



 **SENSITIVE - NOT TO BE SHARED WITH PUBLIC**

 **Access Q&As, Related Instructions, Regional Supplements.**

View [Related Instructions](#)

**Effective Dates:** 12/26/2024 - Present ([View History](#))

[TN 18 \(12-24\)](#) 

## GN 03360.005 Releasing Information by Telephone

### A. Policy

#### 1. General

##### a. Authorized Disclosures

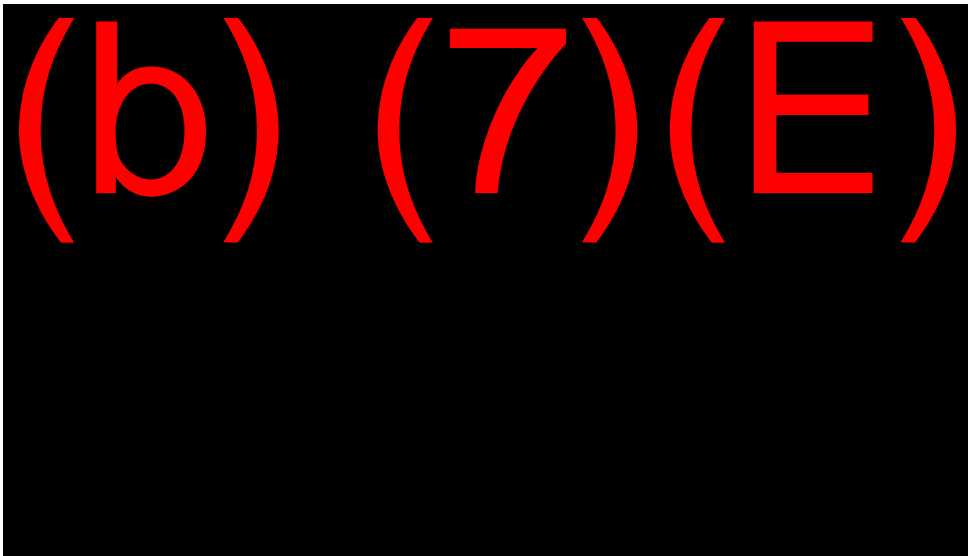
Although authorized disclosures of information are usually in writing, it is permissible to disclose information over the telephone if appropriate measures are taken to assure that the requester is entitled to receive it.

**CAUTION:** Under no circumstances can medical records be released over the telephone (b) (7)(E)

##### b. Prohibition Against Disclosure/Access When Caller (b) (7)(E) (b) (7)(E)

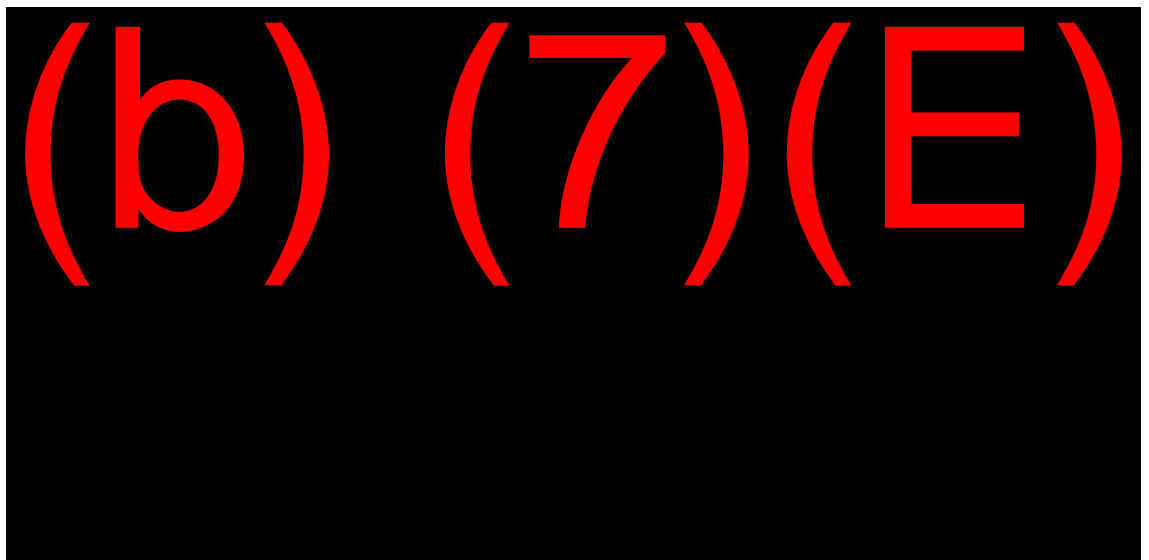
Increases in the availability of personal information and in identity theft have caused SSA to be especially careful when disclosing information over the telephone (b) (7)(E)


(b) (7)(E)



**c. Identifying the Individual of Record Calling for Themselves When Caller is a Claimant/Beneficiary**


A claimant/beneficiary requesting access to information about themselves via the telephone must provide the following information to establish their identity:



See [GN 03380.005B.2](#)  for the chart containing identity verification requirements.



**When Caller is NOT a Claimant/Beneficiary**

When the caller is not a claimant/beneficiary, they must provide all of the information discussed in [GN 03360.005A.1](#)  about the individual of record

(b) (7)(E)

## 2. Requests for Tax Return Information


Tax return information cannot be released over the telephone in situations where a caller is initiating contact with SSA.


However, tax information may be released by telephone in connection with a pending claim or an earnings record discrepancy case which is already in progress. This includes cases where an individual calls to question the accuracy of an earnings record.


**NOTE:** In these situations, the purpose of the telephone conversation is to clarify and resolve questions rather than to initiate access to tax information.

**EXAMPLE:** An individual who has received an earnings statement may call to inquire about the earnings shown on the statement. This subject may be discussed as necessary to resolve or clarify the question. However, if the individual asks for information about years that are not shown on the statement, this information cannot be disclosed by telephone.

## 3. Requests from Subject Individuals

Providing access to the individual who is the subject of the record is usually required, as long as appropriate measures are taken to ensure the caller's identity. These measures are described in [GN 03340.015C.4](#). 


An individual with a hearing or speech impairment may call SSA to request access to their records with the assistance of a telephone relay system operator. This request should be honored as long as the individual's identity is established. See [GN 03380.005B.2](#).  for the chart containing identity verification requirements.


(Also see [GN 03340.000](#)  for a discussion of situations in which access to records by the subject individual may be denied.)

## 4. Requests from Family Members

### a. Requests from Parents of Minor Children

A request for information from a child's record by the child's parent is an access request which must be honored, as long as it is clear that the parent is acting on the child's behalf.

See [GN 03380.005B.2](#)  for the chart containing identity verification requirements.


**NOTE:** A parent's request for a child's SSN or verification of a child's SSN for income tax purposes is considered to be on the child's behalf. During tax filing periods, SSA may receive an increase in the number of telephone requests from parents for their children's SSNs or verifications of their children's SSN. 


**(b) (7)(E)**

#### **b. Requests from Other Family Members**


No personal information from a beneficiary's record (such as benefit amounts) may be disclosed to other family members without proper consent. Only general program information about Social Security benefits may be disclosed.

### **5. Requests from Representative Payees**

As explained in [GN 03316.120](#)  , information may be disclosed to a representative payee when they need it to perform the duties of a payee. However, the payee's identity must first be verified.

See [GN 03380.005B.2](#)  for the chart containing identity verification requirements.

### **6. Requests from Legal Guardians**

Legal guardians may have access to records pertaining to the individuals they represent. However, disclosure to a guardian may be made only if their identity and status as a guardian can be established. See [GN 03380.005B.2](#)  for the chart containing identity verification requirements.

**EXAMPLE:** If a call is received in a field office, and the guardianship papers are available in the office, ask the caller for the date the guardianship was effective.


## 7. Requests from Employers

### a. SSN Information

Only a positive verification of an employee's SSN may be given to an employer. The employer must provide the employee's first and last name, SSN and date of birth. If the information matches, you can advise the employer that according to our records the SSN given was assigned to the name given.



(b) (7)(E)


### b. Other Information

Because of the difficulty of proving identity, personal information may not be disclosed to employers. Employers who need personal information about employees should be asked to submit their request in writing. See [GN 03380.010B.2](#)  for the chart containing identity verification requirements.

**NOTE:** Information about a potential employee should not be disclosed. Ask the employer whether or not the employee has been hired. Accept the employer's allegation and respond according to the above instructions.

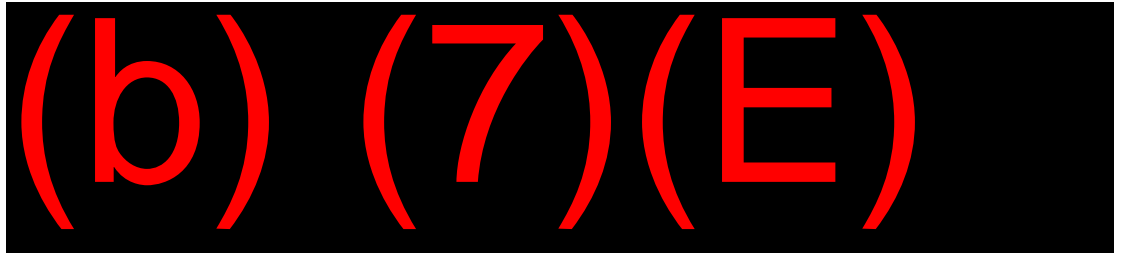
## 8. Requests from Government Agencies

Disclosure by telephone is permitted for information needed by Federal, State, and local agencies which administer income and health maintenance programs (described in [GN 03313.000](#)  and [GN 03314.000](#)  ).

However, the identity of the caller must be certain. See [GN 03380.010B.2](#)  for the chart containing identity verification requirements. Generally, only local SSA FOs have sufficient familiarity with their service areas to be sure of


the identity of callers from these agencies. Therefore, if a TSC receives such an inquiry, it should usually be referred to the servicing FO for a response.

Disclosure to government agencies which do not administer income or health maintenance programs should not be made by telephone.



## 9. Requests from Third Party Filers (Non-Proper Applicants) to Schedule or Modify a Claims Appointment

A third party non-proper applicant who demonstrates clear intent to file is permitted to establish an appointment to file an application for benefits on behalf of a claimant. When establishing the appointment, the third party must provide their first and last name, telephone number, and relationship to the claimant. The third party may only reschedule or cancel the claims appointment if they originally established that appointment. In order to reschedule or cancel the previously established appointment, the third party must provide their first and last name, telephone number and relationship to the claimant and the claimant's first and last name and SSN. The information provided by the third party filer must exactly match the information previously documented in the 800 Number System.

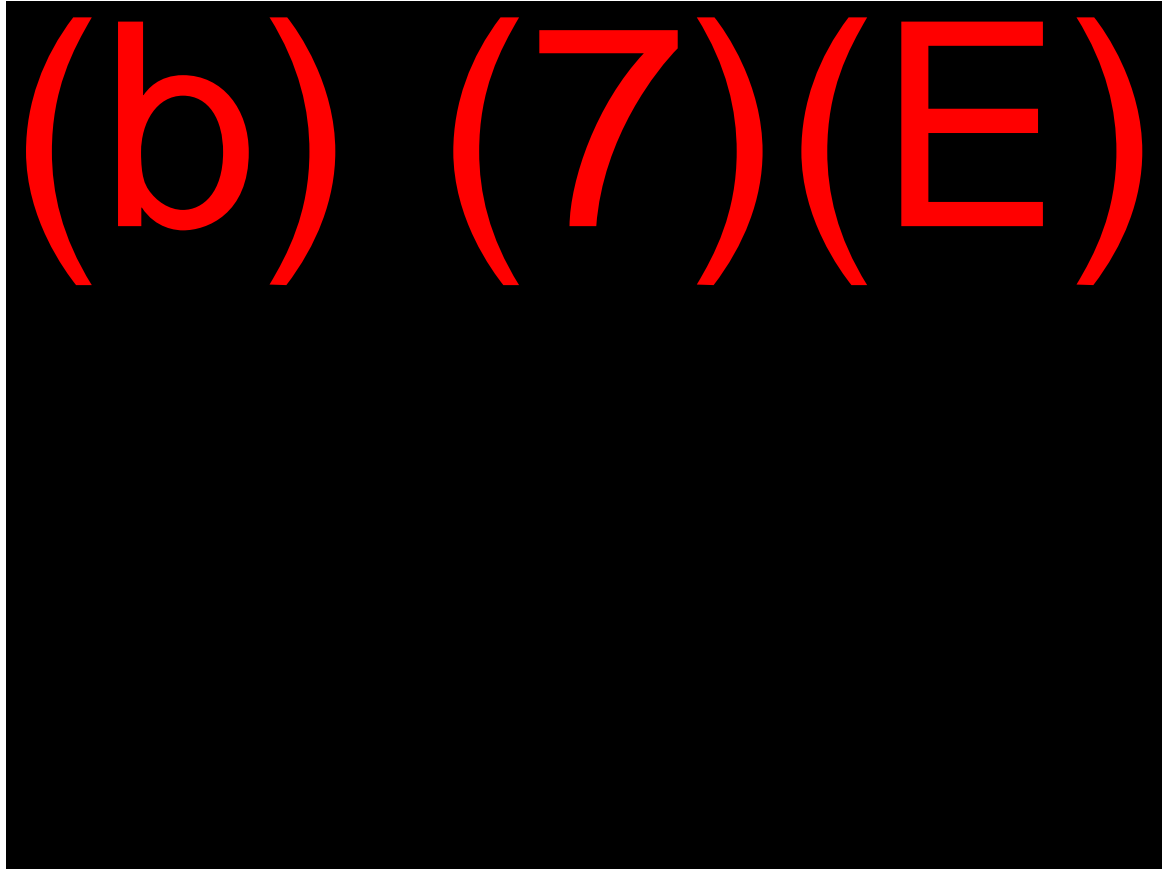
**NOTE** : Individuals present with the claimant at the time of filing merely to assist the claimant in filing an application are not third party filers. These individuals are considered helpers and may not reschedule or cancel the previously established appointment. See [GN 03340.001E](#)  for information about these helpers.

### B. Procedure

When a person calls SSA to obtain personal information from our records, take steps to verify the person's identity.

#### 1. Caller is an SSA Employee from Another Office

(Personal information may be freely disclosed by telephone within SSA based on "need to know," i.e., when an employee needs the information to perform their duties.)



## 2. The Caller is Not an SSA Employee


### a. Verifying Identity

In cases where the caller is not an SSA employee, verify identity using information available in an SSA system of records. (b) (7)(E)

(b) (7)(E)

(b) (7)(E)

 See [GN](#)

[03380.010B.2](#)  for the chart containing identity verification requirements.)

After checking the data provided by the caller against SSA's records, decide whether you have satisfactory verification of the caller's identity.

- If the identity is established, release the requested information.

(b) (7) (E)

**EXAMPLES:** Medical records and tax return information are considered sensitive information which cannot be released by telephone.

### 3. Data Used to Verify Identity

The specific types of information you may use to verify a caller's identity will vary somewhat, depending on what part of SSA's records you will have to access. In all cases, there are certain mandatory items which a caller must be able to provide. Ask for as much additional data as you need to verify identity.

Additional data may include (when applicable) the caller's or the beneficiary's:

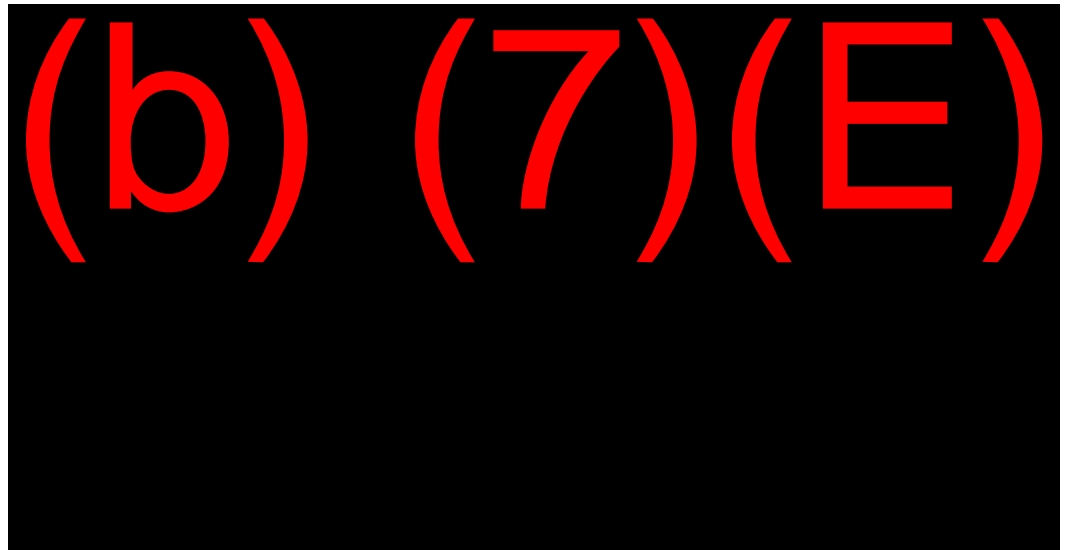
(b) (7) (E)




#### 4. Situations Requiring Identification

Follow the instructions below for situations requiring identification of the caller.

##### a. The Caller is the Individual of Record Calling for Themselves



##### b. The Caller is a Parent Calling on Behalf of a Minor Child

Access to the record may only be provided if the parent is calling on behalf of the minor child (see [GN 03340.025A](#) ).



(b) (7) (E)

**c. The Caller is a Representative Payee**

**REMINDER:** Disclosure is limited to information needed to perform the payee's responsibilities).

- **Individual Payee**

(b) (7) (E)

- **Organizational Payee**

(b) (7) (E)

See [GN 03380.010B.2](#). [↗](#) for the chart containing identity verification requirements.

**d. The Caller is a Third Party Calling for an Individual Who is Present and Gives Oral Permission (see [GN 03340.001E](#). [↗](#) )**


Identification of the caller is unnecessary. Verify from the subject individual that they give oral permission to receiving assistance in obtaining access to their records.

(b) (7) (E)



**e. The Caller is an Authorized Representative (Attorney or Non-attorney)**

To identify the caller/representative, verify that the subject individual has authorized this representative (by obtaining a query or accessing the Form SSA-1696 (Appointment of Representative) if it is available). No further identification is necessary.

(b) (7)(E)

See [GN 03380.010B.2](#)  for the chart containing identity verification requirements.


**f. The Caller is Working for Another Federal, State, or Local Government Agency**

Disclose information only to certain government agencies. If the agency in question meets the requirements outlined in [GN 03313.000](#)  and [GN 03314.000](#) , disclose information if you know the individual and are certain of his or her identity. (b) (7)(E)

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See

[GN 03380.010B.2](#)  for the chart containing identity verification requirements.

**g. The Caller is a Third Party Other Than One of the Parties Listed Above**

Tell the caller that the written consent of the subject individual is necessary prior to disclosure.

**REMINDER:** Disclosure of personal information by telephone to a third party is normally not permitted in any other situations.

## Section History

▼ [Prior Versions of Section](#)

## Additional Information

▼ [Related Instructions](#)

Link to this section:

(b) (7)(E)

