



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

The Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program Frequently asked Questions

What is the SAVE Program?

The SAVE Program is an intergovernmental initiative designed to aid federal, state, and local benefit-granting agencies in determining a benefit applicant's immigration status, thereby ensuring that only entitled applicants receive federal, state, or local public benefits and licenses. The program is an information service for eligible benefit-granting agencies, institutions, licensing bureaus, and other governmental entities.

Specifically, the SAVE Program offers an effective, efficient, and secure method of immigration status verification. By providing immigration status information, authorized benefit-granting agencies or institutions are able to determine whether an applicant is eligible for a benefit according to the agency's regulations. SAVE assesses a charge per transaction.

The SAVE Program verifies an applicant's current immigration status. It does not determine if an applicant is eligible for any publicly-funded benefit.

Who administers the SAVE Program?

In 1986, Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), P.L. 99-603, which required the creation and implementation of a system that verifies the immigration status of immigrants, non-immigrants, and naturalized or derived citizens applying for certain publicly-funded benefits. This system originally fell under the jurisdiction of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). To accommodate this federal mandate, INS created the SAVE Program in 1987.

With the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2003, jurisdiction is now under the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Enterprise Services Directorate, Verification Division.

Who can use the SAVE Program?

To participate in the SAVE Program, an agency must be a federal, state, or local government agency or licensing bureau with a lawful purpose to verify an applicant's immigration status prior to issuing a publicly-funded benefit. Since the creation of the SAVE Program, several pieces of legislation have expanded the need for agencies to verify immigration status.

The **Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA)** requires USCIS to verify and provide the immigration status of non-citizen applicants applying for benefits under the following mandated programs:

- Department of Education - *Education Assistance*
- Department of Health and Human Services - *Medicaid & Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)*
- Department of Housing and Urban Development - *Housing Assistance*
- Department of Labor - *Unemployment Insurance*

The **Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA)** requires SAVE to respond to inquiries by federal, state, and local benefit-granting agencies seeking to verify citizenship or immigration status of an individual for any lawful purpose. The Act allows any agency with a lawful purpose for verifying non-citizens' immigration statuses to participate in the SAVE Program.

The **Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 (PRWORA)** restricts immigration status eligibility for certain programs funded by federal, state, and local government agencies to "qualified aliens," as defined by the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

The **REAL ID Act of 2005** requires all Departments of Motor Vehicles (DMVs) to verify the immigration status of applicants applying for driver's licenses or state identification cards. The majority of DMVs are currently participating in the SAVE Program.

What is the Agency Application Process?

1. Apply for the SAVE Program

An agency begins applying for the SAVE Program by providing certain information via the online SAVE system, including general contact information, a description of the benefit provided by the agency, and anticipated usage, as well as sections of the laws authorizing the administration of the benefit and requiring or authorizing immigration status verification. SAVE conducts a legal review of this documentation to confirm the agency's eligibility to participate in the Program.

2. Review and Sign Agreements

If the basic requirements are met, the SAVE Program sends the agency a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and an Anticipated Collections Addendum (ACD) defining the legal terms and conditions of use, transaction charges, and the method of payment between the agency and USCIS.

3. Receive SAVE Access

Upon completion of the MOA and ACD, the SAVE Program establishes the agency's user account, provides instructions for accessing the online SAVE system, and offers additional training materials.

How many agencies currently participate in the SAVE Program?

As of September 24, 2010, 625 federal, state, and local agencies participate in the SAVE Program. Of those agencies, 38 are Departments of Motor Vehicles, 30 are federal agencies, 233 are state agencies, and 324 are local agencies.

The SAVE Program has grown significantly in recent years. From 1998 to 2008, 241 agencies registered to use the SAVE, with an additional 59 agencies registering in FY 2009. During this time, the SAVE Program saw more than a 23% increase in its customer base. In FY 2010, SAVE has added 327 new agencies to date.

What is the Verification Process?

The SAVE Program uses an online system to check a benefit applicant's immigration status information against records contained in the DHS databases.

SAVE begins verifying the legal status of non-immigrants, immigrants, and naturalized or derived citizens with an Initial Verification (results in 3-5 seconds). Throughout FY 2010, nearly 95 percent of cases that resolved with immigration status did so without requiring additional verification.

However, in some instances, status cannot be verified immediately through the Initial Verification and further processing is needed to verify the applicant's lawful status. This does not necessarily mean that the applicant is not authorized to be in the United States or that he/she is ineligible to receive a benefit.

If an applicant's status is not verified on Initial Verification, the agency should institute Additional Verification, which could be automated (3-5 federal work days) or paper-based (10-20 federal work days). A summary of the verification process is provided below:

Electronic Verification

1. Initial Verification

The agency submits the query electronically based upon information provided by the applicant. The system response provides applicant's immigration status or prompts the agency to "Institute Additional Verification."

2. Additional Verification

The agency provides additional information on the applicant and submits the query electronically. The system response provides the applicant's immigration status or prompts the agency to "Resubmit with Docs."

3. Third Step Verification

The agency submits an electronic request which generates a pre-populated Form G-845, *Document Verification Request*. The agency prints Form G-845 and mails it with photocopies of the applicant's immigration documents to the appropriate Status Verification Office.

Special Note: Agencies that do not have access to an automated system may submit a paper verification request by using Form G-845, *Document Verification Request*.

How many queries does SAVE process per month?

On average, the SAVE Program processes approximately 782,000 initial verifications, 77,000 additional verifications, and 7,000 third step verifications per month.¹ SAVE processed over twelve million queries in FY 2009.

Does the SAVE Program provide customer service and support?

The SAVE Program offers general customer service information to potential and current SAVE participants. The SAVE Program also provides current participants with case status support, additional training opportunities, and technical support. For additional information, please review the SAVE website (www.uscis.gov/save), e-mail the SAVE Help Box (SAVE.help@dhs.gov), or call USCIS Customer Assistance at (888) 464-4218.

¹ Numbers based on average of June, July, and August 2009.