

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

January 2012



Objective

To identify and prevent individuals from inappropriately receiving Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) benefits and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments under multiple Social Security numbers (SSN) at different mailing addresses.

Background

In general, the Social Security Administration (SSA) assigns an individual only one SSN. However, in some cases, because of fraud or staff mistakes, the Agency has assigned individuals more than one SSN.

To conduct our current review, we analyzed a file of OASDI beneficiaries and SSI recipients who received benefits in January 2010. Our analysis of SSNs and other benefit data identified 165 beneficiaries who appeared to be inappropriately receiving benefits at different addresses under at least 2 different SSNs.

To view the full report, visit <http://oig.ssa.gov/audits-and-investigations/audit-reports/A-01-11-11145>.

Follow-up: Individuals Receiving Benefits Under Multiple Social Security Numbers at Different Addresses (A-01-11-11145)

Our Findings

Based on our review, SSA assessed approximately \$2.9 million in overpayments to 46 beneficiaries who inappropriately received benefits under multiple SSNs at different addresses. Of these 46 cases, 40 involved possible fraud, and 6 involved administrative errors. In addition, the Agency avoided paying \$354,070 by discontinuing these incorrect payments.

For example, a California resident obtained two different SSNs in 1959 and 1986. In August 1989, she began receiving disability benefits at one address under the first SSN. Using the other SSN and another address, she continued working and began receiving retirement benefits in January 2004. Because she continued working, SSA determined she was not eligible for disability benefits. Therefore, she was overpaid \$154,194 from April 1994 through June 2011. Our Office of Investigations is reviewing this case for potential fraud.

As of December 2011, 77 cases were still under review—with 74 being investigated for potential fraud by our Office of Investigations. Therefore, we expect SSA to assess additional overpayments.

In total, SSA referred 120 (73 percent) of the 165 cases for investigation of potential fraud. As a result, this review supports SSA's Strategic Plan to collaborate with the Office of the Inspector General to reduce instances of fraud and pursue prosecution of individuals who harm its programs.

Our Recommendation

Once the Office of Investigations completes its assessment of the pending potential fraud cases, we recommend SSA take appropriate action, such as assessing overpayments, stopping benefits, etc. SSA agreed with the recommendation.