

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

April 2011



Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) had adequate controls to ensure it resolved death information on the Numident for suspended beneficiaries.

Background

To identify and prevent erroneous payments to deceased beneficiaries, SSA's Death Alert Control and Update System (DACUS) matches reports of death against SSA's payment records. DACUS also records death information on the Numident, a master file that contains personally identifiable information (PII) for each individual with a Social Security number.

SSA may suspend an individual's benefits while searching for a representative payee, when it needs to verify a beneficiary's address or for miscellaneous reasons.

To view the full report, visit
<http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO/BEPDF/A-09-10-10117.pdf>

Title II Beneficiaries Whose Benefits Have Been Suspended and Who Have a Date of Death on the Numident (A-09-10-10117)

Our Findings

SSA needs to improve controls to ensure it takes timely and proper actions to resolve death information on the Numident for suspended beneficiaries. We estimate that:

- 4,699 beneficiaries remained in suspended pay status despite the death information on their Numident. Of these, we estimate 2,976 were improperly paid approximately \$23.8 million.
- 2,715 beneficiaries' PII was at risk of being released to the public.
- 157 beneficiaries whose benefits were terminated were improperly paid \$342,114.

Our Recommendations

We recommended that SSA:

1. Take appropriate action to terminate benefits or remove erroneous death information from the Numident for the 180 beneficiaries identified by our audit.
2. Identify and take corrective action on the population of 6,277 suspended beneficiaries with death information on their Numident.
3. Take corrective actions for the 7 beneficiaries terminated for death with unresolved improper payments.
4. Evaluate its corrective actions for the 7 beneficiaries and determine whether it should review the estimated 150 deceased beneficiaries with unresolved improper payments.
5. Improve controls to ensure suspended beneficiaries with death information on their Numident are resolved in a timely manner.

SSA agreed with all our recommendations.