This Guideline highlights the requirements of The Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. § 552a as it applies to the collection of Social Security Numbers ("SSNs") by University-related persons. It also harmonizes The Privacy Act with the University’s SSN Usage Standard, which prohibits the collection of SSNs and their use as identifiers unless required by law.

1. Basic Rule: UA may not deny any rights, privileges or benefits to individuals who refuse to provide their SSNs unless—
   • the SSN is required by federal statute, or
   • UA will use the SSN in a record system that required the SSN before 1975, if the system’s use of the SSN was required by law before 1975 to verify a person’s identity, or
   • the State of Arizona requires the SSN in the administration of a tax, general public assistance, driver’s license or motor vehicle registration law

2. Practical Results:
   a. UA may require SSNs in connection with—
      • Employment at UA
      • Federal financial aid
      • Immigration and Customs Enforcement
      • Court order in accordance with FERPA
      • Other federal statutory requirements
   b. UA may require SSNs in connection with a law or University policy in effect before 1975, if they have been used in a record system continuously since that time.
   c. For any other purpose, the Privacy Act permits UA to ask an individual to volunteer the SSN but must not require its use. However, the SSN Usage Standard prohibits the collection of the SSN and its use as an identifier unless required by law. Exceptions to the SSN Usage Standard must be obtained from the UISO.

3. Privacy Act Notices
   a. All forms on which individuals are required to provide SSNs or requested to provide SSNs voluntarily must include a notice.
   b. The notice must indicate:
      i. Whether disclosure is mandatory or voluntary
      ii. The statute or other authority authorizing the requirement
      iii. How the SSN will be used
   c. Samples (NOTE: A notice does not need to include the precise language shown below but must include the three requirements listed above)
      - If the SSN is collected pursuant to federal statute, or the State of Arizona requires the SSN in the administration of a tax, general public assistance, driver’s license or motor vehicle registration law:
The Federal Privacy Act of 1974 requires that you be notified that disclosure of your Social Security Number is required pursuant to [the name or section of the law, e.g., the Internal Revenue Code]. The Social Security Number is used to verify your identity.

*If the SSN is collected for a University record keeping system that was not required by law but was in existence before January 1, 1975, and it is necessary to continue to collect the number:*

The Federal Privacy Act of 1974 requires that you be notified that disclosure of your Social Security Number is mandatory pursuant to the authority of the Arizona Board of Regents under Section 15-1601 et seq. of Arizona Revised Statutes. The Social Security Number is used to verify your identity.

*If the SSN is not mandated by law but is needed for a business purpose AND the UISO has approved an exception to the SSN Usage Standard (e.g., use in the early stages of the admissions process to match standardized test scores) (NOTE: Any of the following samples, including the sample under the next heading, may be appropriate for this purpose):*

Disclosure of your Social Security Number to the University at the time of application for admission is voluntary. All applicants are provided with unique identification numbers to use for University business. The University has no statutory authority other than IRS tax and Title IV student aid regulations to request your Social Security Number. Your Social Security or identification number will be used for administrative purposes and may be used as an identifier for employment, grants, loans and other financial aid programs. Students who do not provide their Social Security Numbers may need to do so at a later time for financial aid or IRS purposes.

OR

The Federal Privacy Act of 1974 requires that you be notified that disclosure of your Social Security Number is voluntary, although failure to do so may delay or even prevent your enrollment. The Social Security Number is used to match your application with your standardized test scores. The University will not disclose your Social Security Number for any purpose not required by law without your consent.

*If the SSN is collected under any other circumstance, or if the University wishes to give persons the choice of either providing a SSN or obtaining an assigned dummy number, AND the UISO has approved an exception to the SSN Usage Standard:*

The Federal Privacy Act of 1974 requires that you be notified that disclosure of your Social Security Number is voluntary under this record-keeping system, which was established pursuant to the authority of the Arizona Board of Regents under Section 15-1601 et seq. of Arizona Revised Statutes. The Social Security Number is used to verify your identity. If you do not choose to disclose your
Social Security Number, an identification number will be assigned to you.

Related Guidance

Information Security Policy (IS-100)
Information Security Terms Guideline (IS-G100)
SSN Usage Standard (IS-S301)
Student Records Privacy Guidelines
Section 7 of the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. § 552a note

Revision History

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