

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

March 2011



Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) obtained required benefit use information from representative payees who failed to respond to both initial and follow-up requests for annual Representative Payee Reports (RPR).

Background

Representative payees are responsible for keeping records and reporting how they spend benefits.

From January 2007 through December 2009, SSA mailed approximately 17.6 million initial requests for RPRs. In approximately 2.1 million cases, representative payees failed to respond to both initial and follow-up requests for RPRs.

To view the full report, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO/BEPDF/A-06-10-11069.pdf>

Annual Representative Payee Accounting Report Non-responders (A-06-10-11069)

Our Findings

While we commend the Agency on its efforts to obtain information from RPR non-responders, we are concerned about the amount of resources SSA must expend to do so.

SSA expended considerable effort to obtain required benefit use information. SSA employees' efforts were labor-intensive; required multiple mailings, telephone calls, and/or face-to-face meetings; and, in some instances, took several months to complete. In almost every case reviewed, SSA field office employees ultimately obtained the required information.

SSA data indicated that about 85 percent of non-responders had custody of their respective beneficiaries. In these instances, because the representative payees and beneficiaries likely shared household expenses, we believe a high probability existed that payees could provide RPR information indicating they used SSA payments to meet beneficiary needs.

Our Recommendations

SSA stated that in December 2009, it transmitted a draft bill to Congress that included a provision that would eliminate the requirement for parents with custody of their children and spouses living with a beneficiary to provide annual benefit accounting. Such a change recognizes that the annual representative accounting process is costly and requires a high level of administrative effort. This proposed change would have a significant impact in reducing SSA's non-responder workload.