

Social Security COVID-19 Updates, Scam Alert

In response to COVID-19 concerns, the Social Security Administration (SSA) has made significant changes to its operations and policies. All local SSA offices are closed to the public indefinitely. SSA is also extending their deadlines for filing wherever possible. The agency is also regularly posting information on their website, ssa.gov/coronavirus/ about how the pandemic is affecting its services.

Some SSA employees continue to work on SSA's highest priority workloads, including:

- ❑ Requests for "dire need" benefit payments, for individuals who did not receive their regular monthly payment, are currently homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, or whose benefits previously were suspended and can now be reinstated.
- ❑ Disability applications for those with the most severe disabilities.
- ❑ Changes of address, changes of direct deposit, changes of representative payee, and reports of death.

How to Reach Your Local Office

Local offices continue to provide some services over the phone. You can now find the direct phone number for each **local office by zip code**. To find your local office number, look below the result for the local office, scroll down past the listing of the hours, and click on the plus sign to "Show Additional Office Information"—the phone number for the local office will be shown here.

Online services also remain available. There are not enough SSA employees currently available to handle the call volume to the national 800 number, so callers will likely experience extremely significant delays or inability to access the line.

Continuing Disability Reviews and Overpayments

SSA is not starting or completing any medical continuing disability reviews (CDRs), and has suspended processing and collecting most new overpayments. Some automated processes will still proceed because there are not enough SSA employees available to take the manual actions necessary to stop them. However, SSA will continue collection activity for existing overpayments.

Scam Alert

SSA is not taking any new, manual actions to reduce, suspend, or delay any benefits during this period, although automated actions may continue. If you receive a communication threatening to suspend or discontinue benefits because SSA offices are closed, this is most likely a scam, and should be reported to the inspector general.

REPORT SCAMS:

- ★ Social Security Fraud Hotline **1-800-269-0271**
or
- ★ Social Security Law Enforcement Team at the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) website: **www.oig.ssa.gov**.

Additional Resources to Avoid Financial Abuse:

- ❑ National "Do Not Call" Registry: Sign up at **www.donotcall.gov** or call **1-800-382-1222**. Telemarketers must honor this "Do Not Call List", however, charities, political organizations and surveys are excluded from the list.
- ❑ Department of Health & Human Services – National Center on Elder Abuse. Resources on elder abuse, neglect and exploitation for professionals and the public at **www.ncea.acl.gov**
- ❑ For additional WISER fact sheets on Elder Financial Abuse, visit WISER's website at **www.wiserwomen.org** or email us at **info@wiserwomen.org**

