

Cross-program Recovery to Collect Overpayments

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To assess the Social Security Administration's (SSA) cross-program recovery (CPR) of overpayments, as authorized by the *Social Security Protection Act of 2004* (SSPA).

Background

SSA administers the Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs under Titles II and XVI of the *Social Security Act*, respectively. An overpayment is the total amount an individual received for any period that exceeded the total amount that should have been paid for that period. With a few exceptions, overpaid individuals are responsible for repaying the overpayments.

The enactment of SSPA provided SSA additional authority to recover OASDI overpayments and reaffirmed the Agency's authority to collect SSI overpayments using CPR. CPR is the process of collecting overpayments for one SSA-administered program by withholding the individual's payable benefits from another SSA-administered program.

Findings

SSA did not always exercise its authority to impose mandatory CPR for recovery of OASDI and SSI overpayments. As of October 2014, we had identified 20,731 individuals who had OASDI and SSI overpayments totaling about \$86.9 million that were potentially available for CPR.

We reviewed 100 individuals' overpayments and determined 99 were available for CPR as of October 2015.

In addition, we found instances where SSA had not updated its Supplemental Security Records (SSR) to (1) transfer overpayments from a terminated SSR to the current SSR so it could pursue collection efforts, (2) document its use of CPR to collect SSI overpayments that could prevent pursuit of collection efforts on a recovered debt, or (3) reestablish collection efforts after CPR was no longer available.

We provided the overpayments for the 99 individuals to the Agency for review. As of March 2017, SSA had initiated CPR actions for 80, and overpayments for 19 individuals were no longer available for CPR.

Based on our sample results, we believe SSA should review the remaining individuals we identified who had OASDI and SSI overpayments and determine whether it should use CPR as a debt collection tool for the overpayments we identified.

We also found SSA had implemented corrective actions pertaining to our prior recommendations. However, SSA had not begun collection efforts for SSI overpayments for 11 individuals we identified in our prior audit. As of January 2017, SSA had initiated CPR actions for nine and overpayments for two individuals were no longer available for CPR.

Recommendations

We made three recommendations to address the findings in this review, which includes SSA reviewing the remaining individuals we identified and imposing mandatory CPR for all applicable overpayments.

SSA agreed with our recommendations.