

Unclaimed Social Security Administration Assets Held by States and the District of Columbia

062329



September 2024

Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To determine whether Social Security Administration (SSA) timely recovered unclaimed assets held by states and the District of Columbia.

Background

Unclaimed assets refer to many types of federally owned monetary assets held by state or local governments, financial institutions, corporations, and other entities that have had no recorded activity or contact from the assets' owner for 1 year or longer.

The Department of the Treasury's Bureau of the Fiscal Service (Fiscal Service) establishes Government-wide policies and guidelines regarding the Federal agencies' efforts to locate, recover, and account for unclaimed Federal assets. According to Fiscal Service, if an agency uses internal efforts to recover unclaimed property, a "timely recovery effort" is evidenced by the federal agency's submission of a claim package to the appropriate holder within 2 years of the holder reporting the asset's availability.

SSA does not use internal efforts to locate or recover its unclaimed assets. Instead, SSA relies on Fiscal Service to recover its unclaimed assets.

We identified unclaimed SSA assets held by all 50 states and District of Columbia as of December 2023. We also obtained data on unclaimed SSA assets collected by Fiscal Service during Fiscal Years (FY) 2021 through 2023.

Results

SSA did not timely recover unclaimed assets held by states and the District of Columbia. As of December 2023, we identified 4,228 unclaimed SSA assets held by all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Multiple states' websites listed SSA assets initially reported as unclaimed in the 1990s or early 2000's:

- 5 states reported 1,171 unclaimed assets worth \$933,414 (average of \$797 per asset).
- 45 states and the District of Columbia listed 3,057 unclaimed assets held on SSA's behalf; however, these websites did not disclose the value of the assets or provided only a range of the assets' value (for example "over \$250" or "over \$1,000").

SSA relied on Fiscal Service to recover unclaimed assets on its behalf, with no ability to oversee collection activities. During FYs 2021 through 2023, Fiscal Service recovered unclaimed SSA assets from 17 states and the District of Columbia totaling \$284,216, \$159,335, and \$269,844, respectively. These are relatively small amounts compared to the unclaimed SSA assets reported on state websites at the time of our review.

Recommendation

We recommended that SSA develop its own internal program to recover unclaimed assets instead of remaining dependent upon Fiscal Service. SSA agreed with the recommendation.