

Concurrent Beneficiaries Who Did Not Have Supplemental Income Data on Their Master Beneficiary Records

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) correctly paid concurrent beneficiaries whose Master Beneficiary Records (MBR) did not include Supplemental Income Data (SID).

Background

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program provides payments to financially needy individuals who are aged, blind, or disabled. Individuals eligible for SSI payments may also qualify for Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) benefits (concurrent entitlement). SSA reduces SSI payments by the recipient's countable income, which includes OASDI benefits. Concurrently entitled individuals continue receiving SSI payments as long as their countable income does not exceed the Federal Benefit Rate plus a \$20 allowance.

SSA electronically links a concurrent beneficiary's payment records by establishing SID information on their OASDI payment record, also referred to as the MBR. SSA then uses the OASDI benefit amount in computing the proper SSI payment amount. If the SID is missing, SSA could incorrectly calculate the SSI payment amount and overpay the beneficiary.

Findings

We identified 1,713 concurrent beneficiaries who received SSA payments in February 2014 but did not have SID information on their MBRs. This is a very small number of errors relative to the 2.8 million concurrent beneficiaries who received SSA payments in February 2014. Based on our review of 100 randomly selected cases, we estimate the following.

- SSA issued combined payments to 428 beneficiaries that exceeded Federal limits, resulting in approximately \$509,000 in improper SSI payments. If the Agency does not correct these errors, we estimate SSA will issue approximately \$222,000 in additional improper SSI payments over the next 12 months.
- SSA issued combined payments to 617 beneficiaries that were within Federal limits. However, if SSA does not take corrective action to update the SID line on these beneficiaries' MBRs, the beneficiaries' future SSI payments may exceed Federal limits.
- As of April 2014, SSA had updated the remaining 668 beneficiaries' payment records to include SID information on the MBRs.

SSA systems staff reviewed 11 error cases and determined that, in 9, differences between beneficiary names or other identification information input on the MBR and SSI payment record likely prevented SSA's systems from establishing the SID line on the MBR. Systems staff could not explain the other two errors.

At SSA Operations' request, we reviewed SSA payment records on October 29, 2014 and determined that 909 of the 1,713 beneficiaries still did not have the SID line on their MBRs. On November 3, 2014, we provided SSA Operations a data file identifying the 909 beneficiaries. At SSA Operations' request, we reviewed SSA payment records again on March 4, 2015 and determined that 592 of the 1,713 beneficiaries' MBRs still did not have the SID line. On March 6, 2015, we provided SSA Operations a data file identifying the 592 beneficiaries.

Recommendation

We recommend that SSA establish the SID line on the 592 beneficiaries' MBRs. SSA agreed with the recommendation.