required when setting up the account. Installation fee will be included in your first month's bill.

Cell Phones:

Cellular phone companies require a deposit from customers who do not have a SSN or credit card history. Prices vary between companies but typically range from \$125-\$400. This deposit would be refunded after one year if you maintain a good payment history. To avoid paying a deposit, many choose to purchase pre-paid calling cards.

A Note on Taxes

Because all international students must submit tax forms to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) each Spring, international students and family members who not eligible for an SSN can apply for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) when submitting their tax forms. The ISSO will provide more information on taxes forms and the ITIN at the beginning of the Spring semester. For more information, visit the IRS website (<http://www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=96287,00.html>).

Contacting the Social Security Administration

For more information, visit the Internal Revenue website at www.socialsecurity.gov or call toll-free 1-800-772-1213 (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call the TTY number, 1-800-325-0778). They can answer specific questions and provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day. To contact our local SSA office, please see below.

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

127 W. State St., 2nd floor

(in the Ithaca Journal Building)

Phone: 256-3651 (Ithaca) • 1 (800) 772-1213 (Automated Customer Service)

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday, 9 am - 4 pm (except for Federal holidays.)