Objectives

To (1) determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) made payments to beneficiaries and representative payees who were deceased according to Puerto Rico Department of Health vital records and (2) identify non-beneficiaries who were deceased according to Puerto Rico vital records but whose death information did not appear in SSA records.

Findings

SSA issued approximately $11.6 million in payments after death to 149 beneficiaries and 4 representative payees who died in Puerto Rico from January 1992 through December 2016. Identifying and correcting these discrepancies will prevent approximately $1.4 million in additional improper payments after death over the next 12 months. We also identified 33,258 non-beneficiaries who were deceased according to Puerto Rico Department of Health vital records but whose death information was not in SSA’s Numident.

We could not determine why the deaths were not in SSA’s Numident or whether Puerto Rico reported the deaths to SSA. Implementing EDR should help ensure Puerto Rico deaths are properly and timely reported to SSA.

Recommendations

We recommend SSA:

1. Take action on the 149 deceased beneficiaries we identified.
2. Take action on the four deceased representative payees we identified.
3. Take action on the 33,258 deceased non-beneficiaries we identified to add their deaths to the Numident, as appropriate.

SSA agreed with our recommendations.