

Social Security Payment Requirements For Most North, Central And South American Citizens Living Outside The United States



People who are not U.S. citizens may receive U. S. Social Security benefits while outside the United States if they meet certain requirements. If you are a citizen of a country in North, Central or South America (except Paraguay and Suriname) and live outside the United States, you may be able to receive your Social Security benefits as long as you are eligible for them.

***NOTE:** If you are a citizen or national of the United States, you may receive your Social Security payments outside the United States without having to make periodic visits as long as you are eligible for them.*

Will I receive my benefits if I am the worker?

If you are a citizen of a country in North, Central or South America (except for Paraguay and Suriname) who is entitled to retirement or disability benefits on your own Social Security record, you (the worker) can be paid monthly Social Security benefits without having to make any visits to the United States.

Will I receive my benefits if I am a dependent or survivor?

If you are a citizen of a country in North, Central or South America (except for Canada, Chile, Paraguay and Suriname), who is entitled to benefits as the dependent (for example, wife, widow, child, etc.) of a retired, disabled or deceased worker, you can be paid monthly Social Security benefits without having to make any periodic visits to the United States if **either** one of the following applies to you:

- You (or a child's parent) lived in the United States for at least five years while in a family relationship with the worker (does not have to be one continuous period of time); **or**

- You were (or could have been) paid benefits for any month before January 1, 1985.

What if I do not meet the requirements to receive benefits as a dependent or survivor?

If you do not meet any of these requirements, then you must visit the United States in order to be paid monthly Social Security benefits. There are three different kinds of visits. Here are the rules:

- If you have not been in the United States at any time during the six calendar months before your first month of entitlement, then to get your benefits started you must come to the United States and stay every hour of a **full calendar month**. For example, if you came to the United States on April 24, you could not leave the United States before June 1. This means that you would be present in the United States the entire month of May.

After you complete this visit for a full calendar month, there are two ways to continue receiving benefits. You can choose one or the other:

- You must spend any part of **one day** in the United States at least once every 30 days or less; **or**
- If you do not do one-day visits (or if you fail to make a visit in a 30-day time period), then you must come to the United States and stay every hour of **30 consecutive days**. For example, if you came to the United States on April 24, you could not leave the United States before May 25. This visit for 30 days must be completed no later than the end of the six-month period that started with your first full calendar month outside the United States.

If you are outside the United States for six consecutive calendar months without coming to the United States at all, then your benefits

(over)

will be stopped beginning with the seventh month. In order to get your benefits started again, you must come to the United States and stay every hour of a **full calendar month**. For example, if you came to the United States on April 24, you could not leave the United States before June 1.

How do I prove my visits to the United States?

To prove that you made a one-day visit to the United States, you must:

- Visit any Social Security office in the United States; or
- Provide proof of entry into the United States from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS); or
- Provide other documentary evidence of your visit.

To prove that you were present in the United States for 30 consecutive days or for a full calendar month, you must:

- Provide a signed statement telling us the date you entered the United States, where you stayed during the visit, and that you did not go outside the United States at any time during the visit; and
- Provide documentary evidence to support your statement, such as an airline or bus ticket or a statement from a relative or neighbor; and
- Visit any Social Security office to document your visit. It is strongly encouraged that you visit a field office soon after you arrive in the United States **and** after you have remained in the United States for the required period of time; and
- Provide proof from DHS that you were lawfully present in the United States for your entire visit (if your claim was

filed on or after December 1, 1996). For example, Form I-94 is an acceptable document issued by DHS.

Payments Abroad Screening Tool

If you intend to move to a country or location outside the United States and would like to learn if your Social Security retirement, disability or survivor payments will continue or stop if you leave the United States, please visit www.socialsecurity.gov/international/payments_outsideUS.html. The Payments Abroad Screening Tool can assist you in determining whether your benefits will continue. (The tool does not interface with any personal records in any of Social Security's systems.)

Contacting Social Security

For more information and to find copies of our publications, visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov or call toll-free, **1-800-772-1213** (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**). We treat all calls confidentially. We can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. We can provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day.

We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some telephone calls.

If you are outside the United States, please contact your nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Visit www.socialsecurity.gov/foreign for a complete list of these offices.