

J Nonimmigrants: Applying for a Social Security Number

A Social Security Number (SSN) is used to report your wages to the United States government and to determine eligibility for Social Security benefits. A SSN can be assigned to a foreign worker who is authorized to work in the US. A SSN also functions as a general identification number in many situations. The SSN may also be requested if you open bank accounts or apply for a driver's license.

Upon arrival at LSU, you must report to the International Services Office for orientation and validation of your program participation. Reporting to your program sponsor upon arrival in the U.S. is not only the law, but also an important step in obtaining a benefit such as applying for and obtaining a SSN. After ISO has validated your program participation, Human Resource Management will assign you a temporary number (in lieu of the SSN) that you can use as an identity for renting an apartment or to get some benefits on campus. Ask your departmental secretary for this number. HRM generally requires that you have a SSN in order to be paid.

How to Apply for a Social Security Number

- Wait about 10 days from your arrival date in the U.S. before applying.
- Complete an *Application For A Social Security Card (Form SS-5)*
- Take the completed application and the following **original** documents to the nearest Social Security Administration (SSA) office:
 - Form DS-2019;
 - Passport with the J-1 visa stamp; and,
 - Form I-94, *Arrival/Departure* Record. Form I-94 is considered to be the primary immigration and identity document when applying for a Social Security card.

For more information, and to get form SS-5, see *Foreign Workers and Social Security Numbers* at: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10107.html>

The nearest SSA office in Baton Rouge is located at 5455 Bankers Avenue, near Corporate Boulevard and College Drive.

Things to remember when completing Form SS-5

Fill in your name *exactly* as it is shown on your form I-94 and passport. The name on your passport, Form DS-2019 and Form I-94 should all be the same. It is critical that all immigration documents match.

How long will it take to get a Social Security Number?

The SSA must verify your documents with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) before a SSN can be assigned to you. After receiving the verification from DHS, a SSN will be issued to you and the Social Security card (containing the assigned SSN) will be mailed to the address provided on the application (Form SS-5). Most of the time, documents can be verified quickly with DHS, online; you will receive the Social Security card within two weeks of the application. If the documents cannot be verified online, it may take DHS several weeks to respond to the request.

For more comprehensive information on Social Security, see: <http://www.ssa.gov/>.