

Using Medical Claim Data to Identify Aged Title XVI Recipients Who Are Deceased

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) could use medical claim data to identify aged Title XVI recipients who are deceased.

Background

In our August 2012 review, *Using Medicare Claim Data to Identify Deceased Beneficiaries*, we determined SSA could use enhanced Medicare claim data to identify deceased Title II beneficiaries who were age 90 or older. Based on our recommendation, SSA implemented the Medicare Non-Utilization Project in September 2013. As of August 2016, SSA had identified about \$165 million in improper payments to deceased Title II beneficiaries. As such, we believe using medical (Medicaid and Medicare) claim data would also be effective in identifying aged Title XVI recipients who are deceased.

We identified 436 Title XVI recipients who were age 90 or older and in current payment status as of October 2015. All recipients had an address in one of the top four Medicaid States (California, Florida, New York, and Texas). These recipients had no Medicaid or Medicare activity from 2011 through 2013 (the most recent 3 years of data available). We selected a random sample of 100 recipients for review.

Findings

SSA can use medical (Medicaid and Medicare) claim data to identify aged Title XVI recipients who are deceased. For example, SSA terminated or suspended 29 sample recipients' payments because they were deceased. SSA also terminated or suspended 41 sample recipients' payments because they were living outside the United States, purportedly living outside the United States, or unable to be located. Furthermore, based on information we obtained as of the date of this review, we believe SSA may terminate or suspend the payments of an additional three recipients. These recipients were in current payment status because of ongoing investigations. We estimate SSA improperly paid aged Title XVI recipients about \$12.4 million.

Based on the number of recipients whose payments SSA terminated or suspended, we believe SSA should expand its Medicare Non-Utilization Project to include aged Title XVI recipients and obtain Medicaid use data from the States to identify recipients who are deceased. In addition, SSA should explore the feasibility of expanding the use of electronic death exchange information with foreign governments to include Title XVI recipients.

Recommendations

1. Work with the States and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to identify aged Title XVI recipients who are not using Medicaid or Medicare and use this information to conduct reviews of the Supplemental Security Income population.
2. Work the remaining 336 cases in our population (who are in current payment status) to determine whether these Title XVI recipients are deceased.
3. Explore the feasibility of expanding the use of electronic death exchange information with foreign governments to include Title XVI recipients. If the Agency believes that existing laws prevent the exchange of such information, we believe it should seek legislative authority that would allow the Agency to exchange death information regarding Title XVI recipients.

SSA agreed with Recommendations 1 and 2 and disagreed with Recommendation 3.