

Medicare Eligibility Determinations for Aged Supplemental Security Income Recipients

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) timely completed Medicare eligibility determinations for uninsured Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who had attained age 65.

Background

The Medicare Buy-In program allows States to enroll certain groups of needy people under the Supplemental Medical Insurance Program, also referred to as Medicare Part B, and pay their premiums. Under the SSI program, 33 States and the District of Columbia have entered into agreements with SSA whereby an individual's entitlement to SSI payments automatically establishes buy-in coverage for the State to pay their Part B premiums. SSA determines Part B eligibility for these recipients.

The Medicare Attainments and Leads Process (MALP) is an automated system that allows SSA to identify and process Medicare-only claims for uninsured SSI recipients as they near age 65.

Findings

SSA did not always timely complete Part B eligibility determinations for uninsured SSI recipients who had attained age 65.

From 1 segment of the Supplemental Security Record, we identified 302 recipients who were (1) at least 65 years and 10 months in January 2013, (2) appeared to meet Part B buy-in criteria, and (3) were not enrolled in Part B. As of October 2014, 226 (75 percent) of the 302 recipients were still not enrolled in Part B.

Applying these results to the full Supplemental Security Record indicates approximately 4,520 SSI recipients who had attained age 65 as of March 2012 and appeared eligible for State buy-in were not enrolled in Part B as of October 2014.

In some instances, it appeared SSA staff input status codes to clear pending cases from MALP without processing the Part B claims. SSA could better serve these low-income seniors, as well as the States they live in, by improving this process.

Recommendation

We recommend that SSA remind staff to timely process Part B alerts pending in MALP and refrain from annotating cases as resolved unless they have completed proper adjudication action.

SSA agreed with our recommendation.