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Media Inquiries: oig.press@ssa.gov

State Death Report Discrepancies Led to \$327M in Improper Payments and Cost SSA Millions of Dollars in Unnecessary Workloads

SSA agrees with OIG's recommendations to improve the accuracy of the death information on its Numident and payment records

Receiving accurate reports of death is a major and ongoing concern for the Social Security Administration (SSA). A recent report by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) illustrates the need for SSA to continue to improve its death reporting processing systems.

According to the report entitled, "Rejection of State Death Reports," from November 2018 through October 2022, states throughout the country submitted about 13.7 million death reports to SSA. SSA's Death Information Processing System (DIPS) accepted about 12.2 million and rejected nearly 1.5 million (11 percent) state death reports. SSA OIG determined that SSA rejected over 1.4 million state death reports that did not pass DIPS verification checks. SSA uses DIPS to verify the death information it receives. DIPS rejects death reports that do not pass its verification checks to prevent posting erroneous death information to SSA records.

It is only after death information passes DIPS verifications that SSA records the information to the Numident (a database that stores information for all Social Security numberholders) and terminates payments to deceased beneficiaries. The verification checks prevented DIPS from posting incorrect or duplicate death information to SSA records for approximately 773,000 of the 1.4 million death reports submitted by states.

However, SSA OIG reported an estimated 702,000 of the 1.4 million state death reports that were rejected contained valid death data but did not pass DIPS verification checks. DIPS rejected most death reports when it detected a verification date submitted by the reporter was different than the latest verification date in SSA's records. When this occurs, DIPS rejects the report without validating whether the reported death information is correct. This delays posting of the date of death to the Numident and payment records and results in continued payments to deceased beneficiaries until SSA receives and processes the death information.

This issue led to improper payments to beneficiaries of \$327 million and could lead to an additional \$108 million over the next year if SSA does not add death information to payment records for beneficiaries in current payment status. Moreover, SSA employees must manually process the rejected death records. It is estimated it will require SSA employees to spend 199,000 hours to process this workload, costing \$12 million in administrative expenses. OIG made three recommendations to improve the accuracy of the death information in its records to which SSA agreed. See the full report [here](#).

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