

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

September 2011



Objective

To assess H-1B workers' use of Social Security numbers (SSN).

Background

Each year, the Department of State issues thousands of H-1B visas for temporary workers. Employers use the H-1B visa program to employ foreign workers in jobs that require theoretical or technical expertise in a specialized field. Specialty occupations include, but are not limited to, architect, engineer, computer programmer, accountant, doctor, and college professor. An individual in H-1B status may only work for their sponsoring employer after they are given approval by the Departments of Labor and Homeland Security (DHS). The original period of admission for an H-1B nonimmigrant is 3 years, with optional extensions that cannot exceed 3 additional years.

To view the full report, visit
http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO_BEPDF/A-08-11-11114.pdf

H-1B Workers' Use of Social Security Numbers (A-08-11-11114)

Our Findings

Based on the results of our review, we estimate about 7,131 (18 percent) of the 38,546 H-1B workers to whom the Social Security Administration (SSA) assigned an SSN in 2007 may have used their SSNs for purposes other than to work for their approved employer. This estimate includes about 4,433 (11 percent) H-1B workers who had posted wages during our audit period from an employer other than their DHS-approved employer. This estimate also includes about 2,698 (7 percent) H-1B workers who had no posted wages from 2007 through 2009.

Unauthorized work by H-1B workers impacts SSA by weakening SSN integrity, and may require that the Agency pay future benefits to individuals who misuse an SSN to work in the United States. In addition, H-1B workers who do not work for their approved employer could pose a risk to homeland security, because they may obtain employment in sensitive areas.

Our Recommendation

We recommend that SSA contact DHS to offer to establish a data match agreement to assist DHS' efforts to identify and reduce the number of H-1B workers who may use their SSNs for purposes other than to work for their approved employer.

SSA agreed with our recommendation.