

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

GENERAL

Question:

How many Social Security numbers have been issued since the program started?

Answer:

Since 1935, we have assigned more than 465 million Social Security numbers and each year we assign about 5.5 million new numbers. With approximately 1 billion combinations of the 9-digit Social Security number, the current system will provide us with enough new numbers for several generations into the future. To learn more about Social Security numbers and cards, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10002.html.

Question:

How do I change my citizenship status on my Social Security record?

Answer:

To change the citizenship shown on our records you need to:

- Complete an *Application For A Social Security Card* (Form SS-5), available at www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber/ss5.htm; and
- Show us documents proving your:
 - Age;
 - Identity; and
 - New or revised citizenship status (We only accept certain documents as proof of citizenship. These include your U.S. passport, a Certificate of Naturalization, or a Certificate of Citizenship. If you are not a U.S. citizen, Social Security will ask to see your current immigration documents.)

Take (or mail) your completed application and documents to your local Social Security office. All documents must be either originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. We cannot accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents. For more information, visit www.socialsecurity.gov.

RETIREMENT

Question:

Why doesn't my estimate using the *Retirement Estimator* take into account my work as a teacher? I've worked for 20 years for the state and thought it would count.

Answer:

If you work for a state or local government agency — including a school system, college, or university — your earnings may not be covered by Social Security. If you are covered only by your state or local pension plan and you don't pay Social Security taxes, your earnings won't be shown on your Social Security record. (Your record will show your Medicare wages if you pay into that program.) For information on how your pension from noncovered state or local employment may affect the amount of your Social Security benefit, you can visit www.socialsecurity.gov/retire2/wep-chart.htm

Question:

I have never worked but my spouse has. What will my benefits be?

Answer:

As a spouse, you may be entitled to one-half of a retired worker's benefit amount when you reach full retirement age. If you want to get a Social Security retirement benefit as early as age 62, the amount of your benefit is reduced. The amount of reduction depends on when you will reach full retirement age.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME

Question:

Can I receive Social Security benefits and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits at the same time?

Answer:

You may be able to receive SSI benefits in addition to monthly Social Security benefits if your Social Security benefit amount is low enough for you to qualify. Whether you can get SSI benefits depends on your income and resources (the things you own). Social Security benefits you receive can make a difference in SSI eligibility and the amount you may be entitled to. You can find out more about the SSI program by going to www.socialsecurity.gov and selecting the SSI tab.

Question:

What are the limits on what I can own to be eligible for Supplemental Security Income?

Answer:

You may be able to get SSI benefits if your resources are worth no more than \$2,000. A couple may be able to get SSI benefits if they have resources worth no more than \$3,000. We count real estate, bank accounts, cash, stocks, and bonds toward the limits on what you can own. Social Security does not count the home you live in and the land it is on, your car, or some funds and plots set aside for burial. Learn more at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/11000.html.

*DISABILITY***Question:**

How do I apply for disability benefits?

Answer:

Apply online at www.socialsecurity.gov; or call our toll-free number, 1-800-772-1213, to make an appointment to apply for benefits at your local Social Security office or to set up an appointment for someone to take your application over the telephone. Get a head start by checking out the online Disability Starter Kit. The Disability Starter Kit is available at www.socialsecurity.gov/disability.

Question:

Who decides whether I can get disability benefits?

Answer:

First, Social Security will review your application to make sure you meet the basic eligibility requirements for disability benefits. We will check whether you worked enough years to qualify. Also, we will evaluate any current work.

If you meet these requirements, we will send your application to the Disability Determination Services office. This state agency evaluates your medical condition and makes the disability decision for us. Doctors and disability specialists in the state agency ask your doctors for information about your condition. They consider all the facts in your case. They use the medical evidence from your doctors and hospitals, clinics, or institutions where you have been treated and all other information. Learn more about disability benefits at www.socialsecurity.gov/disability.

*MEDICARE***Question:**

Where can I go to find general information about Medicare benefits?

Answer:

Social Security determines whether people are entitled to Medicare benefits, but the program is administered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). You can visit CMS's Medicare website at www.medicare.gov, or call them at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). Online or by phone, you can find answers to all your Medicare questions at CMS.

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