

Follow-up on Supplemental Security Income Recipients Eligible for Veterans Benefits

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February 2020

Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) identified Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who were potentially eligible for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits instead of SSI payments.

Background

Since SSI is a program of last resort, SSA requires that individuals apply for all other benefits for which they are potentially eligible, including VA benefits. In a January 2010 report, we estimated SSA paid approximately \$1.3 billion to 21,520 SSI recipients who appeared to meet VA's requirements for benefits.

To conduct our current review, we identified 1,327 SSI recipients (from 1 of 20 Social Security number segments) who appeared to meet VA's requirements for benefits. We randomly selected 50 cases for detailed analysis.

Findings

SSA improved its process of identifying SSI recipients potentially eligible for VA benefits. In October 2015, SSA implemented a process that annually identifies SSI recipients who may qualify for VA benefits. SSA policy is to advise recipients to apply with the VA within 30 days and then follow up on the VA application or decision. Policy requires that SSA employees receive and document the VA's final determination for benefits. Generally, if an individual does not apply for VA benefits within 30 days of notification, SSA policy is to deny or suspend SSI payments until he/she applies for VA benefits.

The changes SSA made to identify SSI applicants or recipients potentially eligible to receive VA benefits improved the condition from our prior report. We estimated approximately 7,960 SSI recipients (63 percent fewer than the 21,520 in our prior report) appeared to meet VA's requirements, and SSA had not documented VA's final determination for benefits or continued SSI payments even though recipients had not filed for VA benefits.

Agency Actions Resulting from the Audit

In our January 23, 2020 draft report, we recommended SSA issue a reminder and/or provide additional training to ensure cases involving SSI recipients potentially eligible for VA benefits are processed and followed up on according to policy. On February 10, 2020, SSA issued a reminder to field office employees of relevant policies and procedures to ensure cases involving SSI recipients potentially eligible for VA benefits are processed and followed up on. As a result of the action SSA took during our audit, we are not making any further recommendations.