

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LexisNexis Subsidiary Agrees to \$54,000 Penalty for “SSA Verify” Marketing

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and LexisNexis Risk Solutions (LNRS), a LexisNexis Group subsidiary, entered into a settlement agreement to resolve the Government’s claim that LNRS violated Section 1140 of the *Social Security Act* by publishing misleading online advertising regarding “SSA Verify.”

LNRS had marketed “SSA Verify” for its access to the Social Security Administration’s (SSA) Consent Based Social Security Number Verification (CBSV) service. LNRS cooperated with the OIG inquiry; the firm immediately discontinued the at-issue advertising upon receiving notice of the Government’s allegation and subsequently discontinued offering the CBSV service to its customers. In the settlement agreement, LNRS did not admit violating the law but agreed to comply with Section 1140 and pay a civil monetary penalty of \$54,000.

SSA makes CBSV available to companies for a fee; the service is typically used by companies that provide financial services, provide background checks, and satisfy licensing requirements. With the consent of a Social Security number (SSN) holder, CBSV verifies whether the SSN holder’s information matches SSA’s records. CBSV does not verify an individual’s identity or provide a participant’s customers with a direct link to Social Security records. Participant companies agree not to use the words Social Security or other CBSV program-related words, acronyms, emblems and symbols in connection with an advertisement for identity verification. LNRS marketed CBSV as “SSA Verify,” suggesting the product offered SSA identify verification, while also asserting that the service provided LNRS customers with a direct link to Social Security records.

Section 1140, a consumer protection law, establishes two broad prohibited activities:

- Prohibits people and companies from misleading consumers through various communications by giving a false impression of association with or endorsement by SSA; and
- Prohibits reproducing and selling Social Security publications and forms without authorization, as well as charging for services SSA provides free without providing proper notices.

The OIG can impose civil monetary penalties against individuals, organizations, or other entities that violate Section 1140. All monies collected go directly to SSA’s Old Age and Survivors Trust Fund.

Citizens can report suspected Section 1140 violations online at <https://oig.ssa.gov>.

For more information on Section 1140, please visit <https://oig.ssa.gov/section-1140>. For media inquiries, please contact Andrew Cannarsa, OIG Communications Director, at 410-965-2671.