

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

December 2011



Objective

To determine whether (1) the Social Security Administration (SSA) had adequate internal controls over the issuance of Social Security number (SSN) Printouts; and (2) field offices located near the United States-Mexico border issued an unusually high number of SSN Printouts.

Background

Individuals have access to many SSA records, including SSN Printouts – which contain the same information as an SSN card (name and SSN), but with none of the same security features. The number of SSN Printouts SSA issues continues to increase. In Fiscal Year 2003, SSA issued approximately 4.6 million SSN Printouts. That number increased to over 7 million in Fiscal Year 2009.

To view the full report, visit <http://oig.ssa.gov/audits-and-investigations/audit-reports/A-04-11-11105>

Controls for Issuing Social Security Number Printouts (A-04-11-11105)

Our Findings

Despite some corrective actions SSA took in response to our previous report, we continue to believe the Agency should strengthen its controls for issuing SSN Printouts. In fact, since our December 2007 report, we found an increase in the (1) number of SSN Printouts SSA issued, (2) volume of numberholders obtaining more than 10 SSN Printouts in a day and a year, and (3) occurrences of fraud involving SSN Printouts. Additionally, SSA managers still had little information to monitor the number of SSN Printouts issued and related anomalies.

SSA stated its procedures for issuing SSN Printouts must comply with the intent of the Privacy Act and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidelines—to provide individuals appropriate and timely access to their SSN information. We acknowledge the importance of SSA's compliance with Privacy Act and OMB guidelines. Nevertheless, we are concerned SSA continues to issue a high number of SSN Printouts with less stringent identity requirements and fewer controls than those for SSN cards. Finally, SSA field offices located near the United States-Mexico border did not issue a higher number of SSN Printouts than other field offices.

Our Recommendations

We made six recommendations to SSA, including:

- Establish a limit on the number of SSN Printouts an individual may obtain in a day, year, and lifetime and require specific management approval for requests that exceed that limit.
- Establish procedures that enable management to identify instances when the issuance of SSN Printouts may be reduced and enhance management oversight.
- Develop and implement a cost-effective method for controlling and accounting for the issuance of SSN printouts.

We acknowledge SSA's many planned improvements in its process for issuing SSN Printouts. Based on the actions SSA agreed to take, we have decided to withdraw one of the recommendations.