

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

March 2011



Objective

To determine whether the representative payee (1) had effective safeguards over the receipt and disbursement of Social Security benefits and (2) used and accounted for benefits in accordance with the Agency's policies and procedures.

Background

Some individuals cannot manage or direct the management of their finances because of their youth and/or impairments. Congress granted the Social Security Administration (SSA) the authority to appoint representative payees to receive and manage these beneficiaries' payments. During our audit period, November 1, 2008 to October 31, 2009, Emerge served as representative payee for 209 beneficiaries.

To view the full report, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO/BEPDF/A-13-10-21087.pdf>

Emerge, Incorporated, an Organizational Representative Payee for the Social Security Administration (A-13-10-21087)

Our Findings

Generally, we found Emerge had effective safeguards over the receipt and disbursement of Social Security benefits, and used and accounted for Social Security benefits in accordance with SSA's policies and procedures. However, we found instances where Emerge could improve its performance as a payee. Specifically, Emerge did not return conserved funds to SSA when it was no longer serving as the representative payee for the beneficiary, monitor conserved funds to ensure beneficiaries stayed below resource limits, maintain burial funds in a separate bank account, or return overpayments for deceased beneficiaries and did not always complete Representative Payee Reports (RPR). In addition, we found Emerge had two beneficiaries in its care who earned significant wages, which resulted in overpayments.

Our Recommendations

We recommend that SSA:

1. Instruct Emerge to notify the Agency timely when a beneficiary is no longer in its care and return benefit payments and conserved funds to SSA.
2. Pursue collection of the overpayments that resulted from Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients' account balances exceeding the maximum allowed.
3. Instruct Emerge to monitor beneficiaries' resources and inform the Agency in a timely manner when SSI beneficiaries' conserved funds exceed resource limits.
4. Verify that Emerge established a separate bank account for burial funds.
5. Determine whether overpayments occurred due to the method used to account for burial funds, and collect overpayments, as applicable.
6. Verify that Emerge repaid overpayments for deceased beneficiaries.
7. Remind Emerge to complete and submit RPRs for the beneficiaries it serves in a timely fashion.
8. Remind Emerge of its monthly reporting responsibilities for beneficiaries with significant wages earned.