

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Public and Indian Housing

Special Attention:

Public Housing Agencies;
Indian Housing Authorities;
Public Housing Directors;
Administrators, Offices of
Native American Programs

Notice PIH 97-32(HA)

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Subject: Questions and Answers concerning Social Security (SS) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Verification

This Notice transmits a list of questions and answers (Q&As) concerning new procedures for verifying SS and SSI income.

Housing agency (HA) staff were allowed some time to ask questions about the new procedures during HUD's May 1, 1997, satellite broadcast. HA staff called in additional questions on HUD's SS/SSI Hotline.

Public and Indian Housing Comptroller's staff developed a list of Q&As to address the HA's staff questions. A copy of the Q&As should be provided to staff responsible for recertifying tenants.

HA staff can contact HUD's SS/SSI Hotline at (202) 708-0099 if there are any further questions.

/s/

Kevin Emanuel Marchman
Acting Assistant Secretary
for Public and Indian Housing

Attachment

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONCERNING SOCIAL SECURITY AND
SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME VERIFICATION

Benefit History and Tenant Income Discrepancy Reports

1. Will the HUD Field Offices be sending out the Benefit History and Tenant Income Discrepancy Reports to the HAs?

No. The reports will be generated from HUD Headquarters and a contractor will mail the reports to each HA.

2. What should HAs do with SS and SSI verification reports for tenants who are not receiving housing assistance from them?

HAs should notify the PIH Comptroller's Office (Computer Matching Activities) at (202) 708-0099, or the HA may mail the reports to the HA that is providing housing assistance to the tenants.

3. What day of the month should HA expect to receive the Benefit History and Tenant Income Discrepancy Reports?

Generally, HAs will receive the reports at least three months prior to the first day of the month in which recertifications are due. Most reports will be mailed during the third or fourth week of the fourth month prior to when recertifications are due.

4. Why are cents omitted on the Benefit History Report for the Medicare premium?

HUD plans to revise the report to show cents for the Medicare premium. It is anticipated this modification will be completed by September 30, 1997. HAs may use either the truncated value without cents or the actual value including the cents, if known.

5. How can you identify on the Benefit History Report, if the medicare insurance premium (e.g., \$43.80) is paid by the State or another organization instead of by the tenant?

This is shown on the Benefit History Report under the Heading of Medicare Data, "Supp. Med. Ins.:" If there is a "Y" under Buy-In, this indicates another person or organization pays the insurance. See Appendix IV, page 42, of the SS and SSI Verification Guide for additional information on the term, Buy-In.

6. Chapter 3 of the Guide for SS and SSI Verification indicates that the reports are issued 90 to 120 days before the tenant's recertification date. What if the HA's occupancy policy or Administrative Plan indicates that income verifications over 60 days will be not accepted?

We suggest that the occupancy policy or Administrative Plans be revised. The revised timeframe should not be problematic since most social security payment changes occur infrequently.

7. What does "credited" mean on the Benefit History Report?

The amount credited indicates the amount paid, or that a benefit was due but may have been used to recover an overpayment.

8. What is the "gross benefit" and "net benefit" on the Benefit History Report?

The gross benefit is the amount of the benefit before the Medicare premium deduction. The net benefit is the amount payable after Medicare premium deduction or an overpayment adjustment, if applicable.

9. SS records are sometimes misleading, especially when adjustments, retroactive payments or overpayments are involved. How can discrepant cases be verified?

Information on how to resolve discrepancies is located in the "Guide for SS and SSI Verification." If you are unable to resolve the discrepancy with the tenant, the tenant can telephone 1 (800) 772-1213 for a benefit verification letter. There may be some instances where HA staff may have to contact the local SSA office directly for assistance.

10. What is the maximum timeframe to be used in calculating the excessive housing assistance owed by a tenant?

HUD does not specify requirements on the maximum timeframe. However, we encourage HAs to go back at least as far as the data shown on the Benefit History Report.

11. How can HAs verify changes in the SS and SSI benefits due to interim changes in family composition or income?

Independent verification of SS and SSI is not required for interim changes. However, the HA should request the tenant provide SSA benefit letters if they have them, or the HA may request that the tenant call SSA at 1(800)772-1213 for a benefit letter.

12. What dates "trigger" the printing of SS and SSI reports?

The system generates reports for tenants based on the effective date of a tenant transaction (Block 1 on the HUD Form 50058). If the MTCS shows an interim recertification as the latest transaction date in Block 1, then a verification report will be generated. This criterion is used because the annual recertification frequently coincides with the admission month. Where this is not true, HAs will receive reports for tenants not due recertification. If a HA receives reports for tenants that are not due recertifications, the HA can file them in the tenant's folder until the tenant's recertification is due.

The revised form HUD 50058 will have a new data field called "Projected effective date of next re-exam, if other than 12 months from the effective date of action." This date will be used to trigger the printing of the SS and SSI Benefit History and Tenant Income Discrepancy Reports for recertification purposes.

13. Why do HAs receive SS and SSI reports for tenants no longer receiving housing assistance, i.e., where the HA has submitted an "End of Participation" report but received a report on the tenant?

This probably occurred due to a timing difference in processing the data or to a fatal error in MTCS processing that the HA has not resolved. Any excessive reports should be appropriately destroyed. If this occurs frequently, the HA should ensure that the electronic data on "End of Participation" is submitted to the MTCS. If the problem persists, HA staff should contact the MTCS Hotline.

14. If a HA recertifies all their tenants in one month or by project, when will the HA receive their reports?

The HA will receive the SS and SSI reports based on the criteria discussed in the answers for questions 3 and 12.

15. Will the SS and SSI Benefit History and Tenant Income Discrepancy Reports be sent to each HA according to each tenant's reexamination/recertification or admission dates?

When the MTCS effective date (HUD Form 50058, Block 1) shows a certification or a recertification as the last action for a household, the month of that certification or recertification is used in selecting the household for matching to SSA data. When the last action shown for a household is an interim recertification, the initial admission month, if shown in MTCS, is used in selecting the household for matching to SSA data.

16. Why does the Benefit History Report sometimes show the gross and net benefits with the same amounts and a Medicare premium?

This means that a third party (usually the State) is paying the premium. The third party paid premium is considered income in calculating eligibility and the amount of rental assistance.

17. What should a HA do if all the Benefit History Reports for a family are not received? (e.g., family of eight – parents and six children – all of the children receive SS payments but Benefit History Reports are received for only three children).

The HA should request that the household provide copies of SSA documents showing income information for family members without Benefit History Reports.

18. What should HA staff do when they receive a Benefit History Report that does not contain all of the SS and SSI information, e.g., the HA has information that a tenant receives both SS and SSI but the Benefit History Report only show the SS or SSI income?

If the HA has received SS and SSI information from the tenant that is more current than the Benefit History Report, the HA should use that information for verification purposes. Further, if the HA is aware that the tenant is receiving SS and/or SSI benefits that are not shown on the Benefit History or Tenant Income Discrepancy Reports, the HA can rely on copies of the SSA documents provided by the tenant. The SSA plans to modify the system used to provide HUD information so that these situations should occur very infrequently.

19. Can HUD do individual tenant SS and SSI queries of SSA's most recent SS and SSI data?

No. HUD receives SS and SSI data from the SSA monthly via a batch processing mode. HUD does not have query access to SSA's databases.

20. What are some of the reasons a HA may not receive SS and SSI reports from HUD?

- No entries at all in MTCS;
- No tenants due recertification for that particular month receive SS or SSI benefits;
- None of the HA data transmissions were received by HUD; or
- The social security number, name(s) or date(s) of birth do not match SSA data (all must match to generate a report from SSA).

21. If a household has more than 6 members with income, where should the HA place the excess members incomes, since the HUD Form-50058 (Item 2) only has space for six family members?

The HA should combine the excess household members incomes with other household members incomes and annotate this in the household's tenant file to avoid the appearance of unreported income. The new HUD Form 50058 form will facilitate the entry of income data for ten family members.

22. What is dual or multiple entitlement?

Dual or multiple entitlement occurs when an individual receives benefits under their own SSN and under another individual's SSN or under two other SSNs, e.g., a widow receives SSI under her own SSN and receives SS (widow's benefits) under her deceased husband's SSN or a child receiving SS or SSI benefits under two parents SSNs.

Presently, HUD receives information from SSA for a single account number which may include benefits paid on behalf of another individual. SSA will be making a cross-referencing modification to the system so that the reports will also include benefits received under another SSN account (claim) number.

23. If the Net Monthly Benefit amount shown on the Benefit History Report differs from the Gross Benefit amount, is the tenant's income based on the gross benefit amount?

Yes.

24. Will the reports contain "state" SSI information?

Yes. Approximately 17 States provide state supplemental security income. There are two types of state payments:

- (1) Mandatory minimum State supplementation -- Required by Federal law for individuals converted to SSI from State assistance programs for the aged, blind or disabled. This provision insures that monthly income will not be less than the amount received under the former State program. No application is necessary; payment is automatic. Payments may be issued directly by the State or may be combined with the SSI payment by mutual agreement of State and Federal agencies.
- (2) Optional State supplementation -- May be provided by States to bring the combined SSI-state payment to an amount more nearly commensurate with their cost-of-living than is the SSI payment alone. Social Security offices will be able to advise whether a specific

State participates in this program. Applications are sometimes filed with local welfare offices, but in many states may be filed at Social Security offices as part of the application for SSI payments. These payments may also be issued either directly by the States or may be added to the SSI payment by mutual agreement of State and Federal agencies.

25. Is state supplemental security income counted as income?

Yes.

26. When an HA's address changes, who should be contacted?

HAs should contact HUD's SS/SSI Hotline at (202) 708-0099 to request an address change. However, this is only to receive the SS and SSI Benefit History and Tenant Income Discrepancy reports. The HA should contact their local HUD Field Office to request an address change in HUD's Integrated Business System (IBS).

27. If the individual is no longer Head of Household but the Benefit History and Tenant Income Discrepancy Reports list the individual as Head of Household, how can the HA correct this?

The HA should submit a HUD Form 50058 completing Field 15-H end of participation to that family record, and submit another HUD Form 50058 with updated information regarding the new head of household and family composition.

28. What should a HA do when Federal and State SSI is reported by a tenant and the HUD-provided reports show only the Federal SSI amount?

The HA should add both amounts together and enter the total amount on the HUD Form 50058, Block 3a.

29. Do HAs have to send to HUD Headquarters or Field Offices the SS and SSI's Tenant Income Discrepancy Reports indicating disposition of the tenant cases?

No. As indicated on page 11 of the Guide for SS and SSI Verification, HAs can annotate on the Tenant Income Discrepancy Reports for their use, the resolution of SS and SSI differences. See suggested codes in Chapter 3 of the Guide.

Internet

1. What is the Internet address to obtain a list of Internet service providers (ISPs)? What is the Internet address to obtain free software and Internet related software tools?

The Internet address for the listing of ISPs is:
<http://thelist.iworld.com/>

Make sure to choose an ISP that has a local access number for your HA area in order to avoid long distance fees.

For free software and Internet software tools, the Internet address is:
<http://freeware.com/>

2. What is the Web site that provides MTCS information?

HUD's Web site is www.hud.gov/pih/pihmtcs.html. The site is updated monthly with information of interest to the HA staff.

3. How will HAs that do not have access to the Internet receive the reports?

The reports will be mailed to HAs that do not have Internet access. However, HAs are encouraged to obtain an Internet service, given the many benefits and nominal costs. Once an HA starts using the Internet Facility to obtain SS and SSI reports (likely to be available by September 1997), SS and SSI reports will no longer be mailed. HA staff with Internet access to the report data will be expected to download their records monthly.

4. Is there any other way to receive the reports other than paper form or Internet? (i.e., Sprint-mail, disk or magnetic tape). Some HAs want to process information and identify the related case load and have the reports sorted by caseload.

Initially, HUD will provide the reports in a Hyper-Text Markup Language (HTML) format on the Internet. Subsequently, we may provide other file formats for distribution of the data through Internet. HUD has no plans at this time to use Sprint-mail to distribute the SS and SSI data to HAs.

Other

1. How will Black Lung Benefits be verified?

Black Lung information will be present on the SS record if the claim was taken by the SSA. None of the Black Lung cases administered by the Department of Labor (DOL) (i.e., all Black Lung cases taken since 1973) will be displayed on SSA records. If the tenant informs the HA of Black Lung payments, the tenant should be instructed to contact DOL for a benefit verification letter. They should be told to contact SSA first if they are unsure of which agency has jurisdiction of the case.

2. What action should HA staff take if the local SSA office is uncooperative in resolving discrepancies?

SSA offices have been instructed to assist HAs. If the local office fails to cooperate, notify HUD Headquarters with the name and the address of the SSA office and type(s) of problems encountered. The HUD Headquarters staff may refer the matter to the SSA Headquarters in Baltimore, MD, for corrective action.

3. How can a HA obtain a video of the May 1, 1997 distance learning satellite broadcast?

Requests for a video of the May 1, 1997 distance learning broadcast should first be addressed to the HUD Field Office and if the HUD Field Office does not have any copies, please contact:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of the Public and Indian Housing Comptroller
451 7th Street, S. W.
B-133 (L'Enfant Plaza Room 8202)
Attention: Mr. Paul Goodwin
Washington, D. C. 20410

4. How can a HA receive a copy of the SS and SSI Verification Guide?

If a HA did not attend the May 1, 1997 SS and SSI Verification training at a HUD office or satellite facility, the HA should make sure a copy of the Guide for SS and SSI Verification is requested either from the HUD Field Office or the PIH Comptroller's office. The PIH Comptroller's office telephone number is (202) 708-0099. HUD anticipates that in the near future, the Guide will be available on the Internet for browsing or downloading.