

# Follow-up: Termination of Disability Benefits Following a Continuing Disability Review Cessation

## A-07-17-50213



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Office of Audit Report Summary

### Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) ensured the timely termination of benefits following a continuing disability review (CDR) cessation determination.

### Background

Once an individual begins receiving Disability Insurance (DI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, SSA should ensure only those individuals who remain disabled and unable to work continue receiving benefits. SSA conducts CDRs to determine whether individuals remain medically eligible for disability payments.

In a 2012 audit, we identified individuals who improperly received payments after their medical cessation determinations because SSA did not terminate benefits timely. We found 30 percent of sampled DI beneficiaries and 16 percent of sampled SSI recipients improperly received payments after their medical cessation determinations. We estimated these untimely cessations caused \$48.9 million in improper DI payments and \$34.7 million in improper SSI payments. We recommended, in part, that SSA enhance the processing system's ability to perform automated terminations to ensure the timely termination of benefits following a medical cessation determination.

### Findings

Since our prior review, SSA had taken actions to improve its processes for terminating benefits following disability cessation determinations. However, based on our review of medical cessation determinations made during Calendar Years 2014 and 2015, SSA continued making improper payments. We found:

- 28 (11 percent) of 250 sampled DI beneficiaries and their auxiliaries improperly received \$276,041 after their medical cessation determinations. Based on our sample results, we estimate 3,148 beneficiaries and their auxiliaries received over \$31 million in improper benefits.
- 17 (7 percent) of 250 sampled SSI recipients improperly received \$51,117 after their medical cessation determinations. Based on our sample results, we estimate 5,284 recipients received almost \$16 million in improper payments.

The improper payments occurred because the systems enhancements SSA implemented after our prior audit did not address all types of disability cases. While SSA had terminated benefits for most of the individuals in our samples, at the time of our review, it had not terminated benefits to 12 of the 28 DI beneficiaries. In addition, SSA had not assessed overpayments to three DI beneficiaries.

### Recommendations

We made four recommendations for SSA to terminate benefit payments and assess overpayments for the individuals we identified and address issues related to the untimely termination of benefits following medical cessation determinations.

SSA agreed with our recommendations.