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**MANAGEMENT BULLETIN #448
(For Informational Purposes Only)**

DATE: August 5, 2014
TO: Owners/ Agents/On-Site Managers
FROM: Diane Smith, Assistant Director
Asset Management Services
RE: Social Security Benefit Letters

Below you will find an update about printed Social Security Benefit Letters. This information is related to the Social Security Administration (SSA) plan to stop providing paper benefit/award letters from the local SSA offices. At the end of 2013, SSA posted the following information on their website:

Social Security Field Office Service Changes

Posted: December 12, 2013

To meet increasing service demands despite shrinking budgets, Social Security has invested in technological innovations offering more convenient, cost-effective and secure options for the public. Considering these factors, Social Security is making some service changes in our field offices across the country.

Beginning in February 2014, local Social Security offices no longer will provide Social Security number printouts or benefit verification letters. As a result, we are asking agencies and other organizations that routinely request these verifications to use the agency's specially developed online methods.

Social Security has collaborated with other federal, state and local agencies to build hundreds of robust data exchanges during the past few years. Today, Social Security provides more than 1.6 billion electronic verifications of Social Security numbers or benefit information to employers, state and local agencies, and other authorized third parties. Agencies and organizations should use available data exchanges to get the necessary verifications.

People needing proof of their Social Security or Supplemental Security Income benefits can get verification letters online instantly through a my Social Security account at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount. They also can get one mailed to them by calling our toll-free number, [1-800-772-1213](tel:1-800-772-1213) (TTY [1-800-325-0778](tel:1-800-325-0778)).

This news was very concerning for industry partners because, while the Enterprise Income Verification System (EIV) has significantly improved our ability to verify SS income, there are situations where EIV just won't work. We need to be able to rely on the Social Security Administration to provide us with alternative resources when:

- EIV cannot be used for new move-ins or when a new adult is added to a household
- Some seniors and residents with disabilities are living on properties with layered programs where use of EIV is strictly prohibited and the SSA award letter is required (tax credit, HOME, 515, some state finance programs, etc.)
- Survivor's benefits are not reflected in EIV
- Medicare Part D premiums are not reflected in EIV when they are deducted from the SSA benefit
Information about certain deductions is not reflected in EIV (unpaid child support, unpaid taxes, repayment agreements, etc.)
- Certain residents are exempt from the SSN reporting requirements therefore no information appears in EIV

In most cases, the "My Social Security account" option is a wonderful alternative to initiating direct contact with the local SSA office. Residents who establish a user name and password can log in and print copies of the SSA award/benefit letters. These can be used as third-party verification in compliance with HH 4350.3 R1, C4, Paragraphs 5-12-5-18 and Paragraph 9-10.

This solution will not work for everyone. Here are the challenges:

- Some seniors and residents with disabilities do not have access to computers
- Some seniors and residents with disabilities do not have access to email accounts
- Some seniors are not willing to have anything to do with the computers because they think everything will get stolen
- Seniors with advanced dementia or Alzheimer's often have difficulty getting set up because of the security questions - often there is no family or other person to help (property managers are cautious in efforts to assist)
- SSA has a number of records showing incorrect birthdates and they are not helpful in resolving the issue

On July 17, 2014, SSA posted an updated announcement.

"Today, the Social Security Administration announced that local Social Security offices would continue to provide benefit verification letters until further notice. Providing services when and where the public needs them remains central to Social Security's efforts, while continuing to encourage federal, state, and local agencies to take advantage of Social Security's data exchange programs that can serve customers more efficiently and effectively"

To view the complete announcement, visit the SSA web site at <http://www.ssa.gov/news/#!/post/7-2014-1>

Sending a resident to the local Social Security office should be used only as a "last resort."

Keep in mind, if you can't use EIV for verification, the easiest way for applicants or residents to get SSA benefit verification is from the SSA web site. The second option is to ask them to use the SSA toll-free number, [1-800-772-1213](tel:1-800-772-1213) (TTY 1-800-325-0778) to request that SSA send a paper copy via US Mail.

It is important for you to start communicating with your residents about the benefits of accessing the information through the "My SSA" site.

While we encourage you to assist your residents as much as possible, you should not set up an account for a resident. Note the warning on the ssa.gov web site.

*"You can only create a "my Social Security account" using your **own personal information and for your own exclusive use**. You cannot create or use an account on behalf of another person, even if you have that person's written permission. You can never share the use of your account with anyone else under any circumstances. Unauthorized use of this service is a misrepresentation of your identity to the federal government and could subject you to criminal or civil penalties, or both."*

You may want to ask a Social Security office representative to come and speak. We don't know anyone who has done this, but SSA has a link if you want to make the request.

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/agency/ask-for-a-speaker.html>

SSA will also provide posters that you can use to communicate with your residents about the "My SSA" resource. <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount/materials.html>

For the HUD multi-family program, I would suggest that property managers check to see if there are any existing residents whose SSA income information is not available in EIV. You should know who these residents are since use of EIV has been mandatory since 2010.

If, at certification/recertification, SSA income verification cannot be obtained through EIV, then the resident will need to obtain a current award letter from the SSA web site, by calling the SSA 800 number or, as a last resort, by visiting the local SSA office.

If you have any questions regarding this matter please contact your Asset Manager.