

Social Security Numbers Assigned and Benefits Paid to Refugees, Parolees, and Asylees

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objectives

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) properly (1) assigned Social Security numbers (SSN) and (2) verified eligibility for Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefit payments made to refugees, parolees, and asylees.

Background

Thousands of refugees, parolees, and asylees enter the United States each year. The Department of Homeland Security may grant these noncitizens legal status when they claim persecution or fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

Many refugees, parolees, and asylees qualify for an SSN based on work authorization or another need, such as entitlement to federally funded, State, or local public assistance benefits.

In some cases, these noncitizens may also qualify for OASDI and/or SSI benefits. Spouses and children of these noncitizens may be eligible for benefits based on earnings or their relationship to an OASDI/SSI beneficiary. Eligible refugees, parolees, and asylees must meet income requirements coupled with disability and/or age determinations to receive SSI payments.

Findings

Based on our sample review, we concluded that SSA properly assigned SSNs to refugees, parolees, and asylees from January 1, 2011 through December 31, 2015. Additionally, we concluded that SSA sufficiently verified eligibility for OASDI and SSI benefits paid to refugees, parolees, and asylees during our audit period.

We noted one documentation issue, which we brought to SSA's attention. Specifically, when processing OASDI and SSI claims, the Agency did not maintain supporting evidence establishing lawful presence in the United States for six beneficiaries, as SSA policy requires. However, we subsequently obtained evidence of lawful United States presence for these beneficiaries.

Recommendation

We recommend that SSA issue a reminder to employees to maintain all supporting evidence of lawful presence in the United States upon verification of a noncitizen's immigration status for initial claims and post-entitlement actions.

SSA agreed with our recommendation.