

Follow-up: Individuals Who Inappropriately Received Benefits Under Multiple Social Security Numbers

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To update prior, and identify new, cases of individuals who inappropriately received Social Security benefits under multiple Social Security numbers (SSN).

Background

Generally, the Social Security Administration (SSA) assigns an individual one SSN but may assign another SSN because of fraud, administrative error, or other reason(s).

In 4 prior audits, we identified 784 individuals who appeared to have inappropriately received Social Security benefits under multiple SSNs. When we issued our reports, SSA had assessed about \$17.7 million in overpayments for 411 individuals; and the Agency or our Office of Investigations continued reviewing the remaining 373 cases.

To follow up on these 784 cases, we quantified any subsequent overpayments as well as any recovered overpayments. We also obtained from the Office of Investigations the status of its investigations and evaluated SSA's implementation of the prior audit recommendations. Finally, using the same methodology as the prior audits, we identified 147 new cases.

Findings

SSA improperly paid approximately \$46.9 million—\$29.2 million identified in this audit and \$17.7 million identified in our prior audits—to 724 beneficiaries who had multiple SSNs and for other reason(s).

SSA's systems identify duplicate Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) *or* duplicate Supplemental Security Income (SSI) records by matching names and dates of birth. SSA did not detect the majority of the cases we identified because they involved *both* OASDI benefits and SSI payments or had different names.

Recommendation

We recommend SSA develop a match to identify and prevent beneficiaries from inappropriately receiving *both* OASDI and SSI benefits under different SSNs.

SSA agreed with our recommendation.