

UNITED STATES MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
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The United States Mission to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Permanent Missions and Permanent Observer Offices to the United Nations and has the honor to provide the following information regarding the issuance of United States Social Security numbers and cards to members of the United Nations diplomatic community in New York.

The United States Mission receives a number of inquiries from Permanent Missions or their members regarding the procedure to be followed for applying for United States Social Security numbers/cards, most often because a local agency or institution has asked a diplomat or his or her dependent to produce one. The United States Social Security Administration (SSA) has advised the United States Mission that it does not assign Social Security numbers for identification purposes. Social Security numbers are given only to United States citizens or to foreign nationals lawfully admitted into the United States who either have permission from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to work in the United States or to receive benefits under a United States Federal Government

**DIPLOMATIC NOTE**

program for which a Social Security number is required. State and local agencies may *choose* to request a Social Security card for identification purposes, but it cannot be required.

Because the Social Security Administration does not assign Social Security numbers for identification purposes, the United States Mission wishes to inform the Permanent Missions of the benefits and services which may be obtained without a Social Security number. There are many situations where a Social Security number may be requested but is not required. Ambassador, diplomatic agents and staff members of the Permanent Missions and accredited representatives of organizations which are designated under the United States International Organizations Immunities Act, and their immediate family members are not required to have Social Security numbers for banking or monetary transactions. They need only complete Internal Revenue Service (IRS) form W-8, Certificate of Foreign Status, which is available at banks and all other financial institutions.

Family members of foreign government officials do not need Social Security numbers to register for school. The United States Mission is informed that schools and universities are not authorized to require a Social Security number for administering academic programs, and should instead assign internal numbers to

students who are ineligible for Social Security numbers. Students may be asked by the school or university to provide one, but an alternate form of identification will be acceptable. Social Security numbers are also not necessary when reporting group health insurance coverage. Employers, including the Permanent Missions, are not required to provide Social Security numbers for lawfully admitted nonimmigrant alien family members who are covered by group health plans but who do not have Social Security numbers.

Although diplomatic spouses and certain other diplomatic dependents of members of the Permanent Missions who have received employment authorization from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services are issued Social Security numbers for tax and other purposes, foreign nationals who are lawfully admitted into the United States and do not have permission to work do not need a Social Security number for such purposes. These individuals may, however, obtain an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) by completing IRS Form W-7. A member of a Permanent Mission or a dependent of that member, not authorized to work but who has United States income such as interest, investments or real estate not held on behalf of the sending state must also apply for an ITIN in order to file a United States tax return because a Social Security number will not be issued for this purpose. In addition, any foreign national who is lawfully admitted

may purchase savings bonds and may be designated as a co-owner or beneficiary of such bonds without a Social Security number.

The United States Mission wishes to advise the Permanent Missions that in most states it is no longer necessary to have a Social Security number to secure a state-issued driver's license or non-driver identification card. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has adopted guidelines that provide states with a means to process the application of a foreign national who has been lawfully admitted but who does not have a Social Security number. Such individuals must present documentation of their legal status in the United States, such as a passport, and are given a unique identifier as an alternative to a Social Security number.

*However, the United States Mission wishes to stress that persons who are required to secure driver's licenses and register their motor vehicles through the Department of State's Office of Foreign Missions in New York still must do so and may not receive driver's licenses or register motor vehicles locally.*

The United States Mission to the United Nations trusts that this note will clarify any misunderstanding concerning the issuance of Social Security numbers, and avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Permanent Missions and Permanent Observer Offices to the United Nations the assurances of its highest consideration.

