OIG Office *of the* Inspector General

Audit Report

Agency Processing of Duplicate Payment Detection Alerts

A-05-19-50796 | May 2020

OIG Office *of the* Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 6, 2020   **Refer To:**

To: The Commissioner

From: Inspector General

Subject: Agency Processing of Duplicate Payment Detection Alerts (A-05-19-50796)

The attached final report presents the results of our review. The objective was to determine whether the Social Security Administration correctly processed alerts for beneficiaries who may have received duplicate Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance payments.

Please provide within 60 days a corrective action plan that addresses each recommendation. If you wish to discuss the final report, please call me or have your staff contact Rona Lawson, Assistant Inspector General for Audit, at 410-965-9700.

Gail S. Ennis

Gail S. Ennis

Attachment

Agency Processing of Duplicate Payment Detection Alerts
A-05-19-50796

SOCIAL SECURITY
ADMINISTRATION
OIG

Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) correctly processed alerts for beneficiaries who may have received duplicate Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) payments.

Background

The OASDI program provides monthly benefits to retired and disabled workers, including their dependents and survivors. SSA's Master File Duplicate Detection Operation (MAFDUP) identifies beneficiaries who may be receiving duplicate OASDI payments under more than one Social Security number (SSN). Employees must review the duplicate payment alerts to determine whether a duplicate payment exists and, if necessary, correct the payments and establish an overpayment. MAFDUP identifies beneficiaries with the same names, dates of birth, and ZIP codes who are receiving a payment under more than one SSN and whose records do not contain proper multiple entitlement information.

Of 11,208 beneficiaries with 3 or more alerts from September 2016 through March 2019, we reviewed a random sample of 100 beneficiaries with 3 to 6 alerts and all 5 beneficiaries with more than 6 alerts.

Findings

Of the 100 beneficiaries with 3 to 6 alerts, SSA employees incorrectly processed alerts for 51 and had not processed duplicate payment alerts for 20. Based on our random sample, we estimate SSA:

- Incorrectly processed duplicate payment alerts for 5,714 beneficiaries. Of these, SSA improperly paid 3,473 beneficiaries approximately $24.3 million.

- Had not processed duplicate payment alerts for 2,241 beneficiaries. Of these, SSA improperly paid 1,680 beneficiaries approximately $13.7 million.

SSA incorrectly processed the alerts for all five beneficiaries with more than six alerts, resulting in an improper payment of $6,678. Finally, we identified four additional beneficiaries who met the criteria for a duplicate payment alert, but MAFDUP did not generate an alert.

Agency Actions Resulting from the Audit

In September 2019, we provided SSA with the 56 beneficiaries with incorrectly processed alerts and 20 beneficiaries with unprocessed alerts. As of March 2020, SSA had addressed the errors for the 76 beneficiaries. We also provided SSA with the SSNs of the four beneficiaries who should have had an alert but did not. SSA corrected the records for all of these beneficiaries.

Recommendations

We made five recommendations for SSA to improve controls of duplicate payment alerts and determine whether additional Information Technology modernization efforts can reduce duplicate payments. SSA agreed with four recommendations, but did not agree to identify an appropriate timeliness requirement for processing duplicate payment alerts and establish procedures to ensure employees process the alerts in accordance with the established timeliness requirement. The report includes the full text of the Agency's comments as well as our response.

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ABBREVIATIONS

MAFDUP	Master File Duplicate Detection Operation
OASDI	Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
POMS	Program Operations Manual System
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSN	Social Security Number
U.S.C.	United States Code

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) correctly processed alerts for beneficiaries who may have received duplicate Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) payments.

BACKGROUND

The OASDI program provides monthly benefits to retired and disabled workers, including their dependents and survivors.[1] A beneficiary may be correctly entitled to OASDI benefits under more than one Social Security number (SSN). SSA refers to this as "multiple entitlement."[2] For example, a beneficiary may be entitled to retirement benefits under his/her own SSN and spouse's benefits under a husband's or wife's SSN.[3] As another example, a child may be entitled to benefits under both parents' SSNs. According to SSA policy, there are certain situations where beneficiaries are entitled to benefits under multiple SSNs but are only eligible for payment under one SSN.[4]

SSA establishes a record for everyone who files a claim for benefits under an SSN. If a beneficiary is entitled to benefits under more than one SSN, information about his/her benefits will be on more than one record. The records for each SSN must contain proper multiple entitlement information, which ensures SSA reviews payments on all applicable records when it determines the beneficiary's correct benefit amount.

SSA's Master File Duplicate Detection Operation (MAFDUP) identifies and generates an alert for currently or previously entitled beneficiaries who are receiving or may have received duplicate payments under more than one SSN. Employees must review these alerts to determine whether a duplicate payment exists and, if necessary, correct the records and establish an overpayment. MAFDUP generates an alert every 6 months—at the end of March and September—until an SSA employee makes the necessary corrections. MAFDUP identifies beneficiaries with the same names, dates of birth, and ZIP codes who are receiving payments under more than one SSN and whose records do not contain proper multiple entitlement information. MAFDUP also identifies beneficiaries whose payments have been terminated on one record but appear, based on payment history, to have a prior unresolved overpayment.

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[1] *Social Security Act*, 42 U.S.C. §§ 401-402 (govinfo.gov 2018).

[2] SSA, *POMS*, GN 01010.050, A-B (January 5, 2017).

[3] See Footnote 2.

[4] SSA, *POMS*, RS 00615.770, A (November 1, 2019) and GN 01010.050, B (January 5, 2017).

We identified 11,208 beneficiaries with 3 or more duplicate payment alerts from September 2016 through March 2019 (see Table 1).[5] From this population, we reviewed a random sample of 100 beneficiaries with 3 to 6 alerts and all 5 beneficiaries with more than 6 alerts.[6]

Table 1: Number of Beneficiaries
by Duplicate Payment Alerts

Number of Alerts	Number of Beneficiaries
3	5,070
4	2,856
5	1,981
6	1,296
7 or 8	5
Total	**11,208**

RESULTS OF REVIEW

We estimate SSA employees incorrectly processed or had not processed duplicate payment alerts for approximately 7,960 beneficiaries. Based on our random sample of beneficiaries with three to six alerts, we estimate SSA employees:

- Incorrectly processed duplicate payment alerts for 5,714 beneficiaries. Of these, SSA improperly paid 3,473 beneficiaries approximately $24.3 million.

- Had not processed duplicate payment alerts for 2,241 beneficiaries. Of these, SSA improperly paid 1,680 beneficiaries approximately $13.7 million.

We also found that SSA employees incorrectly processed duplicate payment alerts for all five beneficiaries with more than six alerts, resulting in improper payments of $6,678 to one beneficiary.

These errors occurred because SSA employees (1) did not correctly reduce or stop the benefits paid under one or more SSNs, (2) established overpayments on incorrect records for the beneficiaries, and (3) did not update records to prevent future unnecessary alerts. Finally, MAFDUP did not always generate alerts for each beneficiary receiving duplicate payments on the record.
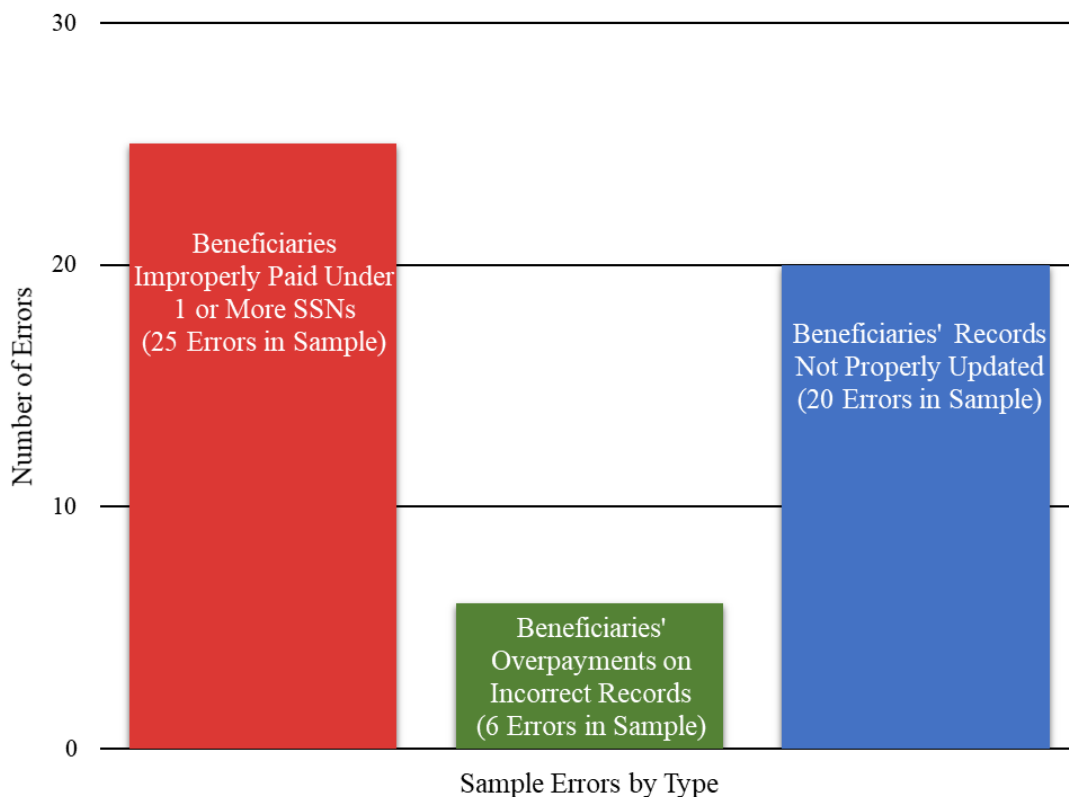
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[5] SSA, Office of the Inspector General (OIG), audit in progress, *Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance Child Beneficiaries Receiving Benefits Under Multiple Records, A-08-19-50814*, focuses on children receiving benefits on multiple records. We have identified 715 beneficiaries who were included in both audit populations. We excluded these 715 beneficiaries from the other audit to prevent duplication of findings. See Appendix A for our scope and methodology.

[6] See Appendix B for our sampling methodology and results.

Incorrectly Processed Duplicate Payment Alerts

SSA employees incorrectly processed duplicate payment alerts for 51 of the 100 sampled beneficiaries with 3 to 6 alerts. Of the 51 beneficiaries, SSA employees (1) did not correctly reduce or stop benefits paid under 1 or more SSNs for 25 beneficiaries, (2) stopped improper duplicate payments for 6 beneficiaries but established the overpayments on incorrect records for the beneficiaries, and (3) did not update the records for 20 beneficiaries to prevent future alerts. Figure 1 summarizes the error types for the 51 beneficiaries in our sample.

Figure 1: Duplicate Payment Alert Sample Errors by Type

Beneficiaries Improperly Paid Under One or More SSNs

SSA improperly paid 25 beneficiaries because employees did not correctly reduce or stop the benefits paid under one or more SSNs. If a beneficiary is entitled under more than one SSN, employees must review benefits paid under all SSNs to determine the correct benefit amount and whether to stop or reduce benefits under one or more of the SSNs.[7]

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[7] SSA, *POMS,* GN 01010.050, B (January 5, 2017).

For example, a child beneficiary who was entitled to benefits under her mother and father's SSNs should only have received benefits under one SSN. However, SSA improperly issued two payments for the child beginning March 2016. MAFDUP generated an alert for the beneficiary in March 2016. However, SSA employees did not take action on that or any subsequent alerts until August 2018. At that time, an SSA employee reviewed the duplicate payment alert but did not stop payments under one SSN according to policy. As a result, MAFDUP generated a seventh alert for the beneficiary in March 2019. As a result of our review, in October 2019, SSA corrected the beneficiary's payments and established a $19,050 overpayment.

As a result of a prior audit,[8] in August 2019, SSA issued guidance for processing duplicate payment alerts that clarified information in policy that should ensure employees determine correct benefit amounts for beneficiaries entitled under more than one SSN.[9] This guidance addressed the type of processing error we found in the 25 cases SSA improperly paid.[10] Specifically, it clarified policies for determining whether an employee should reduce or stop a benefit for beneficiaries entitled under more than one SSN while reviewing these alerts.[11]

Beneficiaries' Overpayments Established on Incorrect Records

SSA employees stopped improper duplicate payments for six beneficiaries but established the overpayments on incorrect records for the beneficiaries. MAFDUP will continue generating alerts because it detects beneficiaries whose payments have been terminated on one record but appear, based on payment history, to have a prior unresolved overpayment.

For example, SSA improperly paid a child beneficiary who was entitled to benefits on his mother and father's SSNs from December 2015 through August 2018. The child was entitled on both SSNs but, in accordance with SSA policy, should have only been paid the higher benefit under his father's SSN.[12] We reviewed the September 2016 MAFDUP alert for this beneficiary. There was no evidence in SSA's electronic records that MAFDUP generated an alert or that employees took action on subsequent alerts until September 2018. At that time, SSA correctly stopped payments to the beneficiary under his mother's SSN and established an overpayment of $14,418. However, SSA incorrectly established the overpayment under the mother's SSN. Had SSA correctly posted the overpayment to the father's SSN, on which the child was receiving benefits, SSA could have recovered part of the overpayment through full benefit withholding. As of September 2019, the overpayment remained uncollected on the mother's SSN.

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[8] SSA, OIG, *Follow-up: Individuals Who Inappropriately Received Benefits Under Multiple Social Security Numbers, A-01-16-50075,* (April 2019).

[9] SSA, Administrative Message AM-19041, *Reminders for Master File Duplicate Detection Operation Processing*, August 21, 2019.

[10] See Footnote 9.

[11] See Footnote 9.

[12] SSA, *POMS*, RS 00203.025, C (September 9, 2011).

According to SSA policy for processing overpayments, if a beneficiary is entitled under multiple SSNs, SSA employees must establish overpayments under the SSN where the beneficiary is receiving payments.[13] This enables SSA to begin withholding benefits to recover the overpayment. However, the policies related to processing duplicate payment alerts do not specify on which payment record employees should establish overpayments. Further, neither the duplicate payment policies nor SSA's August 2019 guidance instructs employees to establish overpayments on records where beneficiaries were receiving payments.[14] Therefore, SSA should update its policies or guidance to indicate that employees must establish overpayments on SSNs where beneficiaries are receiving payment when processing duplicate payment alerts.

Beneficiaries' Records Not Properly Updated

SSA employees did not correctly update the records for 20 beneficiaries, which will cause MAFDUP to continue generating alerts. For 19 of the 20 beneficiaries, SSA employees did not include proper multiple entitlement information on the records for all SSNs on which the beneficiaries were entitled. MAFDUP generates alerts if records do not properly reflect multiple entitlement on other SSNs. The remaining beneficiary's records had proper multiple entitlement information but required updates to benefit information to prevent future alerts.

For example, a disabled beneficiary was receiving $1,100: a $700 monthly disability benefit under her SSN and a $400 benefit under her deceased husband's SSN as a surviving mother with a child-in-care.[15] According to SSA policy, a beneficiary entitled to a disability and a mother's benefit will receive the disability benefit plus the amount the mother's benefit exceeds it.[16] Since the mother's benefit did not exceed the disability benefit, the beneficiary should have only received the $700 disability benefit under her own SSN. Therefore, SSA overpaid the beneficiary approximately $8,000 from October 2015 through March 2017 when SSA stopped the duplicate payment and established the overpayment. However, an SSA employee did not update the records to properly reflect multiple entitlement under the other SSN. As a result, MAFDUP generated another alert in March 2019 and will continue producing alerts because it detects entitlement under SSNs with records that do not contain proper multiple entitlement information.

SSA's August 2019 guidance for processing duplicate payment alerts includes properly manually updating the records for all SSNs when multiple entitlement is involved.[17] Additionally, as part of SSA's information technology modernization efforts, the Agency plans to introduce the Consolidated Claims Experience to combine capabilities of multiple systems into one. Further, this tool could eliminate the need for employees to manually establish multiple entitlement on

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[13] SSA, *POMS,* GN 02210.015, A.1 (February 13, 2012).

[14] See Footnote 9.

[15] Amounts are rounded for simplicity.

[16] SSA, *POMS*, RS 00208.015, B.2 (March 27, 2012).

[17] See Footnote 9.

records. SSA should determine whether the Consolidated Claims Experience initiative could automate manual actions needed to establish multiple entitlement to reduce duplicate payments.

Beneficiaries with More Than Six Alerts

SSA employees did not correctly process the alerts for all five beneficiaries with more than six alerts. Of these, one beneficiary was improperly paid $6,678 because SSA employees did not stop the benefits paid under one SSN according to policy.[18] The remaining four beneficiaries were paid accurately. However, SSA employees did not properly update the beneficiaries' records to prevent future unnecessary duplicate payment alerts.

Unprocessed Duplicate Payment Alerts

SSA employees did not process duplicate payment alerts for 20 of the 100 sampled beneficiaries with 3 to 6 alerts. The alerts had been pending since September 2017 for 5 beneficiaries and March 2018 for 15 beneficiaries. Further, since SSA had not processed these alerts, it had improperly paid 15 of the 20 beneficiaries $122,099 as of August 2019.[19]

According to SSA's management training manual, the duplicate payment alerts should be processed within 3 months.[20] For example, if MAFDUP generates an alert in March 2019, SSA's goal is to process the alert by the end of June 2019. However, SSA does not have a procedure to ensure employees process duplicate payment alerts within the 3-month timeframe. Since this timeframe is not a requirement, according to SSA, other workload demands may interfere with meeting this goal. SSA should identify an appropriate timeliness requirement for processing duplicate payment alerts and establish procedures to ensure employees process the alerts in accordance with the established timeliness requirement.

Duplicate Payment Alerts Not Generated

For three sampled beneficiaries, we identified four additional beneficiaries receiving benefits under the same SSNs who met the criteria for a duplicate payment alert; however, an alert was not generated. For example, we reviewed an alert for a child beneficiary who was overpaid for receiving benefits on his mother and father's SSNs and found a sibling was also receiving benefits on both SSNs. MAFDUP did not generate an alert for the sibling, and SSA had not detected the sibling's overpayment as of August 2019.

According to SSA's Office of Systems, it tests MAFDUP regularly to ensure it identifies all beneficiaries who meet the criteria in SSA's policy for potentially receiving duplicate payments. However, SSA's testing did not ensure MAFDUP identified all beneficiaries it should have. We

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[18] See Beneficiaries Improperly Paid Under One or More SSNs for more information about this type of error.

[19] The remaining five beneficiaries did not have improper payments, but their records required updates to reflect multiple entitlement with other SSNs to prevent additional alerts.

[20] SSA, *Management of Modular Operations,* Unit 3, Objective 1, p. 10 (2013).

provided the beneficiaries we identified to SSA, but SSA could not determine why MAFDUP did not generate an alert for these beneficiaries. Based on its review of the beneficiaries we identified that did not have MAFDUP alerts, SSA should assess whether MAFDUP modernization is needed to identify all beneficiaries receiving duplicate payments.

CONCLUSIONS

SSA employees incorrectly processed or had not processed duplicate payment alerts. Based on our random sample of beneficiaries with 3 to 6 alerts, we estimate SSA incorrectly processed duplicate payment alerts for 5,714 beneficiaries. Of these, SSA improperly paid 3,473 approximately $24.3 million. In addition, we estimate SSA employees had not processed duplicate payment alerts for 2,241 beneficiaries. Of these, we estimate SSA improperly paid 1,680 beneficiaries approximately $13.7 million. SSA incorrectly processed duplicate payment alerts for all five beneficiaries with more than six alerts. Of these, SSA improperly paid one beneficiary $6,678. Finally, we identified additional beneficiaries who met the criteria for a duplicate payment alert, but MAFDUP did not generate an alert.

AGENCY ACTIONS RESULTING FROM THE AUDIT

In September 2019, we provided SSA the 56 beneficiaries with incorrectly processed alerts and 20 beneficiaries with unprocessed alerts. As of March 2020, SSA addressed the errors for the 76 beneficiaries. We also provided SSA the four beneficiaries' SSNs we identified who should have had an alert but did not. SSA corrected the records for all of these beneficiaries as a result of our review. Therefore, we did not recommend further action for these beneficiaries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend SSA:

1. Review the population of beneficiaries with three or more duplicate payment alerts and correct any additional alerts that were processed incorrectly.

2. Update its policies or guidance to indicate that employees must establish overpayments on SSNs where beneficiaries are receiving payment when processing duplicate payment alerts.

3. Determine whether the Consolidated Claims Experience initiative could automate manual actions needed to establish multiple entitlement to reduce duplicate payments.

4. Identify an appropriate timeliness requirement for processing duplicate payment alerts and establish procedures to ensure employees process the alerts in accordance with the established timeliness requirement.

5. Based on its review of the beneficiaries we identified that did not have MAFDUP alerts, assess whether MAFDUP modernization is needed to identify all beneficiaries receiving duplicate payments.

AGENCY COMMENTS

SSA agreed with Recommendations 1, 2, 3, and 5 but disagreed with Recommendation 4. SSA stated under its current process, it works these cases while focusing its resources on achieving budgeted and priority workloads as reflected in its *Annual Performance Report*. SSA also stated that, although it does not agree with establishing timeliness requirements, it will emphasize to its technicians the importance of identifying and resolving duplicate payment alerts in a timely manner. The full text of SSA's comments is included in Appendix C.

OIG RESPONSE

While processing the specific duplicate payment alert workload described in this report may fall outside SSA's current budgeted and priority workloads, the *Annual Performance Report* cited by the Agency supports the creation of broad and objective performance measures to ensure timely processing of alerts tied to OASDI program administration. Specifically, in the report, SSA identified three "Strategic Goals" including "Strategic Goal 3: Ensure Stewardship." Within Goal 3, SSA references strategies to reduce improper payments and prevent their recurrence, and created a specific Performance Measure to "[m]aintain a high payment accuracy rate by reducing overpayments in the [OASDI] program."[21] In Fiscal Year 2019, SSA agreed with two OIG recommendations, from two separate audits, to identify meaningful timeliness measures related to Disability Insurance program workload processing.[22] Objective performance measures serve as an effective control to reduce improper payments in OASDI workloads because they foster accountability among the SSA workforce, improve the accuracy of claims processing, and add a layer of consistency to a decentralized national workload.

Rona Lawson
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

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[21] SSA, *Annual Performance Report Fiscal Years 2019–2021*, pp. 29 and 32 (February 10, 2020).

[22] SSA, OIG, *U.S. Veteran Disability Claims Processing Time, A-15-17-50227,* (July 2019) and *Administrative Law Judges' Appeals Council Remand Decisions, A-12-18-50290,* (September 2019).

APPENDICES

Appendix A – SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

To accomplish our objectives, we performed the following steps.

- Reviewed relevant sections of the Code of Federal Regulations, *Social Security Act,* and Social Security Administration's (SSA) policies and procedures.

- Obtained from SSA a list with 50,417 beneficiaries identified by its Master File Duplicate Detection Operation from September 2016 through March 2019 (see Table A–1). These beneficiaries were associated to 91,997 duplicate payment alerts. We excluded from our population any beneficiaries (1) with indications of previous referrals to the Office of the Inspector General or (2) included in our *Follow-up: Individuals Who Inappropriately Received Benefits Under Multiple Social Security Numbers* (A-01-16-50075).

**Table A–1: Number of Beneficiaries
by Duplicate Payment Alerts**

Number of Alerts	Number of Beneficiaries
1	30,774
2	8,435
3	5,070
4	2,856
5	1,981
6	1,296
7 or 8	5
Total	50,417

- Identified 11,208 beneficiaries with 3 or more alerts and selected 105 for detailed review.[1]

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[1] SSA, OIG, audit in progress, *Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance Child Beneficiaries Receiving Benefits Under Multiple Records, A-08-19-50814*, focuses on children receiving benefits on multiple records. We identified 715 beneficiaries who were included in both audit populations. We excluded these 715 beneficiaries from the other audit to prevent duplication of findings. See Appendix B for our sampling methodology.

- Determined whether SSA employees correctly processed the duplicate payment alert by reviewing evidence from relevant sources within SSA systems. Specifically, we reviewed information from the

  - Paperless Read Only Query System;

  - Recovery of Overpayment, Accounting, and Reporting;

  - Master Beneficiary Record;

  - Payment History Update System;

  - Medicare Premium Due Balance Query;

  - Online Retrieval System; and

  - Claims File User Interface.

- Determined the correct benefit amounts for the beneficiary and verified SSA was issuing payment on the appropriate record.

- Reviewed what was paid versus payable to calculate any associated Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance overpayment or underpayment from the duplicate payment.

- Identified any overpayment resulting from SSA action to correct the duplicate payment and ensured SSA established the overpayment under the correct SSN so appropriate benefit withholding could begin, if necessary.

Our review of internal controls was limited to gaining an understanding of the nature of the program SSA used to identify duplicate payment records. We conducted our audit from August 2019 through March 2020 in Chicago, Illinois. The principal entity audited was the Office of Operations. We determined the data used in this review were sufficiently reliable to meet our audit objective. We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

Appendix B – SAMPLING METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

Sampling

We reviewed a random sample of 100 beneficiaries from a population of 11,203 beneficiaries with 3 to 6 duplicate payment alerts associated to their records to determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) correctly processed the alerts. Additionally, we reviewed all five beneficiaries with more than six alerts (see Table B–1).[1]

Table B–1: Population and Sample Size

Number of Alerts	Number of Beneficiaries	Sample Size
3 to 6	11,203	100
7 or 8	5	5
Total	**11,208**	**105**

Errors and Projections

From our random sample of 100 beneficiaries with 3 to 6 alerts, we determined SSA incorrectly processed alerts for 51 beneficiaries (see Table B–2). Further, 31 of the 51 beneficiaries had improper payments totaling approximately $217,000 as of August 2019. We project SSA incorrectly processed the duplicate payment alerts for 5,714 beneficiaries. Of these, we estimate SSA improperly paid 3,473 beneficiaries approximately $24.3 million (see Table B–2).

Table B–2: Beneficiary Errors, Improper Payments, and Projections Identified for Beneficiaries with Three to Six Duplicate Payment Alerts

Description	Total Errors	Payment Errors	Improper Payment Amount
Sample Results	51	31	$216,978
Population Projection	5,714	3,473	$24,308,057
Projection – Lower Limit	4,748	2,626	$14,140,142
Projection – Upper Limit	6,674	4,417	$34,475,971

Note: All projections are at the 90-percent confidence level.

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[1] See Appendix A for a discussion of the population.

Additionally, of the 100 sampled beneficiaries we reviewed, 20 had alerts SSA had not processed as of August 2019. Of the 20 beneficiaries with unprocessed alerts, 15 had improper payments totaling approximately $122,000. We project SSA had not processed the duplicate payment alerts for 2,241 beneficiaries. Of these, we estimate SSA improperly paid 1,680 beneficiaries approximately $13.7 million (see Table B–3).

Table B–3: Unprocessed Duplicate Payment Alert Errors and Improper Payments

Description	Total Unworked Errors	Total Unworked Payment Errors	Improper Payment Amount
Sample Results	20	15	$122,099
Population Projection	2,241	1,680	$13,678,785
Projection – Lower Limit	1,534	1,065	$5,145,709
Projection – Upper Limit	3,101	2,478	$22,211,860

Note: All projections are at the 90-percent confidence level.

We found SSA processed the alerts for all five beneficiaries with more than six alerts incorrectly. One of the five beneficiaries was improperly paid $6,678 (see Table B–4). Incorrect alert processing for the remaining four beneficiaries did not result in improper payments.

Table B–4: Beneficiary Errors and Improper Payments
Identified for Beneficiaries with More Than Six Duplicate Payment Alerts

Total Errors	Payment Errors	Improper Payment Amount
5	1	$6,678

Appendix C – AGENCY COMMENTS

SOCIAL SECURITY
Office of the Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 10, 2020

Refer To: S1J-3

To: Gail S. Ennis
Inspector General

From: Stephanie Hall
Chief of Staff

Subject: Office of the Inspector General Draft Report "Agency Processing of Duplicate Payment Detection Alerts" (A-05-19-50796) -- INFORMATION

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report. Our system generates alerts to identify beneficiaries paid incorrectly on multiple records. We aim to resolve each case within three months of the initial alert, and we designed the system to generate subsequent alerts for unresolved cases, which allows us to track the records until we resolve all errors. We will take steps to automate the manual actions necessary to resolve these alerts, and explore options to improve our system's ability to identify these records.

We agree with all the recommendations except for recommendation 4. Under our current process, we work these cases while focusing our resources on achieving our budgeted and priority workloads as reflected in our Annual Performance Report (https://www.ssa.gov/agency/performance/). Although we do not agree with establishing timeliness requirements, we will emphasize to our technicians the importance of identifying and resolving duplicate payment alerts in a timely manner.

Please let me know if we can be of further assistance. You may direct staff inquiries to Trae Sommer at (410) 965-9102.

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