

# Follow-up on Deceased Beneficiaries and Recipients with No Death Information on the Numident

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Office of Audit Report Summary

### Objective

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) controls over the recording of death information on the Numident database for deceased beneficiaries.

### Background

When SSA receives a death report, it terminates the decedent's benefits and records the date of death on the Numident as well as the Master Beneficiary and Supplemental Security Records.

Before December 2015, SSA used the Death Alert, Control and Update System (DACUS) to receive, process, and record death information on the Numident. In December 2015, SSA replaced DACUS with the Death Information Processing System (DIPS).

In February 2016, SSA initiated a multi-year Continuing Death Data Improvements (CDDI) clean-up project to resolve deceased beneficiaries' missing death information on the Numident.

For our current review, we identified 15,764 deceased beneficiaries for whom SSA had death information on the payment records but not on the Numident.

### Results

SSA's improved controls over recording death information were not always effective to ensure SSA recorded deceased beneficiaries' deaths on the Numident. In addition, SSA did not record death information on the Numident for 47 of the 50 deceased beneficiaries in our random sample. As of March 2021, SSA had taken action to correct seven records but had not taken corrective action for the remaining 40 records.

Based on our sample, we estimate SSA recorded deaths on the payment records of approximately 14,818 deceased beneficiaries but did not record the deaths on the Numident. This occurred because:

1. DACUS did not generate alerts when the payment records and Numident had name and/or date of birth discrepancies that did not meet the DACUS matching criteria;
2. SSA employees did not use DIPS to record death information they received, as required;
3. SSA employees did not properly resolve death alerts; or
4. the beneficiaries were not included in SSA's CDDI clean-up project.

Finally, SSA's corrective actions to address our prior audit recommendations did not ensure it resolved missing death information on the Numident for all deceased beneficiaries with death information on the payment records.

### Recommendations

We made four recommendations for SSA to ensure deceased beneficiaries' death information is recorded on the Numident. SSA agreed with three recommendations and disagreed with one.