

# Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

July 2009



## Objective

To evaluate the Social Security Administration's (SSA) controls over Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments to refugees, asylees and other non-citizens in refugee-like immigration status.

## Background

The SSI program provides payments to recipients who meet certain financial limits and are aged, blind or disabled. Refugees, asylees and other non-citizens in a refugee-like immigration status meeting income and resource requirements may receive SSI payments. As originally established, SSI eligibility for these non-citizens was not time-limited. Effective with the passage of the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*, and subsequent legislation, certain non-citizens were eligible for SSI payments for a maximum of 7 years.

To view the full report, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO/BEPDF/A-02-09-29001.pdf>

## Quick Response Evaluation: Supplemental Security Income Eligibility of Refugees (A-02-09-29001)

### Our Findings

We found SSA's controls over SSI payments to refugees, asylees and other non-citizens in refugee-like immigration status were generally effective. SSA made proper payments to eligible non-citizens in almost all cases. We identified a few cases where non-citizens beyond their 7-year eligibility period received SSI payments because of inaccurate Alien Eligibility Reason (AER) codes in the Supplemental Security Record (SSR).

The AER code on the SSR indicates whether a non-citizen's eligibility for SSI payments is time-limited or based on a provision that permits continual SSI payments as long as other eligibility factors are met. Per the law, non-citizens who enter the United States after August 22, 1996 were eligible for SSI payments for a maximum of 7 years. The 7-year limit on payments did not affect blind or disabled non-citizens already receiving SSI payments or those who were already lawfully residing in the United States on or before August 22, 1996.

We found 5 of the 383 recipients we reviewed received SSI payments after their 7-year eligibility period and were improperly paid \$11,386.

### Matters for Consideration

To ensure only eligible non-citizens are receiving SSI payments, SSA staff should review the accuracy of a recipient's AER code for those with an alien status date after August 22, 1996 and an AER code indicating their SSI payments are not time-limited when completing redeterminations. Generally, SSI payments with an alien status attained date after August 22, 1996 should be limited to a 7-year period. Also, to ensure accurate payment decisions are made, SSA should consider reinforcing the importance of entering accurate immigration status information into the SSR with its staff.