

Department of Social and Health Services
Olympia, Washington
EAZ Manual

Revision #1234
Category Social Security Number Requirements
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Summary

Updated the EAZ chapter with the DSHS 14-517

Social Security Number Requirements

Revised [August 24, 2023](#)

Purpose:

The purpose of this section is to explain the special situations that affect immigrants when there are requirements for a Social Security number (SSN) in federal and state benefit programs.

WAC 388-424-0009 Citizenship and alien status - Social Security Number (SSN) Requirements

- [Clarifying Information and Worker Responsibilities](#)

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The rules and information below supplement information provided in the SSN Chapter ([WAC 388-476-0005](#)).

Clarifying Information - [WAC 388-424-0009](#)

1. Some immigrants who are "qualified" and some who are "non-qualified" (see [WAC 388-424-0001](#)) are not immediately eligible for employment authorization and therefore may not be issued an SSN:
 - a. For example, most political asylum applicants who have a notice that their political asylum application has been received and is being processed must wait six months or longer before they can apply to work in the U.S.
 - b. Abused immigrants whose spouse has filled out an I-130 or who have a [Notice of Prima Facie](#) eligibility may sometimes have to wait for months or years before they are authorized to work legally.
2. Some immigrants who do not have work authorization can sometimes get a non-work SSN (see Worker Responsibilities #1 below), but staff in most Social Security Administration (SSA) offices will deny these applications.
3. Abused immigrants who are filing a petition under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) will often receive a Notice of Prima Facie eligibility that does not specifically list their children, even though the children are listed in the original application. Children of abused immigrants are considered eligible for benefits to the same extent as the primary applicant, even though they will often be unable to get a non-work SSN.
4. SSA staff are not familiar with many immigration documents that are used to show "qualified alien" status (such as the Notice of Prima Facie eligibility under VAWA) and will often not accept these documents as proof of lawful status (see [Table 5, page 62 in the NILC Guide in Appendix II](#) for a list of documents). In addition, new SSA requirements that immigrants have evidence of date of birth and identity may prevent many immigrants who have lost their documents (often as a result of fleeing persecution or escaping domestic violence) from getting a non-work number.
5. Sometimes a client may choose not to provide an SSN (and consequently be excluded from the AU) but the Department inadvertently learns of their SSN (for example, through a pay stub the client provides to verify income). In such cases we continue to honor the individual client's wish to be excluded from the assistance unit.

Alternatively, a client may choose not to provide an SSN midway through the process of applying for benefits, or at a recertification, even if they have already provided it. The guiding principle is that we will honor client choice. A client may choose to be excluded from the assistance unit by not providing an SSN at any point.

However, we may still use a valid SSN in our possession for verifying income and resources. Staff should explain to the immigrant that the SSN will only be used to verify income and resource information and will not be released to federal immigration authorities. Sometimes, a client may not have a valid SSN but is attempting to provide evidence of income or resources to comply with Department requirements – [they](#) should be allowed to remove the SSN from these documents and should not be discouraged from providing proof of income.

Worker Responsibilities - WAC 388-424-0009

1. If the client is applying for a federal program which requires an SSN and a current and valid SSN is not available, the Department is responsible for providing the client with assistance in applying for an SSN. (If the client needs financial assistance to complete this process, the Department will assist as well - follow procedures in the [Verification Chapter, Worker Responsibilities #9](#))
2. If the client has already tried to apply at the local Social Security Administration (SSA) office and has been denied, the Department should issue benefits (if the client is otherwise eligible) and, if the customer requests our assistance, take the following steps:
 - a. [Create a 14-517](#) on Department letterhead which specifies the names of all family members applying for benefits and request that the SSA issue a non-work SSN for each. The [14-517](#) must explain that the SSNs are being requested so that the clients can participate in the federal programs for which they are eligible. List all programs which apply. See [Appendix VI](#) for link to a sample SSN request letter.
 - b. If a client is unable to get either a regular or non-work SSN, request an Exception to Rule (ETR) and continue benefits until client is work-authorized. Also ask the client to re-apply for an SSN once [they are](#) eligible for and has received an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS.
 - c. If the client is able to get a non-work SSN, document the number in ACES and remind the client that this SSN cannot be used to work.
3. Some persons in a household may not be a part of the assistance unit (AU) which is applying for assistance (for example, undocumented parents of citizen children). In such a case, SSNs for those non-AU members are not a requirement for processing the application of the applying AU.