

Supplemental Security Income Telephone Wage Reporting

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objectives

Our objectives were to determine whether the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Supplemental Security Income Telephone Wage Reporting (SSITWR) process effectively received and processed wage reports as well as reduced improper payments. In addition, we determined whether SSA met its goals to recruit participants in the telephone wage reporting initiative.

Background

SSITWR provides an alternative for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients, deemors, and representative payees to report monthly wages via telephone. SSITWR requires minimal intervention from SSA employees once an SSA employee trains the reporter to use it.

SSITWR participants call a designated SSA telephone number to report wages for the prior month. A successful report results in an automated posting of the gross wage amount to the Modernized Supplemental Security Income Claims System wage screen and the Supplemental Security Record.

Our Findings

We determined SSITWR effectively received and processed wages reported via the telephone, and SSA accurately posted those reported wages to the Supplemental Security Record and the Modernized Supplemental Security Income Claims System. Although SSA reduced improper payments since it implemented SSITWR, information was not available to correlate the reduction with this new process.

Additionally, we noted the following items, which we believe SSA should address.

For the period September 1, 2011 to August 31, 2012, we identified 7,498 duplicate SSITWR transactions; however, these transactions did not affect the benefit payments since SSA only posted the most recent transaction to the recipient's record.

We determined that 22 of 50 randomly sampled SSI recipients, their representative payees, and deemors, regardless of their association with SSITWR, did not report wages and incurred overpayments totaling \$21,388. The purpose of this comparison was to determine the importance of timely wage reporting.

We determined that SSA did not include language in the SSI overpayment notices, due to wages, to inform the individuals about the different methods available to report their wages.

Our Recommendations

We recommend that SSA:

1. Adopt a process to identify and report unique SSITWR classifications (for example, wage reports, wage reporters, wage earners, users, usage, etc.) for a specified period.
2. Add language to overpayment notices due to wages to inform SSI recipients, their representative payees, and deemors of the methods available to report wages.

SSA agreed with Recommendation 1 but disagreed with Recommendation 2.