



Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Management Advisory Report

Match of Oregon Death Information Against Social Security Administration Records

062307 | August 2023



Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 22, 2023

Refer To: 062307

To: Kilolo Kijakazi
Acting Commissioner

From: Gail S. Ennis *Gail S. Ennis*
Inspector General

Subject: Match of Oregon Death Information Against Social Security Administration Records

The attached final report presents the results of the Office of Audit's review. The objective was to determine whether the Social Security Administration issued payments to beneficiaries who were deceased according to Oregon records.

We are not making formal recommendations for corrective action; the Agency should take action on those cases it deems appropriate. However, we request the Agency inform us whether it agrees or disagrees with our estimates of payments issued after death. If you wish to discuss the final report, please call me or have your staff contact Michelle L. Anderson, Assistant Inspector General for Audit.

Attachment

ABBREVIATIONS

PII Personally Identifiable Information

SSA Social Security Administration

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) issued payments to beneficiaries¹ who were deceased according to Oregon records.

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to an Office of the Inspector General subpoena, we obtained Oregon Health Authority data that contained the personally identifiable information (PII) of approximately 1.5 million individuals the State recorded as deceased from January 1971 through June 2022. We processed the data through SSA's Enumeration Verification System and against SSA's payment records.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

We identified 746 beneficiaries in current or suspended payment status whose PII matched that of deceased individuals in the Oregon death data. We also identified 1,556 numberholders who were not in current or suspended payment status who were deceased according to the Oregon death data but whose death information did not appear in SSA's Numident.

Beneficiaries in Current Payment Status

We identified 219 beneficiaries in current payment status whose PII matched that of deceased individuals in the Oregon death data. As of April 2023, we had referred 192² cases to SSA for administrative review and/or corrective action and the Office of Investigations was reviewing the remaining cases. As of July 26, 2023, SSA had determined two beneficiaries were alive and that death information in the Oregon records was incorrect. SSA had also input death information on 82 beneficiaries' Numident records, terminated payments to 78 beneficiaries, and identified approximately \$2 million in payments after their deaths. For example:

- A retirement beneficiary died in November 2012. SSA's records did not contain a date of death and therefore benefit payments continued. SSA determined it issued \$108,468 in payments after death before it terminated the benefits in May 2023.
- A retirement beneficiary died in December 2007. SSA's records did not contain a date of death and therefore benefit payments continued. SSA determined it issued \$261,306 in payments after death before it terminated the benefits in June 2023.

If the remaining beneficiaries are confirmed to be deceased, we estimate SSA issued approximately \$10.2 million in payments after their deaths.³ Identifying and correcting these

¹ We use the term "beneficiary" throughout this report in reference to Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance beneficiaries and/or Supplemental Security Income recipients.

² Includes 8 instances where SSA had terminated the beneficiaries' payments after we identified but before we referred the cases to SSA.

³ Amount calculated based on payments after death SSA identified in 78 terminated benefit cases plus our estimate of payments after death issued to the remaining beneficiaries through February 2023.

discrepancies would prevent approximately \$2.9 million in additional payments after death over 12 months.⁴

Beneficiaries in Suspended Payment Status

We identified 527 beneficiaries in suspended payment status whose PII matched that of deceased individuals in the Oregon death data. As of April 2023, we had referred 520 cases to SSA and the Office of Investigations was reviewing the remaining cases. As of July 26, 2023, SSA had input death information on 388 beneficiaries' Numident records, terminated payments to 43⁵ beneficiaries and identified \$170,192 in payments after death. For example, a concurrent beneficiary died in April 2015 but continued to receive benefits until SSA suspended the payments in October 2020. SSA terminated the benefits in February 2023 and determined it issued \$42,962 in payments after death. If the remaining beneficiaries are confirmed to be deceased, we estimate SSA issued approximately \$1.9 million in payments after their deaths.⁶

Deceased Non-current or Suspended Payment Status Beneficiaries

We identified 1,556 non-current or suspended payment status beneficiaries who were deceased according to Oregon death records but who did not have death information in SSA's Numident. In April 2023, we provided SSA with these beneficiaries' Oregon death information. Resolving these discrepancies will improve the accuracy and completeness of the death information it shares with other Federal benefit-paying agencies.⁷

We did not determine why the death information was not in SSA's records or whether the State had previously reported the deaths to SSA. We are not making formal recommendations for corrective action; the Agency should continue to take action on these cases it deems appropriate. For example, for the beneficiaries confirmed to be deceased, record death information in the Numident, terminate benefits, and initiate collection of overpayments. We ask if Agency personnel suspect fraud to have occurred, that they refer the allegation to our Office of Investigations.



Michelle L. Anderson
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

⁴ Amount calculated based on payments issued to each beneficiary in February times 12 months.

⁵ Includes 5 instances where SSA had terminated the beneficiaries' payments after we identified but before we referred the cases to SSA.

⁶ Amount calculated based on payments after death SSA identified in 43 terminated benefit cases plus our estimate of payments after death issued to the remaining beneficiaries through the month that SSA suspended the benefit payments.

⁷ Example of other Federal agencies include the Railroad Retirement Board, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Internal Revenue Service, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Office of Personnel Management.




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