

## **Social Security backtracks on in-person identification policy after outcry. Here's what it means.**

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The Social Security Administration said it's backtracking from a requirement that would have forced some elderly and disabled people to visit agency offices in person to verify their identities rather than via the telephone, a move that was met with an outcry from seniors and their advocates.

The in-person requirement was slated to go into effect on April 14, and applied to Social Security recipients unable to prove their identities online.

But now, the SSA is changing that policy, which a White House official told CBS MoneyWatch is due to the rollout of anti-fraud software that will be able to identify anomalies and flag potential fraud when people verify their identities over the phones.

### **What is changing about identity verification**

The SSA will allow seniors and other recipients to verify their identity over the phone rather than requiring them to make in-person visits, the White House official said.

Starting April 14, all claims can be filed via the telephone, the official added.

The video player is currently playing an ad.

However, people who are flagged for fraud "would be required to perform in-person ID proofing for the claim to be further processed," the Social Security Administration said in a Tuesday [post](#) on X.

The agency said it receives about 4.5 million telephone claims each year, with about 70,000 flagged for potential fraud.

### **What do advocates say about the reversal?**

Making seniors appear in person to verify their identities could have created hardship for many, especially seniors with health or mobility issues. About 6 million seniors would have faced a 45-mile trip to reach an SSA office, according to an [analysis](#) from the Center on Budget and Public Policies.

Advocates said that while they applauded the change, more needs to be done to improve customer service at the SSA after the Trump administration [cut 7,000](#) agency workers.

"SSA's announcement yesterday that claimants will be able to continue validating identity by phone is a victory for Social Security beneficiaries across the country," said Max Richtman, CEO of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare.

But, he added, the agency "should reverse other harmful policies they have enacted under the phony cover of hunting for 'waste and fraud,' including radically reducing the agency's workforce that serves the public, and re-instituting default withholding of up to [100% of people's benefit checks](#) in the case of accidental overpayments (usually caused by SSA itself)."

## **What is behind the changes at Social Security?**

The changes at the SSA have been orchestrated by the [Department of Government Efficiency](#), or DOGE, which is the cost-cutting operation headed by billionaire Elon Musk. Both Musk and President Trump have claimed that Social Security is rife with fraud, saying that 150-year-olds are collecting benefits, an allegation that has been [debunked](#).

At the same time, cuts to the Social Security Administration's workforce has coincided with glitches and problems at the agency's website, such as disabled and low-income seniors mistakenly being told last week that their [benefits had ended](#). Such problems are sparking widespread [alarm among seniors](#), many of whom rely on their monthly Social Security checks to pay for rent, food and other basics.