



# Agreement Between The United States And Switzerland

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## Introduction

An agreement effective November 1, 1980, between the United States **and Switzerland improves Social Security protection for people who** work or have worked in both countries. It helps many people who, without the agreement, would not be eligible for monthly retirement, disability or survivors benefits under the Social Security system of one or both countries. It also helps people who would otherwise have to pay Social Security taxes to both countries on the same earnings.

The agreement covers Social Security taxes (including the U.S. Medicare portion) and Social Security retirement, disability and survivors

insurance benefits. It does not cover benefits under the U.S. Medicare program or the Supplemental Security Income program.

This booklet covers highlights of the agreement and explains how it may help you **while you work** and **when you apply for benefits**.

### **The agreement may help you, your family and your employer**

- **While you work** — If your work is covered by both the U.S. and Swiss Social Security systems, you (and your employer, if you are employed) would normally have to pay Social Security taxes to both countries for the same work. However, the agreement eliminates this double coverage so you pay taxes to only one system (see pages 2-3).

- **When you apply for benefits** — You may have some Social Security credits in both the U.S. and Switzerland but not have enough to be eligible for benefits in one country or the other. The agreement makes it easier to qualify for benefits by letting you add together your Social Security credits in both countries. For more details, see the section on “**Monthly benefits**” beginning on page 4.

## Coverage and Social Security taxes

Before the agreement, employees, employers and self-employed people could, under certain circumstances, be required to pay Social Security taxes to both the United States and Switzerland for the same work.

Under the agreement, if you work as an employee in the United States, you normally will be covered by the United States, and you and your employer will pay Social Security taxes only to the United States. If you work as an employee in Switzerland, you normally will be covered by Switzerland, and you and your employer pay Social Security taxes only to Switzerland.

On the other hand, if your employer sends you from one country to work for that employer or an affiliate in the other country for five years or

less, you will continue to be covered by your home country and you will be exempt from coverage in the other country. For example, if a U.S. company sends an employee to work for that employer or an affiliate in Switzerland for no more than five years, the employer and the employee will continue to pay only U.S. Social Security taxes and will not have to pay in Switzerland.

If you are self-employed and reside in the United States or Switzerland, you generally will be covered and taxed only by the country where you reside.

### Summary of agreement rules

The following table shows whether your work is covered under the U.S. or Swiss Social Security system. If you are covered under U.S. Social Security, you and your employer (if you are an employee) must pay U.S. Social Security taxes. If you are covered under the Swiss system, you and your employer (if you are an employee) must pay Swiss Social Security taxes. The next section (beginning on page 3) explains how to get a form from the country where you are covered that will prove you are exempt in the other country.

Your work status	Coverage and taxes
<b><i>You are working in Switzerland:</i></b>	
<i>For a U.S. employer who:</i>	
• Sent you to work in Switzerland for five years or less	U.S.
• Sent you to work in Switzerland for more than five years	Switzerland
• Hired you in Switzerland	Switzerland
<i>For a non-U.S. employer</i>	Switzerland
<i>For the U.S. government and you are a:</i>	
• U.S. national	U.S. (either Social Security or federal retirement program)
• Swiss national	Switzerland
<b><i>You are working in the U.S.:</i></b>	
<i>For an employer in Switzerland who:</i>	
• Sent you to work in the U.S. for five years or less	Switzerland

Your work status	Coverage and taxes
• Sent you to work in the U.S. for more than five years	U.S.
• Hired you in the U.S.	U.S.
<i>For a non-Swiss employer</i>	U.S.
<i>For the Swiss government and you are a:</i>	
• Swiss national	Switzerland
• U.S. national	U.S.
<b><i>You are self-employed and you:</i></b>	
• Reside in the U.S.	U.S.
• Reside in Switzerland	Switzerland
<b><i>If this table does not seem to describe your situation and you are:</i></b>	
• Working in the U.S.	Write to the U.S. address on page 9 for further information.
• Working in Switzerland	Write to the Swiss address on page 9 for further information.

**NOTE:** As the table indicates, a U.S. worker employed in Switzerland can be covered by U.S. Social Security only if he or she works for a U.S. employer. A **U.S. employer** includes a corporation organized under the laws of the United States or any state, a partnership if at least two thirds of the partners are U.S. residents, a person who is a resident of the U.S. or a trust if all the trustees are U.S. residents. The term also includes a foreign affiliate of a U.S. employer if the U.S. employer has entered into an agreement with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) under section 3121(l) of the Internal Revenue Code to pay Social Security taxes for U.S. citizens and residents employed by the affiliate.

## Certificate of coverage

A certificate of coverage issued by one country serves as proof of exemption from Social Security taxes on the same earnings in the other country.

### Certificates for employees

To establish an exemption from compulsory coverage and taxes under the Swiss system, your employer must request a certificate of coverage (form USA/CH 10) from the U.S. at this address:

Social Security Administration  
Office of International Programs  
P.O. Box 17741  
Baltimore, MD 21235-7741  
USA

If preferred, the request may be sent by FAX to **(410) 966-1861**. Please note this FAX number should only be used to request certificates of coverage.

No special form is required to request a certificate but the request must be in writing and provide the following:

- Full name of worker;
- Date and place of birth;
- Citizenship;
- Country of worker's permanent residence;
- U.S. Social Security number;
- Date of hire;
- Country of hire;
- Name and address of the employer in the U.S. and Switzerland; and
- Date of transfer and anticipated date of return.

In addition, your employer must indicate if you remain an employee of the U.S. company while working in Switzerland or if you become an employee of the U.S. company's affiliate in Switzerland. If you become an employee of an affiliate, your employer must indicate if the U.S. company has an agreement with the IRS under section 3121(l) of the Internal Revenue Code to pay U.S. Social Security taxes for U.S. citizens and residents employed by the affiliate and, if yes, the effective date of the agreement.

Your employer can also request a certificate of U.S. coverage for you over the Internet using a special online request form available at [www.socialsecurity.gov/coc](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/coc). Only an employer can use the online form to request a certificate of coverage. A self-employed person must submit a request by mail or fax.

To establish your exemption from coverage under the U.S. Social Security system, your employer in Switzerland must request a certificate of coverage (form CH/USA 10) from the compensation fund in Switzerland that collects your Social Security taxes in Switzerland.

The same information required for a certificate of coverage from the United States is needed to get a certificate from Switzerland except that you must show your Swiss Social Security number rather than your U.S. Social Security number.

### **Certificates for self-employed people**

If you are self-employed and would normally have to pay Social Security taxes to both the U.S. and Swiss systems, you can establish your exemption from one of the taxes.

- If you reside in the United States, write to the Social Security Administration at the address on page 9;
- If you reside in Switzerland, write to the Swiss compensation fund of the canton in which you reside.

Be sure to provide the following information in your letter:

- Full name;

- Date and place of birth;
- Citizenship;
- Country of permanent residence;
- U.S. and/or Swiss Social Security number;
- Nature of self-employment activity;
- Dates the activity was or will be performed; and
- Name and address of your trade or business in both countries.

### **Effective date of coverage exemption**

The certificate of coverage you receive from one country will show the effective date of your exemption from paying Social Security taxes in the other country. Generally, this will be the date you began working in the other country.

Certificates of coverage issued by Switzerland should be retained by the employer in the United States in case of an audit by the IRS. No copies should be sent to IRS unless specifically requested by IRS. However, a self-employed person must attach a **photocopy** of the certificate to his or her income tax return each year as proof of the U.S. exemption.

Copies of certificates of coverage issued by the United States will be provided for both the employee and the employer. It will be their responsibility to present the certificate to the Swiss authorities when requested to do so. To avoid any difficulties, your employer (or you, if you are self-employed) should request a certificate as early as possible, preferably before your work in the other country begins.

If you or your employer request a certificate of coverage, you should read the Privacy Act and Paperwork Reduction Act statements at the end of this booklet.

### **Monthly benefits**

The following table shows the various types of Social Security benefits payable under the U.S. and Swiss Social Security systems and briefly describes the eligibility requirements that normally apply for each type of benefit. If you

do not meet the normal requirements for these benefits, the agreement may help you to qualify (see pages 6-7).

This table is only a general guide. You can get more specific information about U.S. benefits at any U.S. Social Security office or by calling our toll-free number at **1-800-772-1213** or by visiting Social Security's website at **[www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)**. You can get more detailed information about the Swiss system

by writing to the Swiss address on page 1 or by visiting the Swiss Social Security system's website at **[www.avss-ai.ch](http://www.avss-ai.ch)**.

Under U.S. Social Security, you may earn up to four credits each year depending on the amount of your covered earnings. For example, in 2017, you get one credit for each \$1,300 of your covered annual earnings up to a maximum of four credits for the year. Under the Swiss system, credits are measured in months. To simplify the information in the table, requirements are shown in years of credits.

<b>Retirement or old-age benefits</b>	
<b>United States</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>Worker</b> — Full benefits at full retirement age.* Reduced benefit as early as age 62. Required work credits range from one and one-half to 10 years (10 years if age 62 in 1991 or later).	<b>Worker</b> — Full benefit at age 65 for men or reduced benefit as early as age 63. Full benefit for women at age 63 increasing to age 64 in 2005 or reduced benefit as early as age 62. One year of coverage required if a Swiss citizen or resident. Ten years of coverage required if neither a citizen nor a resident of Switzerland.
<b>Disability benefits</b>	
<b>United States</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>Worker</b> — Under full retirement age* can get benefit if unable to do any substantial gainful work for at least a year. One and one-half to 10 years credit needed, depending on age at date of onset. Some recent work credits also needed unless worker is blind.	<b>Worker</b> — Under retirement age and at least 40 percent disabled. Must be insured at the time the disability occurs. Workers who are not Swiss citizens must also reside in Switzerland and either have at least one year of Swiss coverage or have resided in Switzerland for 10 years without interruption.
<b>Family benefits to dependents of retired or disabled people</b>	
<b>United States</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>Spouse</b> — Full benefit at full retirement age* or at any age if caring for the worker's entitled child under age 16 (or disabled before age 22). Reduced benefit as early as age 62 if not caring for a child.	<b>Spouse</b> — No provision. However, a supplement may be paid to a disabled worker whose spouse is not entitled to a retirement or disability benefit and has at least one year of Swiss coverage or resides in Switzerland.
<b>Divorced spouse</b> — Full benefit at full retirement age.* Reduced benefit as early as age 62. Must be unmarried and have been married to worker for at least 10 years.	<b>Divorced spouse</b> — No provision.
<b>Children</b> — If unmarried, up to age 18 (age 19 if in an elementary or secondary school full time) or any age if disabled before age 22.	<b>Children</b> — Additional pension paid to worker if child is under age 19 (age 26 if in school).

\*Full retirement age for people born in 1938 is age 65 and 2 months. The full retirement age increases gradually until it reaches age 67 for people born in 1960 or later.



<b>Survivors benefits</b>	
<b>United States</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>Widow</b> — Full benefit at full retirement age* or at any age if caring for the deceased's entitled child under age 16 (or disabled before age 22). Reduced benefit as early as age 60 (or age 50 if disabled) if not caring for child. Benefits may be continued if remarriage occurs after age 60 (or age 50 if disabled).	<b>Widow</b> — Monthly benefits if caring for a child under age 19 (age 26 if in school) or at least age 45 and marriage lasted at least five years. If under age 45 and not caring for a child, but marriage lasted five years, a flat one-time payment is made.
<b>Widower</b> — Same as widow.	<b>Widower</b> — Any age if caring for a child of the worker under age 19 (age 26 if a student).
<b>Divorced widow(er)</b> — Same as widow(er) if marriage lasted at least 10 years.	<b>Divorced widow(er)</b> — Any age if caring for a child under age 18 or there are one or more children (regardless of age) and marriage lasted at least 10 years. Age 45 if youngest child has reached age 18 or, if no children, marriage lasted at least 10 years.
<b>Children</b> — Same as for children of retired or disabled worker.	<b>Children</b> — Under age 19 (age 26 if a student) and, if the worker was the mother, she must have been covered under the Swiss system at time of death.
<b>Lump-sum death benefit</b> — A one-time payment not to exceed \$255 payable on the death of an insured worker.	<b>Lump-sum death benefit</b> — No provision.

\*Full retirement age for people born in 1938 is age 65 and 2 months. The full retirement age increases gradually until it reaches age 67 for people born in 1960 or later.

## How benefits can be paid

If you have Social Security credits in both the United States and Switzerland, you may be eligible for benefits from one or both countries. If you meet all the basic requirements under one country's system, you will get a regular benefit from that country. If you do not meet the basic requirements, the agreement may help you qualify for a benefit as explained below.

- **Benefits from the U.S.** — If you do not have enough work credits under the U.S. system to qualify for regular benefits, you may be able to qualify for a partial benefit from the United States based on both U.S. and Swiss credits. However, to be eligible to have your Swiss credits counted, you must have earned at least six credits (generally one and one-half years of work) under the U.S. system. If you already have enough credits under the U.S. system to qualify for a benefit, the United States cannot count your Swiss credits.

- **Benefits from Switzerland** — Under the agreement, if you are a U.S. citizen, you can qualify for Swiss retirement and survivors benefits with just one year of Swiss coverage. (Before the agreement, U.S. citizens needed at least five years of Swiss coverage to qualify.) Therefore, credits under the U.S. system will **not** be counted when determining eligibility for Swiss retirement and survivors benefits.

To qualify for Swiss disability benefits, you would normally need one year of Swiss coverage **and** also need to be covered by the Swiss system at the time you become disabled. If you do not meet the **current coverage** requirements for Swiss disability benefits, the agreement can help you qualify if you have recent U.S. credits (or are receiving U.S. benefits) at the time you become disabled.

## How credits get counted

You do not have to do anything to have your credits in one country counted by the other country. If we need to count your credits under the Swiss system to help you qualify for a U.S. benefit, we will get a copy of your Swiss record directly from Switzerland when you apply for benefits. If Swiss officials need to count your U.S. credits to help you qualify for a Swiss benefit, they will get a copy of your U.S. record directly from the Social Security Administration when you apply for the Swiss benefit.

Although each country may count your credits in the other country, your credits are not actually transferred from one country to the other. They remain on your record in the country where you earned them and can also be used to qualify for benefits there.

## Computation of U.S. benefit under the agreement

When a U.S. benefit becomes payable as a result of counting both U.S. and Swiss Social Security credits, an initial benefit is determined based on your U.S. earnings as if your entire career had been completed under the U.S. system. This initial benefit is then reduced to reflect the fact that Swiss credits helped to make the benefit payable. The amount of the reduction will depend on the number of U.S. credits: the more U.S. credits, the smaller the reduction; and the fewer U.S. credits, the larger the reduction.

## A Swiss pension may affect your U.S. benefit

If you qualify for Social Security benefits from both the United States and Switzerland and you did not need the agreement to qualify for either benefit, the amount of your U.S. benefit may be reduced. This is a result of a provision in U.S. law that can affect the way your benefit is figured if you also receive a pension based on work that was not covered by U.S. Social Security. For more information, call our toll-free number, **1-800-772-1213**, or visit our website, **[www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)**, and get a copy of *Windfall Elimination Provision*,

(Publication No. 05-10045). If you are outside the United States, you may write to us at the address on the inside cover.

## What you need to know about Medicare

Medicare is the U.S. national health insurance program for people age 65 or older or who are disabled. Medicare has four parts:

- Hospital insurance (Part A) helps pay for inpatient hospital care and certain follow-up services.
- Medical insurance (Part B) helps pay for doctors' services, outpatient hospital care and other medical services.
- Medicare Advantage plans (Part C) are available in many areas. People with Medicare Parts A and B can choose to receive all of their health care services through a provider organization under Part C.
- Prescription drug coverage (Part D) helps pay for medications doctors prescribe for medical treatment.

You are eligible for free hospital insurance at age 65 if you have worked long enough under U.S. Social Security to qualify for a retirement benefit. People born in 1929 or later need 40 credits (about 10 years of covered work) to qualify for retirement benefits.

Although the agreement between the United States and Switzerland allows the Social Security Administration to count your Swiss credits to help you qualify for U.S. retirement, disability or survivors benefits, the agreement does not cover Medicare benefits. As a result, we cannot count your credits in Switzerland to establish entitlement to free Medicare hospital insurance.

For more information about Medicare, call our toll-free number, **1-800-772-1213**, or visit our website, **[www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)**, to see our publication, *Medicare* (Publication No. 05-10043), or visit Medicare's website at **[www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)**.

## Claims for benefits

If you live in the United States and wish to apply for U.S. or Swiss benefits:

- Visit or write any U.S. Social Security office; or
- Phone our toll-free number, **1-800-772-1213**, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. any business day. People who are deaf or hard of hearing may call our toll-free TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**.

You can apply for Swiss benefits at any U.S. Social Security office by completing an application form SSA-2490.

If you live in Switzerland and wish to apply for U.S. or Swiss benefits, contact:

- The Federal Benefits Unit at the U.S. Embassy in Bern (phone **31-357-7235**) to file for U.S. benefits; or
- The compensation fund in the canton where you live (or one of its local branch offices) to file for Swiss benefits.

You can apply with one country and ask to have your application considered as a claim for benefits from the other country. Information from your application will then be sent to the other country. Each country will process the claim under its own laws—counting credits from the other country when appropriate—and notify you of its decision.

If you have not applied for benefits before, you may need to provide certain information and documents when you apply. These include the worker's U.S. and Swiss Social Security numbers, proof of age for all claimants, evidence of the worker's U.S. earnings in the past 24 months and information about the worker's coverage under the Swiss system. You may wish to call the Social Security office before you go there to see if any other information is needed.

### Payment of benefits

Each country pays its own benefit. U.S. payments are made by the U.S. Department of Treasury each month and cover benefits for the preceding month. Payments under the Swiss

system are paid by the Swiss Compensation Office early each month and cover benefits for that month.

### Absence from U.S. territory

Normally, people who are not U.S. citizens may receive U.S. Social Security benefits while outside the U.S. only if they meet certain requirements. Under the agreement, however, if you are a U.S. or Swiss citizen, a refugee, a stateless person or a person who is eligible for dependents or survivors benefits based on the Social Security record of one of these people, you may receive benefits as long as you reside in Switzerland. If you are not a U.S. or Swiss citizen and live in another country, you may not be able to receive benefits. The restrictions on U.S. benefits are explained in the publication, *Your Payments While You Are Outside The United States* (Publication No. 05-10137).

### Appeals

If you disagree with the decision made on your claim for benefits under the agreement, contact any U.S. or Swiss Social Security office. The people there can tell you what you need to do to appeal the decision.

The Swiss Social Security authorities will review your appeal if it affects your rights under the Swiss system, while U.S. Social Security authorities will review your appeal if it affects your rights under the U.S. system. Since each country's decisions are made independently of the other, a decision by one country on a particular issue may not always conform with the decision made by the other country on the same issue.

### Authority to collect information for a certificate of coverage (see pages 3-4)

### Privacy Act

The *Privacy Act* requires us to notify you that we are authorized to collect this information by section 233 of the *Social Security Act*. While it is not mandatory for you to furnish the information to the Social Security Administration, a certificate of coverage cannot be issued unless



a request has been received. The information is needed to enable Social Security to determine if work should be covered only under the U.S. Social Security system in accordance with an international agreement. Without the certificate, work may be subject to taxation under both the U.S. and the foreign Social Security systems.

### Paperwork Reduction Act Notice

This information collection meets the clearance requirements of 44 U.S.C. section 3507, as amended by section 2 of the *Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995*. You are not required to answer these questions unless we display a valid Office of Management and Budget control number. We estimate that it will take you about 30 minutes to read the instructions, gather the necessary facts, and write down the information to request a certificate of coverage.

### Contacting Social Security

#### Visit our website

The most convenient way to conduct Social Security business from anywhere at any time, is to visit [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov). There, you can:

- Apply for retirement, disability, and Medicare benefits;
- Find copies of our publications;
- Get answers to frequently asked questions; and
- So much more!

#### Call us

If you don't have access to the internet, we offer many automated services by telephone, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you're in the United States, call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** or at our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**, if you're deaf or hard of hearing.

If you need to speak to a person, we can answer your calls from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. We ask for your patience during busy periods since you may experience a higher than usual rate of busy signals and longer hold times to speak to us. We look forward to serving you.

#### For more information

To **file a claim** for U.S. or Swiss benefits under the agreement, follow the instructions on page 8.

To find out more about U.S. Social Security benefits or for information about a claim for benefits, contact any U.S. Social Security office or call our toll-free number at **1-800-772-1213**. **If you live outside the United States, write to:**

Social Security Administration  
OIO—Totalization  
P.O. Box 17049  
Baltimore, MD 21235-7049  
USA

For more information about Switzerland's Social Security programs, write to the compensation fund in the canton where you live or one of its local branch offices. If you do not live in Switzerland, write to:

Swiss Compensation Office  
18 Avenue Ed. Vaucher  
CH-1211, Geneva 28  
SWITZERLAND

If you **do not wish to file a claim for benefits** but would like more information about the agreement, write to:

Social Security Administration  
Office of International Programs  
P.O. Box 17741  
Baltimore, MD 21235-7741  
USA

For additional information visit our website:  
[www.socialsecurity.gov/international](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/international).



Securing today  
and tomorrow

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