

From the Hotline

Q. An applicant came into the office yesterday and applied for food stamp benefits. When I asked for his social security number (SSN), he gave me what he thought was his number. I questioned him further, however, because he was stumbling over the final digit and couldn't seem to settle on whether the last digit was a "2" or a "3." I suggested he bring his card in with him so that we could both be certain of the number. In this example, is it acceptable to ask an applicant to give us his social security card for verification of the SSN?

A. No. It is not acceptable to ask any applicant or recipient for a social security card as verification of the SSN, ***under any circumstances***. Instead, take down what the individual believes is his or her SSN. The Department will then verify that number by a computer match with the Social Security Administration (SSA). SSN Verification Matches are sent daily from SSA to DTA and are used to report name, SSN number and date of birth discrepancies.

Q. In the above example, what happens if the applicant gave the wrong SSN ?

A. If the wrong SSN is given, a discrepancy will be received on the SSN Verification Match View. In this example, the AU Manager could call the applicant to double check the number or simply enter the other SSN given by the applicant. This *new* SSN would be verified overnight by SSA. If the SSN comes back again as discrepant, the applicant must provide verification of the SSN as it is now questionable. The applicant may choose to verify the SSN by providing his social security card or by getting written verification from the SSA. (The SSN could be verified by using the ENUM-2 form.) It is not acceptable, even in this situation, for an AU Manager to require the applicant to provide the social security card.

Q. During a routine application interview, the food stamp applicant repeated her social security number and I entered it onto the RFA. She then attempted to hand me her social security card, but I politely declined to see the card. Instead, I informed the applicant that the Department no longer requires an applicant to provide a copy of their social security card as verification of their social security number. Was my response correct?

A. Yes. As in the previous examples, the Department will verify this social security number through a computer match with the Social Security Administration. If multiple social security numbers are verified for the applicant, or if the number given to the Department cannot be verified by SSA, the applicant will be required to obtain written verification from SSA.

Regulations concerning SSN requirements and verifications in the Food Stamp Program can be found at 106 CMR 362.500.

Regulations concerning SSN requirements and verifications in the TAFDC and EAEDC Programs can be found at 106 CMR 701.230.

Procedures regarding SSN Verification Matches are in *A User's Guide*, pages II-A-27 through II-A-29.

