

Match of Maryland and Michigan Death Information Against Social Security Records

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To determine whether 160 individuals Maryland or Michigan vital records agencies identified as deceased, but whom the Social Security Administration (SSA) was still paying benefits, were overpaid.

Background

To identify and prevent payments after death, section 205(r) of the *Social Security Act* requires that SSA establish a program under which States can voluntarily contract with the Agency to provide death data to match against its records. SSA's Office of Analytics, Review, and Oversight's analysis of Maryland and Michigan death data identified 160 beneficiaries who were likely deceased and in current payment status.

We obtained from SSA a data file of 160 individuals who had a reported date of death in Maryland from Calendar Years 1979 through 2015 or in Michigan from Calendar Years 1971 through 2010. The deceased individuals' names appeared to coincide with those of beneficiaries receiving payments on SSA's records.

Findings

Of the 160 individuals, 15 were alive. SSA issued approximately \$16.9 million in payments after death to 145 individuals who reportedly died in Maryland from 1979 through 2015 or Michigan from 1971 through 2010. Specifically, at the time of our review, of the 145 beneficiaries,

- our Office of Investigation (OI) was reviewing 125, and
- we referred 20 to SSA for administrative review and/or corrective action.

As of January 9, 2019, SSA suspended or terminated benefits and added death information to its records for 95 of the 145 beneficiaries. SSA had posted approximately \$10.5 million in overpayments. In addition, OI continued reviewing the remaining cases. Therefore, we made no recommendations for further corrective action.

SSA had no comments on the report.