

How to Make the Most of Program Participation



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Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program

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This document will outline the steps that program participants should take to utilize their substitute address and fully protect their confidential address.

The Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program is open to all victims of domestic abuse, stalking, human trafficking, rape, sexual battery, or any other sexual offense who satisfy eligibility and application requirements at no cost.

Once an applicant has been approved for program participation, the Safe At Home Program will issue to the participant a Certificate of Program Participation, a Program Authorization Card, a unique substitute address, and a participant identification number. The Safe At Home Program will also provide the participant with additional instructions and documentation required by law. Below are some guidelines to help participants make the most of their substitute address and their program participation.

The Substitute Address

Once a substitute address has been assigned, the Safe At Home Program will accept all first class and certified mail received at the substitute address. The Safe At Home Program will also accept all service of process directed to the program participant. When mail or other documents are received, the Safe At Home Program will forward those materials to the program participant at their designated mailing address.

The Safe At Home Program will not accept packages or other boxes, unless clearly marked as sent from a state or local government agency. The Safe At Home Program will not accept or forward magazines, catalogs, or other advertising materials (i.e., junk mail). Participants should not attempt use the substitute address for receipt of perishable or fragile materials or controlled substances – these packages may be refused and returned to the sender at the Office of the Secretary of State's sole discretion.

When Can the Substitute Address be Used?

1. Whenever a program participant is required by law to swear to or affirm the participant's address, the participant may use the participant's substitute address. For example, the substitute address can be used to apply for TennCare Medicaid, CoverKids, Families First, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. T.C.A. §§ 40-38-602, 606.
2. Wherever a program participant is required by law to establish residency, the participant may use the participant's substitute address. For example, the substitute address may be provided to a public school. School officials must contact the Office of the Secretary of State to verify that you reside within the school district and your child is eligible to enroll in that public school. T.C.A. §§ 40-38-602, 606.
3. The substitute address may be used for motor vehicle records and may be printed on a drivers license. T.C.A. § 40-38-602.
4. The substitute address may also be used as your official mailing address for all public utilities and utility service providers. T.C.A. §§ 40-38-602, 606.
5. Participants may also request that private entities use the substitute address, although they are not required to do so. For example, you might request that your bank or your employer use the substitute address for all official mail.

Note that, in many cases, you may be required to provide proof of program participation before the substitute address is accepted.

When can the Substitute Address NOT be used?

1. When listing, appraising, or assessing property taxes;
2. When collecting property taxes;
3. On any document related to real property recorded with a county clerk or recorder.

Note: Federal government agencies are NOT required to accept the substitute address as a program participant's residential address, but may accept the substitute address as the participant's official mailing address. For example, if a Participant submits an application for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), through the Social Security Administration, the Participant may be required to verify their residency in the State of Tennessee by providing their actual residential address.

What Steps Can a Participant Take to Ensure That Their Confidential Address is Kept Secret?

- Participants should **always** use the substitute address when interacting with a state or local government entity, whether on their own behalf or on behalf of their children. Participants should **never** disclose their confidential address, unless required by law to do so.
- Participants should **always** notify the state or local government official or entity with whom they are interacting that they are a program participant and that their residential address is confidential.
- Participants should **always** be prepared to provide officials with a copy of their program participation certificate.
- If a Participant has filed paperwork with a state or local government entity using their confidential address within 30 days prior to their application for program participation, the participant should immediately contact the state or local agency to notify them of the Participant's participation certification, provide a copy of the Participant's Certificate of Program Participation, and request that the participant's confidential address be protected.
- If a Participant is asked to verify their residential address for purposes of enrolling either themselves or their minor children in a public school, the Participant should provide the school with a copy of their Certificate of Program Participation and your substitute address. Then, direct school officials to contact the Office of the Secretary of State for further verifications in accordance with T.C.A. §§ 40-38-602, 606.
- Participants should provide their Public Utility Service Providers (electric, water, and gas, etc.) with a copy of their Certificate of Program Participation and their substitute address, and then request that the Public Utility Service Provider keep their residential address confidential. These requests should be presented to the Public Utility Service Provider's records custodian.

What can a Participant do if they receive a Jury Summons?

- Program participants are exempt from selection for state and municipal jury duty. If a program participant receives a jury summons for either state or municipal jury duty, the Participant must notify the summoning court of the participant's exempt status and provide a copy of the Participant's Certificate of Program Participation, if requested. Participants **may not** fail to respond to a jury summons.

Program Participants are also required to update their contact and application information with the Safe At Home Program any time that any change occurs. Failure to do so may result in the cancellation of program participation.

For more information, contact the Safe At Home Program or visit sos.tn.gov/safeathome.