

Supplemental Security Income Recipients Who Have Not Had a Redetermination in Longer than 10 Years

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To identify Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who might have been overpaid because the Social Security Administration (SSA) had not completed a redetermination in longer than 10 years.

Background

SSA conducts redeterminations, which are reviews of SSI recipients' non-medical factors of eligibility, such as income, resources, and living arrangements. The redetermination process is a way of detecting any unreported changes in circumstance that would affect a recipient's SSI eligibility.

Redeterminations are scheduled annually if a change in circumstance is likely or once every 6 years if a change in circumstance is unlikely.

We identified 53,744 SSI recipients (from 1 of 20 segments) who had not had a redetermination completed in longer than 10 years. We analyzed a random sample of 275 cases.

Additionally, we identified 1,115 SSI recipients (from 1 of 20 segments) who had not had a redetermination completed in longer than 10 years; when SSA initiated a redetermination in January 2016 or later and/or completed a redetermination in October 2016 or later. We analyzed a random sample of 50 cases.

Findings

We estimated about 1.1 million SSI recipients—about 1 in 8 recipients—had not had a redetermination completed in longer than 10 years because SSA only did a limited number of redeterminations each year based on its budget. As a result, we estimated about 77,060 SSI recipients might be overpaid approximately \$381.5 million because SSA had not completed a redetermination in longer than 10 years.

As a result of this audit, SSA's Office of Quality Review (OQR) was planning to conduct a similar review in conjunction with its Office of Analytics and Improvements, which is responsible for the error-profiling system SSA uses during its redetermination process.

In a process similar to redeterminations, SSA conducts continuing disability reviews (CDR) of disabled recipients' medical eligibility. The Agency has reported using a mailer process almost doubled the return on investment for conducting CDRs, which allowed the Agency to conduct more CDRs. For example, in Fiscal Year 2014, more than 1.1 million of the 1.7 million CDRs SSA conducted were completed through the mailer process.

Recommendations

We recommend SSA:

1. Incorporate the findings of this audit, as well as the planned OQR study, to enhance the business process used to select SSI cases for a redetermination.
2. Evaluate whether it should implement a process similar to CDR mailers for SSI recipients who have not had a redetermination in 6 years.

SSA agreed with the recommendations.