

New Social Security procedures for F and J students and exchange visitors

Effective January 5, 2004, the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) revised its procedures for verifying the immigration status of F-1 and J-1 nonimmigrants.

- ❖ F-1 or J-1 applicants for a Social Security Number must present the following documents to the Social Security Administration (SSA):

All applicants must present

- A completed Form SS-5, Application for a Social Security Card;
- At least two documents to establish your age and identity, including but not limited to a passport and NJIT ID Card;
- Form I-94.

F-1 students must also present

- SEVIS Form I-20;
- Proof of employment authorization to support your SSN application:
 - For proof of eligibility for on-campus employment, you must carry a letter from the OIS&F affirming your full-time F-1 student status;
 - For proof of eligibility for Curricular Practical Training (CPT), you must show CPT authorization on Page 3 of your I-20;
 - For proof of eligibility for Optional Practical Training (OPT) or off-campus employment, you must present an employment authorization document (EAD) issued by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

J-1 exchange visitors must also present

- SEVIS Form DS-2019;
- Proof of employment authorization. A J-1 student or a J-1 exchange visitor (scholar, professor, or student) must have a letter from the exchange program sponsor authorizing employment. For J categories in which employment is authorized incident to status, a DS-2019 showing that the exchange visitor will be receiving funding from the program sponsor is sufficient.

- ❖ SSA verification of immigration status in SAVE

SSA verifies immigration documents and status through the DHS *Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements* (SAVE) Program. SAVE is a verification service accessible by benefit granting agencies (such as SSA). SSA initiates its check through an online query of SAVE.

The SAVE database that SSA initially queries is called the Verification Information System (VIS), a “nationally accessible database of selected immigration status information.”

- See <http://uscis.gov/graphics/services/SAVE.htm> on the USCIS web site for information about the SAVE database.

To query SAVE, SSA will enter an F’s or J’s nonimmigrant Admission/Departure Number as on Form I-94, temporary I-551 stamp, or employment authorization document (EAD). If the alien’s immigration documents are verified in SAVE, the SSN will be processed without further inquiry.

❖ How soon after admission to the U.S. will immigration information be available in SAVE?

DHS estimates that immigration information from the DHS's Nonimmigrant Information System (NIIS) database normally becomes available in SAVE within 10 calendar days of an alien's admission to the United States.

❖ What will SSA do if it cannot verify data in SAVE?

If SSA cannot verify an alien's immigration information in SAVE (either because no data yet appears in SAVE, or because of discrepancies between SAVE data and the immigration documents), even after 10 days of the alien's admission to the United States, SSA will have to request verification of status from DHS by submitting a written inquiry on Form G-845. However, a new procedure is outlined below.

❖ New procedure: SSA requests verification from DHS LOSISV

As of January 5, 2004, for F-1s and J-1s who have been in the U.S. for at least 10 calendar days and for whom an online SAVE verification cannot be made, SSA will verify immigration status by faxing a request for verification to the new DHS Los Angeles Immigration Status Verification (LOISISV) unit in California.

LOISISV is a new unit set up by DHS to specifically deal with verifying immigration status inquiries by SSA for F and J nonimmigrants. LOSISV has direct access to SEVIS, and checks the SEVIS database to confirm for SSA the student's or exchange visitor's immigration and SEVIS status.

❖ The importance of being "registered" (F students) or "validated" (J exchange visitors) in SEVIS

A student or exchange visitor must be in "Active" SEVIS status in order for the LOSISV unit to confirm immigration status. In order to be in "Active" SEVIS status, the student MUST report to their school or program to be "registered" in SEVIS by the PDSO or DSO (F students) or "validated" in SEVIS (J exchange visitors).

LOISISV will NOT confirm immigration status UNLESS the student or exchange visitor is in "Active" SEVIS status.

Because of this, SSA requests that students and exchange visitors report to their school or program to have the SEVIS Registration or Validation process completed *before* they apply for a Social Security Number.