
**OFFICE OF
THE INSPECTOR GENERAL**

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

**DISABLED INDIVIDUALS POTENTIALLY
ELIGIBLE AS AUXILIARY CHILD BENEFICIARIES**

June 2012

A-13-10-10146

AUDIT REPORT



Mission

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SOCIAL SECURITY

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 12, 2012

Refer To:

To: The Commissioner

From: Inspector General

Subject: Disabled Individuals Potentially Eligible as Auxiliary Child Beneficiaries (A-13-10-10146)

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to determine whether Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients were potentially entitled to Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) benefits as disabled child beneficiaries.

BACKGROUND

The SSI program provides cash assistance to individuals who have limited income and resources and who are age 65 or older, blind, or disabled.¹ The OASDI program provides benefits to qualified retired and disabled workers and their dependents as well as survivors of insured workers.² According to Social Security Administration (SSA) policy, an application for benefits under the SSI program is also an application for benefits under the OASDI program.³

SSI is a program of last resort; therefore, it is important to assess other benefit programs for which an individual may be eligible. SSI recipients may also be eligible as auxiliary child beneficiaries on a wage earner's⁴ record under the OASDI program. This occurs when certain criteria are met, such as being dependent on the parent; being age 18 or older and disabled before reaching age 22; and having a parent who is entitled to Disability or Retirement Insurance benefits or was insured at the time of death.

To conduct this review, we obtained a data extract of information from SSA's Supplemental Security (SSR) and Master Beneficiary Records (MBR), Modernized Enumeration System History, and Master Representative Payee File as of March 2011.

¹ *Social Security Act* § 1601, et seq., 42 U.S.C. §1381, et seq. See also 20 C.F.R. § 416.110.

² *Social Security Act* § 201 et seq., 42 U.S.C. § 401 et seq.

³ SSA, POMS, SI 00601.010.D1 (November 29, 2011).

⁴ In this report, the term "parent" is synonymous with wage earner.

The data extract from 1 random segment of SSA's records contained 1,760 records. To these records, we applied additional screening requirements. From this, we identified 675 SSI recipients who were potentially entitled to OASDI as disabled child beneficiaries but were not receiving those benefits. We randomly selected and assessed OASDI auxiliary benefit eligibility, and if applicable, payments for 100 of the 675 SSI recipients. Our analysis uses information recorded in SSA's records at the time of our review. See Appendix B for a discussion of our scope and methodology and Appendix C for our sampling methodology and results.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

Although SSA had taken actions to identify and prevent missed entitlements, we identified SSI recipients who were also eligible for OASDI. Our analysis of 100 SSI recipients found 95 were eligible for OASDI as auxiliary child beneficiaries. Of these, we identified 16 SSI recipients who were due OASDI underpayments totaling about \$71,000. We estimate approximately 2,160 SSI recipients were eligible for OASDI and were due underpayments totaling approximately \$9.6 million.

SSI RECIPIENTS ELIGIBLE FOR OASDI BENEFITS

We assessed the SSI recipients' eligibility for OASDI benefits by examining information recorded in SSA's MBR, SSR, Master Earnings File, Representative Payee System, Numident, and Prisoner Update Processing System. We assessed various eligibility and non-eligibility factors, including marital status, age, disability, and criminal history (see Appendix D for a full list of factors). Based on our analysis of 100 SSI recipients' records,⁵ we determined 95 were eligible for OASDI as auxiliary child beneficiaries and 5 were ineligible.

On September 9, 2011, we submitted information pertaining to our sample cases to SSA for review. We requested the Agency confirm eligibility for OASDI and determine the amount of underpayment (if applicable) due the SSI recipients. SSA advised us that it did not plan to respond to our request to review our sample cases.⁶

Based on our review of SSA's MBRs as of January 2012, SSA had determined 7 of the 95 recipients were eligible for OASDI as auxiliary child beneficiaries. Of these seven, six were in current pay and receiving about \$4,000 in monthly OASDI benefits. If the Agency

⁵ In April 2011, we selected a random sample of 50 SSI recipients. In July 2011, we randomly selected an additional 50 SSI recipients to review—for 100 recipients. To assess OASDI eligibility for the 100 SSI recipients in our sample, we reviewed information recorded in SSA's automated systems as of May and July 2011, respectively.

⁶ In February 2012, Agency staff advised us of this decision.

evaluates the remaining 88⁷ recipients we identified, we expect more of the recipients will be determined eligible and receive OASDI payments as auxiliary child beneficiaries. Specifically, based on our analysis, 16 of the 88 recipients were due approximately \$71,000 in OASDI underpayments (see Table 1).

SSI Recipient	Offset Period	OASDI Due	Windfall Offset⁹	Net OASDI Underpayment
A	1/06 – 5/11	\$52,914	\$28,881	\$24,033
B	8/98 – 5/11	\$110,713	\$89,780	\$20,933
C	9/08 – 5/11	\$30,227	\$22,768	\$7,459
D	3/10 – 5/11	\$11,197	\$4,690	\$6,507
E	6/09 – 5/11	\$19,892	\$16,728	\$3,164
F	7/09 – 5/11	\$18,081	\$15,502	\$2,579
G	7/02 – 5/11	\$52,741	\$51,215	\$1,526
H	4/96 – 5/11	\$35,078	\$33,995	\$1,083
I	2/11 – 5/11	\$4,366	\$3,380	\$986
J	12/06 – 5/11	\$26,361	\$25,606	\$755
K	1/11 – 5/11	\$3,928	\$3,370	\$558
L	3/98 – 5/11	\$41,384	\$40,938	\$446
M	3/04 – 5/11	\$38,689	\$38,328	\$361
N	6/96 – 5/11	\$61,552	\$61,248	\$304
O	7/00 – 5/11	\$46,370	\$46,098	\$272
P	2/07 – 5/11	\$21,812	\$21,797	\$15
TOTAL		\$575,305	\$504,324	\$70,981

Based on our analysis of information in SSA's records for 1 segment of the SSR, we are 90-percent confident the number of eligible SSI recipients ranged from 73 to 153, and the total amount of underpayments for these individuals ranged from \$136,534 to \$821,704. For all 20 segments of the SSR, we estimate approximately 2,160 SSI recipients were eligible for OASDI as disabled child beneficiaries and were due underpayments totaling approximately \$9.6 million.

⁷ Of the 88 recipients, we do not expect 37 SSI recipients are due any OASDI underpayment because the SSI payments were greater than or equal to the OASDI benefit due. We determined 35 are technical entitlement OASDI beneficiaries. According to SSA policy, when the family maximum is equal to the primary insurance amount, any auxiliaries on the record will have a zero monthly benefit amount. This is considered technical entitlement since the auxiliary is entitled, but no benefits are payable at that time.

⁸ We based the values in the table on our understanding of Agency policies and payment calculations. We asked SSA to confirm that an underpayment was due, but the Agency would not do so. The estimated underpayments do not consider other overpayments/underpayments that may apply. As such, these amounts are estimates and are subject to change.

⁹ SSA, POMS, SI 02006.001 (November 21, 1996) indicates a windfall offset is the reduction of retroactive OASDI benefits by the amount of SSI payments that would not have been due had SSA paid the OASDI income timely.

Children Named on the Parent's Record

We asked SSA staff why these types of cases are overlooked. Office of Quality Performance (OQP) staff informed us that, in some cases, children are named on the parent's (numberholder) OASDI record,¹⁰ but field office staff did not file the claim. We evaluated this issue for our sampled cases. For 66 of the 100 SSI recipients, SSA's Modernized Claims System (MCS) indicated the parent had a child who was under age 18, a student age 18 or 19, or a child age 18 or older and disabled before age 22. For 53 (80 percent) of the 66 cases, we determined that SSA staff had listed the SSI recipient in our sample on the OASDI claim as the numberholder's dependent child. Despite being identified on the parents' claim, field office staff had only taken an auxiliary OASDI claim application for 12 (23 percent) of the 53 recipients.

In May 2010, OQP issued a report¹¹ that discussed incorrect filing dates and improper close-out procedures that resulted in open applications. OQP determined that the majority of protective filing¹² errors were due to the Agency's failure to take auxiliary applications that were protected on the numberholder's initial applications. OQP further reported that often, these errors occurred in disability application appeals cases because of deferred development. When SSA finally approved an award, staff could overlook auxiliary beneficiary applications when paying the numberholder after the lengthy appeal process. To avoid these errors, OQP suggested the adjudicator review prior claims and queries for protected auxiliaries and review auxiliary information on the application. Finally, OQP reported the protective filing errors occurred about 30,000 times a year and accounted for approximately \$144 million in errors each year.

OQP explained it was conducting a review to identify individuals who were eligible as auxiliary beneficiaries for OASDI benefits. Similar to our review, OQP's probe sample identified cases in which children were named on the parent's application, but the Agency failed to file the claim. Further, OQP staff reported that the probe sample revealed instances where a child's name had been deleted from the parent's record. This could significantly affect the protective filing for the child.

¹⁰ Naming a child on the parent's OASDI application establishes a protective filing for the child. See also note 11.

¹¹ SSA OQP, *Analysis of Protective Filings and Open Applications in OQP Reviews*, May 2010.

¹² Protective filing refers to the date that a claimant or applicant first contacts SSA (either orally or in writing) expressing an intent to file an application for benefits.

SSA'S EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND PREVENT MISSED ENTITLEMENTS

Each year, OQP produces analytical reports that provide information on the accuracy of Agency workloads and an assessment of the most prevalent error-causing issues in those workloads. According to OQP's annual report,¹³ its reviews consistently identified missed entitlements¹⁴ as one of the major areas of concern for the Agency. To address this issue, the Agency had taken various actions to identify and prevent missed entitlements, such as issuing reminders and providing refresher training to staff.

Reminders to SSA Staff

In April 2010, SSA issued an Administrative Message (AM)¹⁵ to provide information on identifying potential auxiliary claimants and prevent missed entitlement. Specifically, it included (1) reminders for claims representatives when addressing entitlement issues, (2) scripts containing questions the interviewer can ask the claimant to assist in locating potential auxiliaries, and (3) steps to download and run a macro¹⁶ that will assist the adjudicator in gathering sufficient information to contact all current and former spouses and children on the application.

In August 2011, the Agency issued another AM¹⁷ to remind staff about properly closing protected auxiliaries named on OASDI applications. When a numberholder files for OASDI benefits and names a child on the application, the application serves as a protective filing. Staff is to take an application or issue a 6-month close-out notice to properly close an OASDI protective writing.¹⁸ If this is not done, the protective filing will remain open indefinitely.¹⁹ If the named auxiliary does not wish to file or cannot be located, staff should close the protective writing. If the numberholder does not specifically name a child, but the application includes enough information to identify the child, staff should find intent to file for the child.²⁰

¹³ SSA OQP, *Office of Quality Performance Annual Report Fiscal Year 2011*, p. 2.

¹⁴ Missed entitlement (also referred to as potential entitlement) refers to workloads where individuals either are entitled to a benefit but are not receiving it, or are being paid at an incorrect rate.

¹⁵ SSA, AM 10002, *Tips and Tools for Locating Potential Auxiliaries and Preventing Missed Entitlement* (April 16, 2010).

¹⁶ A macro is a single computer instruction that stands for a sequence of operations.

¹⁷ SSA, AM 11102, *Reminder- Properly Closing out Protected Auxiliaries Named on Title II Applications and Setting a Diary in MCS* (August 24, 2011).

¹⁸ A written statement that protects the claimant's filing date. The statement must show the writer's intent to claim benefits for him/herself or on behalf of another.

¹⁹ SSA, AM 11102, *supra*.

²⁰ *Id.*

Training

On January 12, 2010, SSA aired an Interactive Video Teletraining (IVT) broadcast²¹ to provide refresher training on policies and procedures to avoid missed entitlements. The targeted audience was field office, regional office, processing center, and teleservice center employees. The IVT broadcast noted that recent Agency studies showed missed entitlements were one of the more common errors in the initial claims process. The claims representative is responsible for identifying all possible entitlements so the claimant can make an informed filing decision. Although SSA policy requires it, the identification, documentation, and processing of other entitlements are often missed.²² This IVT broadcast addressed the most common missed entitlement issues, including documentation and computation errors. During the broadcast, SSA also introduced tools designed to help interviewers identify potential entitlements.

In addition to the IVT broadcast, SSA released a video on demand (VOD) on November 30, 2011²³ regarding childhood disability benefits (CDB). This VOD is one of several Disability Training Initiative VODs created as refresher training to prevent instances of missed entitlement. The training covers basic requirements for CDB. It also covers reentitlement, dual entitlement, and some general reminders.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We identified SSI recipients who were eligible for OASDI benefits as disabled child beneficiaries. Based on our analysis of information in SSA's information systems, we estimate approximately 2,160 SSI recipients are eligible for OASDI benefits and are due underpayments totaling approximately \$9.6 million. Our screening criteria resulted in 95 percent of the recipients in our sample identified as eligible for OASDI as auxiliary child beneficiaries. Therefore, SSA's use of our criteria could assist it in identifying individuals eligible for OASDI entitlement.

²¹ SSA Office of Learning, *Missed Entitlements - Tips and Tools* (27 minutes), January 12, 2010.

²² *Id.*

²³ SSA Office of Learning, *Childhood Disability Benefits* (14 minutes), November 30, 2011.

In February 2012, we identified 14,434 SSI recipients—from all 20 segments of SSA's records—who were potentially entitled disabled child beneficiaries. We provided this information to the Agency for corrective action. Therefore, we recommend SSA:

1. Develop and implement a cost-effective strategy to assess the 14,434 recipients we identified to correctly pay those recipients eligible for OASDI as auxiliary child beneficiaries and pay the OASDI underpayments due the recipients, as appropriate.
2. Consider establishing an automated periodic review of SSI disabled child recipients for potential entitlement to OASDI auxiliary child benefits.

AGENCY COMMENTS

SSA agreed with our recommendations. See Appendix E for the Agency's comments.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr.

Appendices

APPENDIX A – Acronyms

APPENDIX B – Scope and Methodology

APPENDIX C – Sampling Methodology and Results

APPENDIX D – Analysis of Sample Cases

APPENDIX E – Agency Comments

APPENDIX F – OIG Contacts and Staff Acknowledgment

Acronyms

AM	Administrative Message
CDB	Childhood Disability Benefits
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
IVT	Interactive Video Teletraining
MBR	Master Beneficiary Record
MCS	Modernized Claims System
OASDI	Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
OQP	Office of Quality Performance
POMS	Program Operations Manual System
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
SSR	Supplemental Security Record
U.S.C.	United States Code
VOD	Video on Demand

Scope and Methodology

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Obtained and reviewed applicable Federal laws and regulations, pertinent sections of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Program Operations Manual System, and other criteria relevant to the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) programs.
- Reviewed prior relevant Office of the Inspector General reports.
- Interviewed personnel from SSA's Offices of Quality Performance and Operations.
- Obtained and analyzed data extracted from SSA's Supplemental Security (SSR) and Master Beneficiary Records (MBR), Modernized Enumeration System History, and Master Representative Payee File as of March 2011.
- Selected a random sample of 100 SSI recipients. Examined information in SSA's SSR, MBR, Numident, Representative Payee System, Prisoner Update Processing System, and Master Earnings File to determine eligibility for OASDI benefits and the applicable OASDI underpayments, if any, owed to the SSI recipients.¹

We performed our review at SSA's Headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland, from May 2011 through January 2012. We found the data used for this audit to be sufficiently reliable to meet our audit objective. The primary entity audited was the Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Operations.

We conducted our review in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

¹ In April 2011, we selected a random sample of 50 SSI recipients. In July 2011, we randomly selected an additional 50 SSI recipients to review—for 100 recipients. To assess OASDI eligibility for the 100 SSI recipients in our sample, we reviewed information recorded in SSA's automated systems as of May 2011 and July 2011, respectively.

Sampling Methodology and Results

We obtained and analyzed data extracted from the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Supplemental Security and Master Beneficiary Records (MBR), Modernized Enumeration System History, and Master Representative Payee File as of March 2011.

The extracts identified 1,760 records from 1 random segment that met the following criteria.

- The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipient was in current payment status.
- The SSI recipient had a date of disability onset established before age 22.
- There was an indication the SSI recipient never received Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) benefits.
- At least one of the SSI recipient's parents (name and Social Security number) was identified from the Modernized Enumeration System History or Master Representative Payee File (natural or adoptive father, natural or adoptive mother, stepfather, or stepmother).
- The parent met the following criteria:
 - was a primary beneficiary/numberholder and
 - had a ledger account file other than N (disallowed claim) or ND (denied claim).

We refined the extracts by applying the following additional screening requirements.

- SSI recipient was age 18 or older.
- SSI recipient was not married.
- The parent was in current payment status or was deceased.
- SSI recipient did not have an MBR.

After applying the additional screening requirements, we identified 675 SSI recipients in one segment who were potentially entitled to OASDI benefits as disabled child beneficiaries. We selected a random sample of 100 SSI recipients to determine whether they were eligible for OASDI benefits and were due OASDI underpayments. Projecting our sample results to all 20 segments, we estimate approximately 2,160 recipients are eligible for OASDI and are due underpayments totaling approximately \$9.6 million.

Table C-1: Population and Sample Size	Number of SSI Recipients
Total Sample Frame (1 Segment)	675
Sample Size	100
Number of Eligible SSI Recipients in Sample	95 ¹

Table C-2: Projection of SSI Recipients Who Are Eligible for OASDI and a Payment is Due	Number of SSI Recipients	OASDI Underpayments
Sample Results	16	\$70,981
Estimate to the Sample Frame (Point Estimate)	108	\$479,119
Lower Limit	73	\$136,534
Upper Limit	153	\$821,704
Estimate to the Population (20 Segments)	2,160	\$9,582,380

Note: All projections are at the 90-percent confidence level.

¹ Based on our analysis of SSA's records, the remaining five SSI recipients were ineligible for OASDI as an auxiliary child beneficiary.

Analysis of Sample Cases

To evaluate the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients' eligibility for Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) benefits as a disabled child beneficiary, we reviewed various entitlement and non-entitlement factors, as well as issues that would limit the amount of benefits that would be payable.¹ Specifically, we determined whether

- the SSI recipient was in current payment status;
- the SSI recipient was convicted of killing the numberholder (parent);
- the SSI recipient was ever entitled to, and received, OASDI benefits;
- the SSI recipient was dependent on the parent;
- alcoholism or drug addiction was a contributing factor to the SSI recipient's disability;
- the SSI recipient was imprisoned in the United States after conviction for a felony;
- the SSI recipient had an outstanding warrant for a crime, probation violation, or parole violation;
- the SSI recipient was married;
- the SSI recipient performed substantial work;
- the SSI recipient was an alien living outside the United States or a non-citizen or alien unlawfully present in the United States;
- the SSI recipient was living in a restricted country;
- the SSI recipient was the insured person's child;
- the SSI recipient met the definition of disabled;
- the SSI recipient was age 18 or older and became disabled before reaching age 22;
- the parent or child was granted a tax exemption as a member of a religious group opposed to insurance;
- the family was receiving the maximum payment allowed;
- the parent was receiving Disability Insurance benefits that were subject to offset because of worker's compensation payments;
- the parent was entitled to Disability or Retirement Insurance benefits or was insured at the time of death;
- the railroad retirement board had jurisdiction over the survivor's claim; or
- the parent had been deported or removed from the United States.

¹ Benefits may not be payable or may be payable only in part, if certain conditions exist.

Agency Comments



SOCIAL SECURITY

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 23, 2012

Refer To: SIJ-3

To: Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr.
Inspector General

From: Dean S. Landis /s/
Deputy Chief of Staff

Subject: Office of the Inspector General Draft Report, "Disabled Individuals Potentially Eligible as Auxiliary Child Beneficiaries" (A-13-10-10146)—INFORMATION

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report. Please see our attached comments.

Please let me know if we can be of further assistance. You may direct staff inquiries to Amy Thompson at (410) 966-0569.

Attachment

**COMMENTS ON THE OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL DRAFT REPORT,
“DISABLED INDIVIDUALS POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE AS AUXILIARY CHILD
BENEFICIARIES” (A-13-10-10146)**

Recommendation 1

Develop and implement a cost-effective strategy to assess the 14,434 recipients we identified to correctly pay those recipients eligible for Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) as auxiliary child beneficiaries and pay the OASDI underpayments due the recipients, as appropriate.

Response

We agree.

Recommendation 2

Consider establishing an automated periodic review of Supplemental Security Income disabled child recipients for potential entitlement to OASDI auxiliary child benefits.

Response

We agree.

OIG Contacts and Staff Acknowledgment

OIG Contacts

Shirley E. Todd, Director, Evaluation Division

Florence Wolford, Audit Manager

Acknowledgment

In addition to those named above:

Melinda Lockhart, Senior Auditor

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