

Beneficiaries Whose Payments Have Been Suspended and Who Have Death Information on the Numident

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) had adequate controls to ensure it resolved death information on the Numident for beneficiaries whose payments it had suspended.

Background

When SSA receives a death report, it should terminate the decedent's benefits, record the death on the Numident and payment records, and initiate recovery for any payments issued after death.

SSA uses the Death Information Processing System to add death information to the Numident, change death information already on the Numident, or remove erroneous death information from the Numident. SSA's Death Alert Tracking System (DATS) contains a list of death alerts that employees must resolve.

In a 2011 audit, we found that SSA needed to improve controls to ensure it took timely and proper actions to resolve suspended beneficiaries' death information on the Numident.

For this review, we identified 3,406 beneficiaries whose payments SSA had suspended for address, representative payee development, or miscellaneous reasons and had death information on the Numident.

Findings

We continue to find that SSA needs to improve controls to ensure it takes timely and proper actions to resolve suspended beneficiaries' death information on the Numident. Based on our random sample, we estimate 1,907 beneficiaries remained in suspended payment status despite the death information on the Numident. Of these, we estimate SSA improperly paid 988 beneficiaries about \$6.6 million. Generally, this occurred because SSA systems did not always generate alerts for suspended beneficiaries with death information on the Numident or include all alerts in DATS. Therefore, SSA employees did not resolve death information on the Numident for these beneficiaries.

Recommendations

We recommend that SSA:

1. Evaluate the results of its corrective actions for the 56 beneficiaries in our sample and determine whether it should take corrective action for the remaining population of 3,406 suspended beneficiaries who have death information on the Numident.
2. Develop controls for suspended beneficiaries with death information on the Numident to ensure they are resolved in a timely manner.

SSA agreed with our recommendations.