

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

June 2009



Objective

To determine the appropriateness of benefits paid to individuals whose Numident record contained a date of death.

Background

The *Social Security Act* requires that the Social Security Administration (SSA) match death records from various sources against SSA payment records to identify and prevent erroneous payments after death. SSA uses the Death Alert, Control, and Update System (DACUS) to receive and process death information and record dates of death on the Numident, a data file that houses personally identifiable information for each numberholder. DACUS was designed to ensure that all benefits to deceased beneficiaries are terminated appropriately.

To view the full report, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO/BEPDF/A-06-08-18095.pdf>

Payments to Individuals Whose Numident Record Contains a Death Entry (A-06-08-18095)

Our Findings

Based on our results, we estimate that SSA made approximately \$40.3 million in improper payments to deceased beneficiaries after recording their date of death in SSA's records. Further, we estimate SSA would make approximately \$6.9 million in additional improper payments over the next 12 months if these discrepancies were not corrected.

Our Recommendations

In March 2009, we obtained an updated data extract that identified 6,733 beneficiaries in current payment status whose Numident record contained a date of death. We provided the data to SSA Operations and recommend that SSA

1. Determine the current living status of all 6,733 beneficiaries.
2. Terminate benefits, recover improper payments, and refer potential instances of fraud to the Office of Investigations for all beneficiaries determined to be deceased.
3. Remove erroneous dates of death on the Numident records for beneficiaries determined to be alive during living status verifications.
4. Periodically identify all beneficiaries with a death indicator on their Numident receiving benefits and determine the living status for these individuals.