



# Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** August 9, 2023

**Refer To:** 062314

**To:** Gina Clemons  
Deputy Commissioner  
Office of Analytics, Review, and Oversight

**From:** Michelle L. Anderson *Michelle L. Anderson*  
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

**Subject:** Match of Alaska Death Information Against Social Security Administration Records

Pursuant to an Office of the Inspector General subpoena, we obtained Alaska Department of Health data that contained the personally identifiable information (PII) of 217,851 individuals the State recorded as deceased from January 13, 1900 to February 14, 2023. We processed the data through the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Enumeration Verification System and against SSA payment records and identified 119 beneficiaries in current or suspended payment status whose PII matched that of deceased individuals in the Alaska death data.

In lieu of a report, we are issuing this memorandum. We are not making formal recommendations for corrective action; the Agency should take action on these cases it deems appropriate. For example, for the beneficiaries confirmed to be deceased, record the deaths on 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.

### **BENEFICIARIES IN CURRENT PAYMENT STATUS**

We identified 55 beneficiaries in current payment status whose PII matched that of deceased individuals in the Alaska death data file. According to Alaska Department of Health death data:

- A retirement beneficiary died in April 2012. SSA's records did not contain a date of death and therefore benefit payments continued. SSA had issued approximately \$188,000 in payments after death through June 2023.
- A widow receiving survivor benefits died in December 2013. SSA's records did not contain a date of death and therefore benefit payments continued. SSA had issued approximately \$199,000 in payments after death through June 2023.

- A disability beneficiary died in January 2020. SSA's records did not contain a date of death and therefore benefit payments continued. SSA had issued approximately \$66,000 in payments after death through June 2023.

We referred 29 cases to SSA in July 2023. SSA plans to release the cases to regional offices in Fiscal Year 2024. The Office of Investigations is reviewing the remaining cases and will coordinate referral of these cases to SSA, as appropriate. If the beneficiaries are confirmed to be deceased, we estimate SSA issued approximately \$2.3 million in payments after their deaths.<sup>1</sup> Identifying and correcting these discrepancies would prevent an additional \$902,000 in payments after death over 12 months.<sup>2</sup>

### **BENEFICIARIES IN SUSPENDED PAYMENT STATUS**

We identified 64 beneficiaries in suspended payment status whose PII matched that of deceased individuals in the Alaska death data file. In 11 of the 64 cases, SSA input a date of death on the Numident and suspended, but did not terminate, the payment records. For example, a retirement beneficiary died in April 2022, and SSA input the death on the beneficiary's Numident in December 2022. However, SSA did not input the death on the beneficiary's payment record. We estimate SSA issued approximately \$18,000 in payments after the beneficiary's death before suspending the payments in December 2022. We referred all 64 cases to SSA in July 2023. SSA plans to release the cases to regional offices in Fiscal Year 2024. If SSA confirms the 64 beneficiaries are deceased, we estimate SSA issued approximately \$748,000 in payments after the beneficiaries' deaths.<sup>3</sup>

We did not determine why most of the death information was not in SSA records or whether the State had previously reported the deaths to SSA. If you wish to discuss this memorandum, please call me, or have your staff contact Ron Gunia, Director, Program Audit Division 6.

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<sup>1</sup> Amount calculated based on payments after death issued through April 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Amount calculated based on payments issued to each beneficiary in May 2023 times 12 months.

<sup>3</sup> Amount calculated based on payments after death issued through the month that SSA suspended the benefit payments.