



News Release

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Chicago Life Coach Sentenced for Theft of Government Funds

Robbie Peters misused over \$70,000 in Social Security retirement benefits after his mother's death

The Inspector General for the Social Security Administration (SSA), Gail S. Ennis, is announcing the sentencing of Robbie Peters for theft of government funds. Peters, who works as a life coach and counselor in the Chicago area, was sentenced on February 4, 2021, to two years of probation, six months of which is home detention. He was also ordered to make full restitution to SSA. Peters pleaded guilty to the charge in September 2020.

According to the plea agreement, Peters' mother was receiving Social Security retirement benefits when she passed away on May 8, 2016. Her benefits were deposited into a bank account of which she was the sole owner. SSA was not notified of her death, and Peters used a debit card to access her account and withdraw funds from June 2016 until October 2019, knowing he was not entitled to the funds.

After the SSA Office of the Inspector General received a tip through its fraud hotline, investigators interviewed Peters in August 2019 at the residence he previously shared with his mother. Initially, he stated that his mother was not at home and would return the following week. Peters only acknowledged his mother's death after investigators confronted him with their knowledge that she had passed away. Peters then admitted that his mother was, in fact, deceased.

The agents then questioned Peters about the Social Security benefits that had been issued after his mother's death. They explained to Peters that it was too late to stop the September 2019 payment, and that he should not access those funds even though SSA would deposit money into the account. Peters claimed that he destroyed the debit card earlier that month. However, Peters had not destroyed the debit card, and he used it to access the funds in the account through October 2019. Peters misused a total of \$73,412 in Social Security retirement benefits intended for his deceased mother for over three years, using the funds for his own travel, entertainment, shopping, and dining.

"This individual not only misused these benefits for years, but also continued to do so even after advised not to by Federal law enforcement agents," said Wayland Quon, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the SSA OIG Chicago Field Division. "Anyone who fails to report a death to Social Security should take heed of this sentence and know that we will come knocking on the door."

Inspector General Ennis thanked the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois, and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Niranjan S. Emani in particular, for their efforts leading to this sentencing.

Members of the public are encouraged to report suspected Social Security fraud to the OIG at <https://oig.ssa.gov>.