

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

July 2009



Objective

To evaluate the Social Security Administration's (SSA) controls over Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments to refugees, asylees and other non-citizens in refugee-like immigration status.

Background

The SSI program provides payments to recipients who meet certain financial limits and are aged, blind or disabled. Refugees, asylees and other non-citizens in a refugee-like immigration status meeting income and resource requirements may receive SSI payments. As originally established, SSI eligibility for these non-citizens was not time-limited. Effective with the passage of the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*, and subsequent legislation, certain non-citizens were eligible for SSI payments for a maximum of 7 years.

To view the full report, visit
http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO_BEPDF/A-02-09-29001.pdf

Quick Response Evaluation: Supplemental Security Income Eligibility of Refugees (A-02-09-29001)

Our Findings

We found SSA's controls over SSI payments to refugees, asylees and other non-citizens in refugee-like immigration status were generally effective. SSA made proper payments to eligible non-citizens in almost all cases. We identified a few cases where non-citizens beyond their 7-year eligibility period received SSI payments because of inaccurate Alien Eligibility Reason (AER) codes in the Supplemental Security Record (SSR).

The AER code on the SSR indicates whether a non-citizen's eligibility for SSI payments is time-limited or based on a provision that permits continual SSI payments as long as other eligibility factors are met. Per the law, non-citizens who enter the United States after August 22, 1996 were eligible for SSI payments for a maximum of 7 years. The 7-year limit on payments did not affect blind or disabled non-citizens already receiving SSI payments or those who were already lawfully residing in the United States on or before August 22, 1996.

We found 5 of the 383 recipients we reviewed received SSI payments after their 7-year eligibility period and were improperly paid \$11,386.

Matters for Consideration

To ensure only eligible non-citizens are receiving SSI payments, SSA staff should review the accuracy of a recipient's AER code for those with an alien status date after August 22, 1996 and an AER code indicating their SSI payments are not time-limited when completing redeterminations. Generally, SSI payments with an alien status attained date after August 22, 1996 should be limited to a 7-year period. Also, to ensure accurate payment decisions are made, SSA should consider reinforcing the importance of entering accurate immigration status information into the SSR with its staff.