Social Security Number

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 (SSA). In this chapter, we discuss the SSN requirement and the match process.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT REQUIREMENT

The FAFSA collects the SSN so that the Department can verify it through a tape match with SSA records. The SSA 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 school must be sure that it has the correct SSN before disbursing any aid. There is one exception to the requirement to provide SSNs, as discussed below (see "Exception for Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau," page 86).

Because the Department uses the SSN in its databases, it also must have the correct SSN in its records. Therefore, a school is required to make sure the Department knows the correct SSN if the school has documentation that the SSN on the application or output document is wrong. The school fulfills this requirement by having the student make a correction to the application information.

The CPS 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 SSA at 1-800-772-1213 or go to its web site at <http://www.ssa.gov>.

Date of Death

For the 2000-2001 award year, the Department expanded the match with SSA to include the Date of Death field. If the SSA'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 SSA 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 will conduct a post-screening match with the Social Security Administration to determine if the student is incarcerated, and if so, in what type of institution.

SSN Requirement Cites
Sec. 484(p), 34 CFR 668.32(i), 668.36

Requirement to Notify ED of Correct SSN Cite
34 CFR 668.36(b)(2)

Match Flag for Successful Match
4

Comment for Attempted Change to Confirmed SSN
13

Match on Wrong SSN Example
When Stanislaw submits his FAFSA, he accidentally provides an SSN with one number wrong. However, even though it is not his SSN, the SSA confirms the data in the match with CPS. Stanislaw sees the mistake when he gets his SAR, and tries to correct it. Because the match confirmed that the SSN was in the database, and that it matched his name and date of birth, the CPS won't make the change. Stanislaw gets the new SAR back. It has a comment telling him that he can't change his SSN. Stanislaw calls the FAA at Lem Community College, who tells him he must start over with a new FAFSA.

Match Flag and Reject Code for Date of Death
5, Reject 8

Comment for Date of Death
145

Match Flag and Reject Code for No Match
1, Reject 18

Comment for No Match
24

Incarcerated students are ineligible for Title IV loans and, if incarcerated in a federal or state penal institution, are ineligible for Pell grants as well. When available, further information will be posted on the IFAP Web site.

SSN MATCH

The CPS provides the match results 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. Note that 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 SSA 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.)

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 SSA confirms the student's SSN, and SSA records have the same name and birth date as reported on the FAFSA, the student's SSN has been confirmed and the school may disburse aid to the student. No comment is provided on the output document when the SSN match is successful. Of course, if the school has any conflicting information about the SSN, it 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 FAA for help. If the confirmed SSN is wrong, the student can only correct it by filing a new FAFSA.

No Match on SSN

The school must resolve any problems with the match before disbursing aid. If the SSN is not found in the SSA 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 SSA if he or she believes the SSN reported is correct. The student will have to correct the application information with the CPS before he or she can receive aid.

Incorrect SSN on application

If the student's application is rejected because he or she reported an incorrect SSN, the student must provide a correct SSN to the CPS. The student could simply submit a correction (either on the SAR, or by having the school submit a correction through EDE). However, the Department recommends that the student file a new application using the correct SSN, rather than correcting the original information.

One reason for this recommendation is that the SSN is used by the Department as part of the student identifier. The CPS uses the SSN reported on the student's first application of the award year in the identifier for the student for that year. If the student corrects the SSN, his or her identifier for the year still contains the original, incorrect SSN. This may cause a conflict if another applicant also applies using that SSN (See "Applicants using Same SSN," page 85). It may also cause confusion in communicating with other Department systems, such as NSLDS or the Pell payment system.

Incorrect SSN from data entry

If student provided the correct SSN on the application, but the SSN on the output document is wrong, the student can contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC) at 1-800-433-3243. The FSAIC can confirm whether there was an error entering the student's data into the CPS. The FSAIC will refer any such data errors to the Department for correction; the student should not submit a correction. After the data entry error is corrected, the CPS will produce new output documents. See Chapter 9 of this publication for general information on data entry error corrections.

Correct SSN not in SSA database

If the SSN on the form is correct, but isn't in the SSA database, the student must contact a local or regional SSA office to update the database. He or she must report the correct SSN to the SSA and provide documentation verifying the correct number. The student must contact an SSA office directly; he or she cannot ask the Department of Education to correct SSA records. The SSA database is updated daily with information from local and regional offices. Once the SSA database is updated, the student can submit a correction, providing the SSN originally reported as if it is a correction. The CPS will then match again with SSA. Note that the student can't simply verify that the SSN is correct; the application will be rejected until the SSA database is updated.

No Match on Name or Birth Date

The student's application won't be rejected if the SSN is in the SSA database but the name or birth date doesn't match those the student provided. The school still needs to resolve the discrepancy before paying the student.

Problems matching the name are less likely if the student makes sure that the name he or she provides on the application matches the name on his or her Social Security card.

Match Flags for Name or Birth Date Discrepancy
2,3

Comments for Name or Birth Date Discrepancy
60, 61

Incorrect Name on Application Example
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.

Correct Name not in Database Example

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.

Match Flag and Reject Codes for Missing Information

8, Rejects N, 13, 5, P

Comments for Missing Information

23, 59

Incorrect name or birth date on application

A student may not need to correct a name or birth date that was reported incorrectly on the application. The school 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 isn't required to make a correction, the Department recommends that he or she do so. 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 reported the current (or later) year as his or her birth date, the application will be rejected, and the student **must** submit a correction.

Correct name or birth date not in SSA database

If the name or birth date in SSA records don't match the correct name and birth date reported on the application, the student isn't required to contact SSA to update its records. Instead, the student only needs to provide documentation to the school showing that the name and birth date on the application is correct. However, the student may wish to ask SSA to update its database, so that he or she does not need to provide documentation every time he or she applies for SFA aid.

Missing Information

No match is performed when the student doesn't provide the last name or birth date, and the student's application will be rejected. 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.

SSN within 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 or birth date. The student must submit a correction providing the missing information. When the correction is sent, the information will be sent to SSA for matching, and the school should check the new output document for match results.

Social Security Number Match

Result	Match flag	"C" code or rejected application	Comment number and text	Action needed
Successful match	4		No comment	None
Date of birth inconsistent with SSA records	2	C code	060 The date of birth you reported on your application is inconsistent with the Social Security Administration's records.	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 can also submit a correction; 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 may want to contact SSA to have it correct its records.
Name inconsistent with SSA records	3	C code	061 According to Social Security Administration (SSA) records, the name you reported on your application does not correspond with the social security number you provided in Item 8. You should review Items 1, 2, 3, and 8 on this SAR. If all of these items are correct, you must contact an SSA office to resolve this problem. If you find that any of these items are incorrect, you should make corrections on your SAR where appropriate.	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, but 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, you must contact an SSA office to resolve this problem. If you determine that the social security number you reported on your aid application is not correct, you should correct your social security number in Item 8 on your SAR or contact your FAA.	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 can correct the SSN on the output document, or file a new FAFSA with the correct SSN (see "Incorrect SSN on application," page 80).

Social Security Number Match (continued)

Result	Match flag	"C" code or rejected application	Comment number and text	Action needed
No match because last name or date of birth was missing, but SSN is within valid range	8	Rejects N, 13, and/or 5	059 We could not determine from the Social Security Administration if the social security number you reported belongs to you because you did not give us your last name or date of birth. Correct Items 1 and/or 9 on your SAR.	The student must make corrections to provide the name and date of birth. 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 because last name or date of birth was missing, and SSN is not within valid range	8	Reject P and Rejects N, 13, and/or 5	023 It appears that the social security number you reported on your application is not a valid social security number. See your FAA for assistance.	The student must make corrections to provide the name and date of birth. 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 can 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 file a new FAFSA with the correct SSN.
Student tried to change SSN previously confirmed by SSA.	4		013 You tried to change your social security number. The Social Security Administration already verified that this social security number belongs to you. If you need assistance, see your FAA.	If the student used a wrong SSN, but it was confirmed by SSA, the student can only change it by filing a new application, not by making a correction. In certain rare cases, the student may need a correction application (see "Applicants Using Same SSN," page 85).
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 Item 8 is incorrect, you should correct your social security number on your SAR or contact your FAA. If the number 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 on the output document, or file a new FAFSN with the correct SSN.

SSN not within valid range

If the SSN doesn't fall within a 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 or birth date on a correction, the student must either contact SSA to correct its records (if the reported SSN is correct) or correct the SSN he or she reported. Again, the school should check the new output document for match results.

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.

A financial aid administrator who needs to receive a 2000-2001 Correction Application should contact the Department at 1-202-260-9988. The Department will determine case by case if a Correction Application is necessary. If a Correction Application is

Students Using Same SSN Example

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.

necessary, the financial aid administrator may request that it be mailed either to the school or to the student.

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 cannot use FAFSA on the Web or FAFSA Express to apply for SFA funds electronically. These students may, however, ask their schools to use EDExpress to transmit the student applications electronically if EDExpress is available.