

# New Numbers For Domestic Violence Victims



People in all walks of life can be victims of family violence or harassment, abuse or life-endangering situations. If you are a victim of family violence, Social Security may be able to help you.

Public awareness campaigns stress how important it is for victims to develop safety plans that include gathering personal papers and choosing a safe place to go. Sometimes the best way to evade an abuser and reduce the risk of further violence may be to relocate and establish a new identity. Following these changes, it also may be helpful to get a new Social Security number.

Although Social Security does not routinely assign new numbers, we will do so when evidence shows you are being harassed or abused or your life is endangered.

Applying for a new number is a big decision. It may impact your ability to interact with federal and state agencies, employers and others. This is because your financial, medical, employment and other records will be under your former Social Security number and name (if you change your name). If you expect to change your name, please do so before applying for a new number.

## How to apply for a new number

You must apply in person at any Social Security office. We will help you complete a statement explaining why you need a new number and an application for a new number.

You will need to present:

- Evidence documenting the harassment or abuse;
- Your current Social Security number;
- Original documents establishing your:
  - U.S. citizenship or immigration status;
  - Age;
  - Identity; and
  - Evidence of your legal name change if you have changed your name.

Also, we will need to see original documents showing you have custody of any children for whom you are requesting new numbers and documentation proving their U.S. citizenship, ages and identities.

## Citizenship or immigration status

**U.S. citizen:** We can accept only certain documents as proof of U.S. citizenship. These include a U.S. birth certificate or a U.S. passport.

**Noncitizen:** To prove your U.S. immigration status, show us the current immigration document, I-94, *Arrival/Departure Record*, issued to you when you arrived in the United States. If you are an F-1 or M-1 student, you also must show us your I-20, *Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status*. If you are a J-1 or J-2 exchange visitor, show us your DS-2019, *Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status*.

## Age

You must present your birth certificate.

## Identity

We can accept only certain documents as proof of identity. An acceptable document must be current (not expired) and show your name, identifying information and preferably a recent photograph.

**U.S. citizen:** Social Security will ask to see a U.S. driver's license, state-issued nondriver identification card or U.S. passport as proof of identity. If you do not have the specific documents we ask for, we will ask to see other documents, including:

- Employee ID card;
- School ID card;
- Health insurance card (not a Medicare card);
- U.S. military ID card; or
- Adoption decree.

**Noncitizen:** Social Security will ask to see your current U.S. immigration documents. Acceptable immigration documents include your:

- Form I-551 (includes machine-readable immigrant visa and unexpired foreign passport);
- I-94 with your unexpired foreign passport; or
- I-766 (work permit from DHS).

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## How to change your name on your card

If you legally change your name because of marriage, divorce, court order or any other reason, you need to tell Social Security so that you can get a corrected card. If you are working, also tell your employer. If you do not tell us when your name changes, it may:

- Delay your tax refund; and
- Prevent your wages from being posted correctly to your record, which may lower your future Social Security benefits.

If you need to change your name on your Social Security card, you must show us a recently issued document as proof of your legal name change. Documents Social Security may accept to prove a legal name change include marriage document, divorce decree, Certificate of Naturalization showing a new name or court order for a name change.

If the evidence of a legal name change does not give us enough information to identify you in our records or if your document was issued more than two years ago, you also must show us an identity document in your old name (as shown in our records).

**Marriage, divorce or annulment:** In addition to showing us a legal document proving your marriage, divorce or annulment, you must provide an identity document. That document must show your old name, as well as other identifying information or a recent photograph. (We can accept an expired document as evidence of your old name.)

**Adoption, naturalization or other name change:** In addition to showing us a legal document citing your new name, such as a court order, adoption decree or Certificate of Naturalization, you must show an identity document in your old name (as shown in our records). If you don't have an identity document in your old name, we may accept an identity document in your new name as long as we can properly establish your identity.

Both of these documents must show identifying information or a recent photograph.

**Citizenship:** Also, if you are a U.S. citizen born outside the United States and our records do not show you are a citizen, you will need to provide proof of your U.S. citizenship. If you are not a U.S. citizen, Social Security will ask to see your current immigration documents.

Your new card will have the same number as your previous card, but will show your new name.

**All documents must be either originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. We cannot accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents.** We may use one document for two

purposes. For example, we may use your U.S. passport as proof of both citizenship and identity. Or, we may use your U.S. birth certificate as proof of age and citizenship. **However, you must provide at least two separate documents.**

We will mail your number and card as soon as we have all of your information and have verified your documents with the issuing offices.

## Providing the evidence you need

The best evidence of abuse comes from third parties, such as police or medical personnel, and describes the nature and extent of harassment, abuse or life endangerment. Other evidence may include court restraining orders and letters from shelters, family members, friends, counselors or others who have knowledge of the domestic violence or abuse. We will help you get any additional evidence needed.

## Blocking access to your record

You can choose to block electronic access to your Social Security record. When you do this, no one, including you, will be able to get or change your personal information on the Internet or through our automated telephone service. If you block access to your record and then change your mind in the future, you can contact Social Security and ask us to unblock it. Go to [www.socialsecurity.gov/blockaccess](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/blockaccess) to block electronic access to your personal record.

## Contacting Social Security

For more information and to find copies of our publications, visit our website at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov) or call toll-free, **1-800-772-1213** (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**). We treat all calls confidentially. We can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. We can provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day.

We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some telephone calls.

National Domestic Violence Hotline  
**1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**  
(TTY) **1-800-787-3224**