Press Release

Report Shows Delays in Employees Addressing Critical Issues Could Jeopardize Beneficiaries' Financial Security
SSA did not have adequate controls to address complex cases

A recent Office of the Inspector General (OIG) audit report found that Social Security Administration (SSA) employees did not properly process 57 percent of the Manager-to-Manager (M2M) requests randomly sampled. The audit report demonstrates SSA did not have adequate controls to address complex cases, ensure communications regarding critical issues, and prevent premature M2M closings.

As a result, SSA has limited assurance that its employees properly processed the majority of the nearly 105,000 M2M requests made between June 2021 and June 2023. This resulted in delays in employees addressing critical issues and potentially thousands of beneficiaries waiting unnecessarily for weeks or months to receive the benefits they were due.

The M2M application is a two-way communication tool designed to address priority inquiries on critical cases between offices. When a field office, processing center, or teleservice center employee identifies a critical issue for a beneficiary that requires another office's action, managers can expedite action for the beneficiary by initiating an M2M request. Managers should only use M2M for high priority requests, such as beneficiaries who have terminal illnesses; made homicidal, suicidal, or potentially violent behavior threats; or are in dire need situations, such as facing eviction or homelessness.

Given the critical nature of M2M requests, employees must address these requests within 5-business days or provide an interim reply to the requesting manager explaining the delay. SSA managers provided reasons for delays, and OIG identified control weaknesses that contributed to delays, such as: (1) case complexity; (2) insufficient communication between offices, including no notifications in the M2M application when employees take action on requests; and (3) the absence of controls that prevent employees from prematurely closing M2M requests.

Unless SSA improves its controls, employees will continue to incorrectly process critical cases, contributing to delays in issuing benefits and possibly jeopardizing beneficiaries' financial security. OIG made six recommendations to improve SSA's controls and practices related to processing M2M requests. SSA agreed with all six recommendations. See the full report here.

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