

# Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

July 2012



## Objective

To determine the status of the corrective actions the Social Security Administration (SSA) took to address the recommendations in our January 15, 2010 report on *The Accuracy of the Garnishment of Title II Benefits by the Social Security Administration's Court Ordered Garnishment System (A-15-09-19063)*. In addition, our objectives were to determine whether SSA (1) accurately calculated the allowable garnishment amounts and (2) properly documented new, amended, and terminated garnishment orders in a retrieval system for later access.

## Background

Title II benefits are subject to legal process brought by a State agency or individual obligee to enforce the legal obligation of a Title II beneficiary to provide child support and/or make alimony payments. The Court Ordered System is a national system that automates withholding from beneficiaries in compliance with State- or court-ordered garnishment requests.

To view the full report, visit <http://oig.ssa.gov/audits-and-investigations/audit-reports/A-15-10-21063>

## *The Accuracy of the Garnishment of Title II Benefits by the Social Security Administration's Court Ordered Garnishment System (A-15-10-21063)*

### Our Findings

Our audit disclosed that SSA took corrective actions to address the recommendations in our January 15, 2010 report, and no further action is required on our two prior recommendations.

During our follow-up audit, we found the instances of incorrectly calculated garnishment payments for 13 (6 percent) of 202 beneficiaries. In addition, SSA did not maintain 56 (22 percent) of 258 beneficiaries' court orders. In addition, we found several court orders permitted an administrative fee to process garnishment payments. Based on our analysis, SSA could have collected approximately \$34.7 million in administrative fees for the 3-year period reviewed. After our fieldwork concluded, SSA determined it did not have the legal authority to collect garnishment fees because of budget constraints and limited resources. Therefore, SSA should seek legislative authority to collect garnishment fees to offset the cost of processing garnishment orders.

### Our Recommendations

We recommend that SSA:

1. Ensure staff reviews the 13 garnishments in this report totaling \$17,808 in overpayments and \$32,402 in underpayments.
2. Determine whether the seven policy-related cases need corrective action.
3. Consider seeking legislative authority to collect garnishment fees to offset the cost of processing garnishment orders.

The Agency agreed with our recommendations.