

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

March 2010



Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration's (SSA) decisions to write off Title XVI overpayments were in accordance with its policies and procedures. Additionally, we determined the status of corrective actions the Agency had taken to address recommendations in our January 2006 report, *The Social Security Administration's Controls over the Write-Off of Title XVI Overpayments* (A-04-05-15041).

Background

When SSA determines it has overpaid a recipient, it first attempts full and immediate recovery of the overpayment while affording the debtor due process in resolving the overpayment. In certain circumstances, when SSA determines an overpayment is not collectible, it may elect to terminate future collection efforts and write off the debt.

To view the full report, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO/BEPDF/A-04-09-19138.pdf>

Follow-up: The Social Security Administration's Controls over the Write-Off of Title XVI Overpayments ***(A-04-09-19138)***

Our Findings

In January 2006, the Office of the Inspector General issued a report recommending that SSA address control weaknesses in its process of writing off Title XVI overpayments. Although SSA took corrective actions on these recommendations, our recent work found similar conditions existed. We estimate that in Fiscal Year 2008, SSA personnel did not fully comply with SSA policies and procedures for 56,448 overpayment write-offs totaling about \$70.6 million. Additionally, three of the four highest dollar overpayment write-off decisions, totaling \$167,318, did not fully comply with SSA's policies and procedures.

Our Recommendations

SSA should: (1) continue to urge staff compliance with existing policy when writing off Title XVI overpayments and hold accountable those employees who do not follow established criteria, (2) determine whether the policy and procedures for collecting overpayments from deceased beneficiaries are an efficient use of SSA resources. If necessary, revise the current policy; (3) implement a mechanism to ensure SSA field office personnel fully develop and document overpayment write-off decisions, as required by policy; (4) reverse the \$55,332 overpayment write-off for which restitution has been ordered; and (5) determine whether it is permissible for regional offices to delegate write-off authority for debts greater than \$20,000 to staff other than the Assistant Regional for Management and Operations Support.

SSA agreed with the recommendations.