

Summary of Noncitizens Issued Multiple Social Security Numbers

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Objective

To determine whether Social Security Administration (SSA) controls ensured the Agency's information systems properly identified noncitizens who obtained multiple Social Security numbers (SSN).

Background

Generally, SSA will assign an individual only one SSN. Under certain circumstances, SSA can approve issuance of an additional SSN. When SSA issues an individual more than one SSN, the Agency must cross-refer the SSNs to properly credit the individual's earnings to his/her earnings record and prevent payment of duplicate claims.

We initiated this review in response to a criminal case where a noncitizen used two SSNs to fraudulently obtain approximately \$55,000 in Federal payments.

Our Findings

SSA controls designed to prevent issuance of multiple SSNs to noncitizens have been effective at preventing these occurrences, and the number of such cases has declined significantly over the past 30 years. However, SSA's records indicated that, on occasion, the controls did not prevent issuance of two SSNs when noncitizens submitted multiple SSN applications or obtained an SSN through both the enumeration-at-entry process and an SSN application submitted in an SSA office.

We identified 4,317 instances where the Numident record of 2 SSNs assigned to noncitizens contained matching first, middle, and last names; dates and places of birth; gender; and fathers' and mothers' names. SSA issued about 87 percent of the duplicate SSNs before Calendar Year 2001.

Noncitizens who obtain multiple SSNs could use the SSNs to commit fraud against various Federal programs or conceal work activity.

Our Recommendation

We recommended that SSA cross-reference the SSN pairs, as appropriate. SSA agreed with the recommendation.