

Supplemental Security Income Redeterminations Closed by Field Office Management

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June 2019

Office of Audit Report Summary

Objectives

To identify instances where field office managers and supervisors closed unusual volumes of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) redeterminations and determine whether they closed the redeterminations in accordance with Agency policy.

Background

The SSI program provides monthly payments to individuals with limited income and resources who are aged, blind, or disabled. SSA periodically reviews recipients' non-medical eligibility factors—income, resources, and living arrangement—to determine whether the recipient is still eligible for, and receiving, the correct SSI payment. SSA calls these reviews redeterminations.

SSA's systems access policy allows managers and supervisors to close redeterminations. However, we obtained information that a field office manager was closing redeterminations initiated by Claims Specialists before development of recipients' eligibility factors was completed. We confirmed these allegations and shared this information with the appropriate SSA officials. To review this issue further, we obtained data that identified 119,930 SSI redeterminations SSA field office managers and supervisors closed from October 1, 2013 through June 8, 2017.

Findings

During the period reviewed, 661 managers and 2,091 supervisors closed 119,930 redeterminations—about 1 percent of the approximately 9 million redeterminations SSA completed during the review period. Most managers and supervisors closed fewer than 10 redeterminations. However, 5 managers and 32 supervisors closed 500 or more redeterminations, including 1 manager who closed more than 3,000 redeterminations. SSA has initiated its own review of these cases.

Our review of randomly selected cases indicated that managers and supervisors closed 36 percent of the redeterminations before development of SSI recipients' eligibility factors was completed.

Although SSA's systems access policy allows managers and supervisors to close redeterminations, SSA did not ensure they received SSI technical training and had the SSI program proficiency necessary to effectively complete redeterminations. Closing redeterminations without developing all eligibility factors can result in inaccurate eligibility and payment amount determinations.

We also found that managers and supervisors who improperly closed redeterminations opened by other field office staff did not change employee codes to their own codes before they closed the cases. If these cases were selected for quality review, any deficiencies would be incorrectly attributed to field office staff instead of the managers/supervisors who closed the cases.

Recommendations

We made five recommendations for corrective action. SSA agreed with four recommendations but did not agree to require managers and supervisors who close redeterminations to update unit codes to accurately attribute redeterminations for quality reviews. The report includes the full text of the Agency's comments as well as our response.