

Funds Dedicated to Address Program Integrity and Hearings Backlog Workloads

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objectives

To determine whether the Social Security Administration's (SSA) completed counts for program integrity and hearings workloads in Fiscal Years (FY) 2017 through 2021 were complete and accurate. In addition, we determined whether SSA's spending exceeded dedicated funding amounts for program integrity and hearings backlog workloads.

Background

An appropriation represents a limitation on the amounts an agency may obligate and may not be exceeded without legal penalty. Congress can earmark appropriated funds for a limited object or purpose.

In FYs 2017 through 2021, SSA received dedicated funding to assist with program integrity (periodic and work continuing disability reviews [CDR]), non-medical Supplemental Security Income redeterminations, cooperative disability investigation units, and fraud prosecutions by Special Assistant United States Attorneys (SAUSA). Additional dedicated funding assisted SSA with reducing the disability hearings backlog.

We tested samples from each of the completed workloads to determine whether the reported information was accurate and complete. In addition, we reviewed actual costs, per cost reports, spent on program integrity and hearings workloads.

Results

The majority of SSA's completed counts for program integrity and hearings workloads in FYs 2017 through 2021 were complete and accurate. However, we noted errors in the number of:

- CDR mailers the Agency processed for FYs 2017 through 2020;
- prosecutions SAUSAs completed; and
- the total restitutions ordered for FYs 2017 through 2020.

SSA's spending did not exceed dedicated funding amounts for the program integrity and hearings backlog workloads. However, we noted errors in the reported costs incurred to operate the Cooperative Disability Investigation units for FYs 2017 through 2020. These errors were immaterial to the overall reported program integrity costs for the FYs reviewed.

Recommendations

1. Create an internal control or system edit to ensure SSA employees contact a beneficiary and complete an SSA-455, *Disability Update Report*, before they mark a CDR mailer as deferred.
2. Enhance the quality review process to ensure CDR mailers are processed correctly.
3. Enhance controls to ensure all manual adjustments to program integrity figures are made before the figures are reported.

SSA disagreed with Recommendation 1 and agreed with Recommendations 2 and 3.