

# Social Security Matches

*To be eligible to receive SFA funds, each student must provide a correct Social Security Number (SSN). To confirm the student's SSN for schools, the Department conducts a match with the Social Security Administration. In this chapter, we discuss the SSN requirement and the match process.*

The FAFSA collects the student's Social Security Number (SSN) so that the Department can verify it through a tape match with the Social Security Administration. The Social Security Administration and the FAFSA processing system work together to conduct the match verifying that the student's SSN is valid and that the name and birth date associated with that SSN match the name and birth date provided by the student.

The Central Processing System won't process an application without an SSN. A student who doesn't have an SSN, or doesn't remember his or her SSN must contact the local Social Security office for help. For additional information (in English and Spanish), a student should call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 or go to its web site (<http://www.ssa.gov>). There is one exception to the requirement to provide SSNs, as discussed below (see "Exception for Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau").

The SSN is one of the key identifiers for the student's records at the Department and other agencies. Therefore, you must make sure the Department knows the correct SSN if you have documentation that the SSN on the application or output document is wrong. You can fulfill this requirement by having the student correct the number, preferably on a new FAFSA.

## SSN MATCH

The CPS prints the match result in the "FAA Information" section of the output document as the SSN Match Flag. In addition, the CPS prints a comment giving the student instructions if there was a problem with the match. There is no comment if the match is successful.

If the match was successful, the CPS doesn't rematch the student's data against the Social Security database on subsequent transactions. However, the CPS will attempt the match again if the student makes corrections to the name, birth date, or SSN. (Note that the SSN can't be corrected if all the match elements were previously confirmed; see "Successful Match" below.)

### SSN requirement

*Higher Education Act  
Sec. 484(p),  
Student Assistance General Provisions  
34 CFR 668.32(i), 668.36*

### SSN doesn't match

#### Student reported wrong SSN

- correct FAFSA data
- FAFSA processing error
- call 1-800 4 FED AID
- Error in SSA database
- Contact SSA office; resubmit SSN as correction after SSA change is made

### Other match problems

- SSN matches, but name and date of birth don't match
- Missing FAFSA information: student didn't report a name or birthdate, or didn't sign the FAFSA
- SSN record includes date of death
- SSN record indicates holder is incarcerated

Once all the match elements have been confirmed (that is, SSN, name, and birth date all match), the SSN flag will be carried forward to the next year's Renewal FAFSA, and the SSN match won't have to be performed again.

### ***Successful match***

If the CPS match with the Social Security Administration confirms the student's SSN, and the Social Security records have the same name and birth date as reported on the FAFSA, you may disburse aid to the student. No comment is provided on the output document when the SSN match is successful. Of course, if you have any conflicting information about the SSN, you must resolve the conflict before disbursing SFA funds to the student.

Once a student's SSN is confirmed, and there is no discrepancy on the name or birth date, the student can't change the SSN. If a student whose match data have been confirmed subsequently tries to change his or her SSN, the CPS won't accept the change. Instead, the student's SAR will have a comment telling the student to contact his or her financial aid administrator for help. In the unlikely event that the confirmed SSN is wrong, the student must correct it by filing a new FAFSA.

### ***No match on the Social Security Number***

You must resolve any problems with the match before disbursing aid. If the SSN is not found in the Social Security Administration database, the student's application will be rejected. The student will also receive a comment that instructs the student to correct his or her SSN or contact the Social Security Administration if he or she believes the SSN reported is correct. The student will have to correct the application information with the CPS and get a successful match result before he can receive aid.

▼ *Student reported wrong SSN on the FAFSA.* If the student's application is rejected because she reported an SSN that is not in the Social Security Administration's database, the student must provide a correct SSN to the CPS. The student could simply submit a correction (either on the SAR, or by asking your office to submit a correction through EDE). However, we strongly recommend that the student file a new application using the correct SSN, rather than correcting the original information, so that the correct SSN will be used in the Department's systems.

One reason for this recommendation is that the SSN is used by the Department as part of the student identifier. The CPS will correct the student's SSN, but will continue to use the SSN reported on the student's first application of the award year in the identifier for the student for that year. This may cause a conflict if another applicant also applies using that SSN (See "Applicants using Same SSN"). It may also cause confusion in communicating with other Department systems, such as NSLDS or the Pell payment system.

▼ *FAFSA data entry error.* If a student provided the correct SSN on the FAFSA, but the SSN on the output document is wrong, the student can contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800 4 FEDAID (1-800-433-3243). If the Information Center confirms that there was a data entry error, it will refer the error to the Department for correction — the student does not need to submit a correction. After the data entry error is corrected, the CPS will produce new output documents. See Chapter 4 of the *Application and Verification Guide* for general information on data entry error corrections.

▼ *Error in Social Security database.* If the SSN on the FAFSA is correct, but isn't in the Social Security database, the student must contact a local or regional Social Security Administration office to update the database. He or she must report the correct SSN to the Social Security Administration and provide documentation verifying the correct number. The student must contact a Social Security Administration office directly — the Department of Education cannot correct Social Security records. The Social Security database is updated daily with information from local and regional offices. Once the Social Security database is updated, the student can submit a correction by re-entering the SSN originally reported as if it is a correction. The CPS will then match again with the Social Security database. Note that the student can't simply verify that the SSN is correct; the application will be rejected until the Social Security database is updated.

### ***No match on name or birth date***

The student's application won't be rejected if the SSN is in the Social Security database but the name or birth date doesn't match those the student provided. Misspellings or name changes due to marriage are common reasons for a nonmatch — the student should make sure that the name she provides on the application matches the name on her Social Security card.

You can disburse aid if the student can explain the discrepancy and provide documentation showing that the SSN belongs to him or her. Although the student can receive SFA funds without correcting the name or birthdate reported on the FAFSA, we strongly recommend that the data be corrected. The incorrect name or birth date can prevent other matches (such as the NSLDS match) from working properly. Also, if the name or birth date is not corrected, financial aid history data may be submitted to NSLDS using the incorrect name or birth date, which may cause problems for the student in subsequent years.

If the student can provide documentation to you showing that the name and birth date reported on the FAFSA are correct, the student isn't required to contact the Social Security Administration to have the correction made to the Social Security database. However, you may want to suggest that the student update his or her information with the Social Security Administrations to prevent future problems.

### **Example: Incorrect name on application**

*When Sarven Technical Institute receives Tod's ISIR, the FAA sees that, according to the SSN match, the name Tod provided on his application isn't the one associated with his SSN in the SSA database. The FAA asks Tod to bring in documentation showing his correct name and SSN. He brings in his Social Security card. The first name on the card is Warren, not Tod. He also has a driver's license showing his first name is Warren. The FAA could disburse aid to Tod, keeping a copy of the Social Security card as documentation of the correct name. However, because Tod has other corrections to make, the FAA asks him to also correct his name when he makes the other corrections.*

**Example: Correct name not in database**

*Elizabeth's ISIR shows that, according to the SSN match, her name doesn't match the one on file for her SSN. When the FAA talks to Elizabeth, she explains that she recently got married and changed her last name. Elizabeth gives the FAA a copy of her marriage certificate. The FAA plans to disburse aid to Elizabeth, but advises her to contact SSA and have the database updated to prevent future problems.*

If the student reported the current (or later) year as his or her birth date, the application will be rejected, and the student **must** submit a correction.

***Missing information***

No match is performed if the student doesn't sign the FAFSA or provide a last name or birth date. The student's FAFSA will be rejected and the student must submit a correction with the missing information.

Although the CPS doesn't conduct the match, it will check to see whether the reported SSN falls within a valid range. If the SSN is in a valid range, the student will receive a comment explaining that the match could not be conducted without the name, birth date, or signature. The student must submit a correction providing the missing information. When the correction is sent, the information will be sent to the Social Security Administration for matching, and you should check the new output document for match results.

*If the SSN is not within the valid range*, the student will receive a comment stating that the reported SSN does not appear to be valid. In addition to submitting the missing name, birth date, or signature on a correction, the student must either contact the Social Security Administration to correct its records (if the reported SSN is correct) or correct the SSN he or she reported. Again, you should check the new output document for match results.

***Date of death***

If the Social Security Administration's database shows a date of death associated with the SSN the student reported, the student's application will be rejected. Students resolve this problem in the same way as problems matching the SSN. The student must either contact Social Security Administration to get the records corrected, or must submit a change with the correct SSN (see "No Match on SSN").

***Prisoner match***

Beginning with the 2001-2002 award year, ED is matching records with the Social Security Administration to determine if the student is incarcerated, and if so, in what type of penal institution. Incarcerated students are ineligible for SFA loans and, if incarcerated in a federal or state penal institution, are ineligible for Pell grants as well. For further information, see Action Letter #4 (GEN 00-22), Action Letter #6 (GEN 01-03), and the *Guide to 2001-2002 ISIRs*.

## Social Security Number Match

*Note: only students with a match flag of 4 (successful match) can get PINs*

<i>Result</i>	<i>Match flag</i>	<i>"C" code or rejected application</i>	<i>Comment number and text</i>	<i>Action needed</i>
Successful match	4		No comment	No resolution required.
Match conducted. Date of birth inconsistent with SSA records	2	C code	060 The date of birth you reported on your application doesn't match the Social Security Administration's records. If your information is correct, contact SSA. If your information is incorrect, you should make corrections on this SAR.	The student may receive payment after providing documentation that explains the discrepancy and showing that the submitted SSN is correct. If the reported birth date was incorrect, the student should also submit a correction so that he can receive a PIN; the application will then be rematched, and the school should check for changes to the match results. If the reported date of birth was correct, the student should contact SSA to have it correct its records.
Match conducted. Name inconsistent with SSA records	3	C code	061 The name you reported on your application doesn't match the Social Security Administration's records. If your information is correct, contact SSA. If your information is incorrect, you should make corrections on this SAR.	The student may receive payment after providing documentation that explains the discrepancy and showing that the submitted SSN is correct. If the reported name was incorrect, the student should submit a correction to the CPS. The application will then be rematched, and the school should check for changes to the match results. If the reported name is correct, the student may want to contact SSA so it can correct its records.
Match conducted. No match on SSN (SSN invalid)	1	Reject 18	024 The Social Security Administration (SSA) did not confirm that the social security number you reported on your aid application is valid. If you believe that the number you reported is correct, contact the SSA. If the social security number is incorrect, you should submit a new application with the correct social security number.	If the student's SSN is correct, the student should contact SSA to have it correct its database. Once the database is updated, the student can reenter the SSN and submit the change as a correction. If the SSN is incorrect, the student must correct the SSN, preferably by filing a new FAFSA with the correct SSN (see "Incorrect SSN on application").

## Social Security Number Match (continued)

<i>Result</i>	<i>Match flag</i>	<i>"C" code or rejected application</i>	<i>Comment number and text</i>	<i>Action needed</i>
No match conducted. Record could not be sent to SSA because no last name, date of birth, or signature provided.	8	Rejects N, 5, 13, 14, and/or 16	059 The Social Security Administration could not determine if the social security number you reported belongs to you because you did not give us your last name, date of birth, or signature.	The student must make corrections to provide the name and date of birth, and/or signature. When the corrections are submitted, the application will be rematched with SSA. The school should check the new output document for the match results.
No match conducted. Record could not be sent to SSA because no last name, date of birth, or signature provided.	8	Reject P Rejects N, 5, 13, 14, and/or 16	023 It appears that the social security number you reported on your application is not valid.	The student must make corrections to provide the name and date of birth, and/or signature. In addition, if the student's SSN is correct, the student should contact SSA to have it correct its database. Once the database is updated, the student must reenter the SSN and submit the change as a correction. If the SSN is incorrect, the student can correct the SSN on the output document, or preferably file a new FAFSA with the correct SSN.
No additional match conducted. Applicant tried to change SSN after SSA verified that reported SSN was correct.	4		013 You cannot change your social security number, because the Social Security Administration already verified that this social security number belongs to you.	If the student used the wrong SSN, yet his name, date of birth, and SSN were confirmed by SSA on the previous transaction, contact ED's Correction Application Coordinator at 202-708-6719 for further instructions. (See "Applicants Using Same SSN.")
Match conducted. Successful match to a deceased person's record on the SSA database.	5	Reject 8	145 According to Social Security Administration (SSA) records, the social security number you provided in Item 8 belongs to a deceased person. If the SSN in Item 8 is correct, you must contact an SSA office to resolve this problem.	If the student's SSN is correct, the student must contact SSA to have it correct its database. Once the database is updated, the student can reenter the SSN and submit the change as a correction.  If the SSN is incorrect, the student can correct the SSN, preferably by filing a new FAFSA with the correct SSN.

## APPLICANTS USING SAME SSN

When applicants with similar names report the same SSN by mistake, they may end up with a shared record identifier. The record identifier is made up of the SSN and the first two letters of the applicant's last name. The CPS uses this record identifier to identify the applicant for the rest of the award year, even if the student later makes a correction to the SSN or last name on the SAR or ISIR. If another student submits an application with the same SSN and first two letters of the last name, the CPS assumes the application is a duplicate application from the first applicant. As is usual with duplicate applications, the CPS won't accept the data on the new application (except for a new address or different schools). In addition, the shared number will cause problems for both students in the CPS and Pell systems, because the systems will treat them as a single student.

The student who has used the wrong SSN and now has a shared identifier **must** correct this error by filing a new FAFSA. The student cannot simply submit a correction on the SAR or through EDE, because he or she will still have the same, shared identifier.

If the student using the correct SSN applied after the other student, he or she must submit a special type of application called a "correction application." This correction application will cause the CPS to accept the student's data instead of treating the application as a duplicate and providing the other student's data on the output document. If the student using the correct SSN applied first, his or her data should already be on the application record, and so a correction application isn't necessary. However, the student should check to see if the address and schools have been changed, and should make corrections to those if necessary.

Both students should keep copies of all the output documents, including those from the first FAFSAs filed. When the students file the correction application or a new FAFSA, the application receipt date is changed. Because some schools and agencies use this receipt date to determine if the student met a deadline, the students should keep the output documents to show the original receipt date and to show why a second (and later) application was necessary.

If you believe that a Correction Application may be needed, contact the Department at 1-202-708-6719 for more information. If a Correction Application is necessary, you may request that it be mailed either to your office or to the student.

### Example: Students using same SSN

*Hector completes an application in January, but uses his brother Eddy's SSN instead of his own. When Hector gets his SAR, he realizes that he used the wrong SSN, corrects the SAR, and mails it back to the processor. He gets a new SAR with the correct SSN, but it has the same identifier as the first SAR. Eddy files an application in April, and is surprised to receive a SAR that doesn't match what was on his application because it has Hector's information instead. Eddy goes to the financial aid office at Guerrero University, where a counselor tells him he'll need to file a correction application. Hector is also attending Guerrero, so the counselor asks Eddy to have Hector contact the financial aid office so they can explain why he'll need to file a new application even though he already has a SAR with the correct information.*

**SSN exception for residents of the  
Freely Associated States**

*HEA Sec. 484(a)(4)*

**EXCEPTION FOR MICRONESIA,  
MARSHALL ISLANDS, PALAU**

Students from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau are not required to provide SSNs. Students from these areas who don't have SSNs should send their FAFSAs to the following address—not to the address on the FAFSAs or on the FAFSA envelopes:

Federal Student Aid Programs  
P.O. Box 4010  
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864-8610

The Department prefers that schools bundle such applications and send them as a group. These applications will first be assigned a special identifying number (in lieu of an SSN) in Item 8 of the FAFSA and then will be sent to the CPS for regular processing. These applications are exempt from the SSN match with the SSA.

Students who don't have SSNs can use *FAFSA on the Web* to apply for SFA funds electronically — there is an edit that allows these students to enter an SSN beginning with 888. As an alternative, you can use EDEExpress to transmit the FAFSA data for these students electronically.