

Summary of Congressional Response Report: Supplemental Security Income Recipients with Automated Teller Machine Withdrawals Outside the United States
A-01-11-01122



September 2012

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

Objective

To assess the Social Security Administration's (SSA) efforts to identify and prevent improper payments to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who are outside the United States.

Background

Generally, SSI recipients are ineligible for payments once they are absent from the United States for 30 consecutive days.

We received a request from Senator Coburn to follow up on our 2008 report. We were asked to: conduct a new analysis to determine the current extent of SSI overpayments to individuals outside the United States; determine whether SSA took action on the recommendation from our prior audit; and report the effectiveness of action taken by SSA to reduce SSI payments to individuals outside the United States.

Our Findings

The results of our analysis showed that residency violations were 1 percent of our current sample as compared to 4 percent in our prior audit. Furthermore, SSA has several processes in place to reduce SSI payments to individuals outside the United States.

Although SSA has taken steps to identify residency violations, the Agency ultimately relies on individuals to self-report absences from the United States. Because reporting such absences could make recipients ineligible for SSI payments, some SSI recipients fail to self-report this information to the Agency.

As of September 2012, we were reviewing the feasibility of SSA obtaining and using Department of Homeland Security travel data to identify SSI recipients outside the United States. This report will be available later in the year.