

Can I change my Social Security number so that my abuser cannot use it to find me or my children?

Yes, the Social Security Administration (SSA) may assign a new Social Security number (SSN) to victims of domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault. To do so, you should visit your local Social Security office and fill out a request for change of SSN. You should also bring the following documents with you to the Social Security office:

- original documents establishing your age, identity and U.S. citizenship or lawful non-citizen status, such as a birth certificate and a driver's license;
- your current Social Security number;
- one or more documents identifying you by both your old and new names if you have previously changed your name;
- custody papers for children that are requesting new SSNs; and
- evidence documenting the harassment or abuse.

Changing your SSN may enhance your safety by making it more difficult for your abuser to find you and your family. However, there are potential drawbacks to changing your SSN, including possible loss of credit and other histories; loss of professional and/or educational credentials; interactions with mutual parties (parties known to the abuser and victim/survivor); or difficulties in getting jobs, buying a house, or even renting an apartment.

For further information, use these links to go to instructions on the Social Security Administration web site: “SSA Provides Assistance to Victims of Domestic Violence” and “New Numbers For Domestic Violence Victims.”

Other relocation strategies that may be employed by victims of domestic violence include:

- using P. O. boxes or a service such as Mailboxes Etc. for mail;
- using “Virtual Voicemail” phone numbers such as www.golden-voice.com, www.messagingservice.com, or www.voicemailoffice.com;
- renting where utilities are included in the rent;
- asking the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) to print a P. O. box address on your driver's license;
- checking voter registration policies; and
- speaking with schools, churches, etc. about your and your children's confidentiality issues.

Obtaining new SSNs for children involves the same considerations and relevant documentation requirements as obtaining an SSN for yourself. However, an applicant for a minor child must prove **sole** custody of the children (designation as the residential parent and legal custodian of the child).