WIC Requirements for Vital Documents and Tips on Obtaining Replacement Social Security Cards for Children and Youths in Out-of-Home Care

A Social Security (SS) replacement card is requested when an individual has already been issued a SS number but needs to be issued a physical card.

Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Requirements

Foster youth have the right to work and develop job skills at an age-appropriate level under WIC § 16001.9(a)(31), which must align with state law. In California, minors generally must be at least 14 years old to work, with limited exceptions. Providing vital documents (i.e., certified/original birth certificates, SS cards and government issued identification cards, such as California Real ID) to foster youth starting at age 13 ensures they are prepared to obtain necessary work permits and access employment opportunities as soon as they become eligible, supporting their financial independence and career development.

In addition, pursuant to WIC 391, after a dependent child has attained 16 years of age, DCFS must submit a report to the Court verifying that specific information, documents, and services have been provided to the child. This includes, but is not limited to, the following (Note: This is NOT an all-inclusive list.):

1. SS card (under specific circumstances as outlined below)
   WIC 391 outlines specific circumstances when the child's SS card may be provided temporarily to the dependent child for the following purposes:
   - To enable the child to obtain employment.
   - To apply for admission to an institution of postsecondary education or a vocational training program.
   - To apply for financial aid.
   - To apply for, or access, public benefits.
   - As otherwise determined by the case-carrying CSW, including, but not limited to, in response to a request from the child.
   - To apply for a driver's license
2. Copy of the their birth certificate
   - Per WIC 391, a *certified* copy is to be provided upon request by the child.
   - Staff may review the "Vital Records (Birth, Death, Marriage and Divorce" (1200-500.10) policy.
3. Driver's license or identification card

Also, at the last regularly scheduled review hearing held pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 366.3 before a dependent child attains 18 years of age, DCFS must submit a report verifying that the above information, documents, and services have been provided to the child.

Obtaining a Replacement SS Card for a Child or Youth

The Social Security Administration (SSA) places a limit on the number of replacement cards that can be issued. An individual may receive no more than three replacement SS cards in a year and ten replacement SS cards per lifetime. The SSA may allow for reasonable exceptions to these limits on a case-by-case basis in compelling circumstances.

There are different options to request a replacement SS card, *which may or may not start with the online application.*

Initiate an application online *(optional)*

Staff, or children/youths/nonminor dependents (NMDs) who are mentally/physically able, are encouraged to use the SSA's online system to initiate the process to obtain a replacement SS card.

- For DCFS Staff: when asked for your relationship and responsibility to the individual, you must select "State Agency or State Licensed Agency with Legal Custody."
- When using the online application and scheduling an appointment, staff/youth can make an appointment then visit a local SSA office or card center with the required documentation

Scheduling an appointment *(mandatory)*

Effective January 6, 2025, the SSA began requiring all customers to schedule an appointment for service in SSA field offices, including to obtain SS cards.

- Through the online application process above, staff/youth may be eligible to schedule an appointment before visiting the local SSA office *(note that the SSA's website might require you to input personal information)*.
- You may also call a local SSA office or card center to schedule the appointment.

Option 1: A child/youth/NMD applies and appears in-person at the SSA office

If a child/youth/NMD applies on their own behalf a minute order is not required and any adult accompanying the child should not be required to furnish identification.

- There is no specific age limit for a child/youth to apply on their own as long as they are able to sign the SS-5 form, appear in-person, and answer questions about their parents.
- The child/youth should sign Box 17 of the SS-5 form and appear in-person at the SSA office, with the documentation of their age, identity, and citizenship described on the following page.

Option 2: Staff appears in-person on behalf of the child/youth (ages 0-17)

- The adult applying on behalf of the child or youth must sign Box 17 of the Social Security Application (SS-5) form and that same adult must appear at the SSA office with their identification.

- Proof of the requestor's identity - The SSA should accept a personal State-issued Identification; however, if that is unavailable, they may accept a County badge (original only, not a photo copy). Some SSA offices might require *two* forms of ID.

- Proof of authority to sign on behalf of the child – Sometimes the County badge is sufficient, but some SSA offices might require a letter on DCFS letterhead, signed by a supervisor or manager, indicating that the requestor has authority to file on behalf of the child.
- Proof of the requestor's relationship/responsibility to the child - The SSA should accept a minute order that is certified/stamped or signed by the judge/hearing officer (see options to request a certified minute order). Note that some offices require the original/certified Detention minute order and some require the minute order to contain the *specific name* of the DCFS staff (or other person) who is applying for the SS card on the child's behalf.
- Documentation of the child's age, identity, and citizenship described on the following page.
- Note that the SSA has a hierarchy as to whom can apply for a replacement SS card (Determining the Proper Applicant for a Social Security Card) so the SSA won't always allow foster caregivers to apply on behalf of a child or youth, but relative caregivers might have a better chance.

Documents required by the SSA to prove the child/youth/NMD's age, identity, and citizenship.

The SSA may accept one document for two purposes. Therefore, staff need two of the original documents listed below (Note: the birth certificate can be used to prove both age and citizenship, but it **cannot** be used to prove identity):

You need to submit **original** documents **(no copies), with wet signatures/stamps,** and all documents should be **current/not expired**.

Child's Age	Proof of Age	Proof of Citizenship	Proof of Identity
Children not of school age	Birth certificate	Birth certificate or hospital birth records, or U.S. passport	Medi-Cal/health insurance physical card, daycare record*, passport, medical records showing, in addition to the applicant's name, the applicant's DOB or age *(Medical records directly from the medical provider with their stamp on it are more likely to be accepted, but some SSA offices might accept a stamped DCFS 561(a) form. In some instances, SSA offices may request that their own medical form be completed and signed by the medical provider).*

School age children	Birth certificate	Birth certificate or hospital birth records, or U.S. passport	School identification card *(some SSA offices may not accept a school ID if it does not have a date of birth on it and/or have a photo of the child)*, Medi-Cal/health insurance physical card, school record/transcript*, State Issued ID, or passport
Age 18+	Birth certificate	Birth certificate, hospital birth records, or U.S. passport	School identification card *(some SSA offices may not accept a school ID if it does not have a date of birth on it and/or have a photo of the child on it)*, employment identification card, insurance card, state issued ID, driver's license, or passport

*Daycare record or school record needs to have the child's date of birth, the stamp of the institution, and be recent.
**Court authorization is necessary to release medical records to the SSA

Document efforts to obtain SS cards on CWS/CMS and in the court report. After the SSA verifies the document(s) and completes the request, most SS cards should be sent by the SSA within 14 business days.

Notes:
If the child/youth is a United States (U.S.) citizen but not born in the US, you will need the original document of one of the following to establish citizenship: US passport, Certificate of Naturalization, Certificate of Citizenship, Certificate of Report of Birth or Consular Report of Birth Abroad.
If the child/youth is not a U.S. citizen, please refer to the Immigration Options for Undocumented Children and Families policy. If you need further assistance, you may consult with the Special Immigrant Status (SIS) Unit. Email: sisuib@dcfs.lacount.gov

Barriers and Issues When Obtaining SS Cards

Please note that, due to there being many nuances within SSA policies, a wide array of individual situations, as well as some variations of protocols between different SSA field offices, results may vary regarding which documents they accept.

If you have questions regarding the process for obtaining SS cards, or encounter barriers, please contact the main number for the local SSA field office near you to try to resolve the issue.

If issues persist or you need additional support, please contact SSCardSupport@dcfs.lacounty.gov and provide as many details as possible regarding your issue (e.g., which documents you furnished to the SSA, which SSA office you dealt with, whom you interacted with there, what you were advised to do by SSA staff, on what date(s), etc.). DCFS management has been in communication with SSA management to try to overcome systemic barriers.