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Description of document: **Summary Information about Nonagenarian Project at the Social Security Administration (undated)**

Requested date: February 15, 2007

Released date: March 22, 2007

Posted date: 23-January-2008

Title of Document Nonagenarians

Date/date range of document: Undated

Source of document: Social Security Administration  
Office of Public Disclosure  
3-A-6 Operations Building  
6401 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, Maryland 21235

Notes: From the content of the document it may have been produced during 2001

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# SOCIAL SECURITY

Refer to:  
S9HB: PV2704

March 22, 2007

I am responding to your Freedom of Information (FOIA) request dated February 15, 2007, seeking available records on the Nonagenarian Project at the Social Security Administration (SSA), which evaluated whether individuals in their 90s who were receiving benefits were actually alive and entitled to those benefits.

SSA initiated the Nonagenarian Project in 1989 for the purpose of verifying that older beneficiaries were properly receiving their benefits; determining that any needed representative payees were in place; and eliminating any possible fraud activities.

In 1999, the project evolved into having field offices initiate contact with 87,955 Title II and Title XVI claimants who were born in 1900 and 1901 and had attained age 99 and 98 respectively. Of those cases, 17,590 had already been terminated for death prior to the contact; 119 had already been contacted by the field offices; and 64 had erroneous date of birth information so these should not have been a part of the project.

Of the remaining 70,182 cases:

- 144 were terminated;
- 165 were suspended; and
- 40 were referred to the Office of the Inspector General

There was \$4.9 million in overpayments of which \$0.6 million was recovered by the time the project was suspended in May, 2000 due to budget constraints.

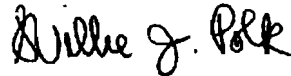
For your convenience, I am also enclosing a copy of a fact sheet on this subject located on our website at: <http://www.ssa.gov/history/ssa/ssa2000chapter6.html>. Please note that this website contains archived or historical documents and may not reflect current policies or procedures.

There is no fee for processing this request.

If you disagree with this decision, you may request a review. Mail your appeal within 30 days after you receive this letter to the Executive Director for the Office of Public Disclosure, Social Security Administration, 6401 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, Maryland 21235. Mark the envelope "Freedom of Information Appeal."

There is no fee for this service. I hope you find this information helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Willie J. Polk". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "W".

Willie J. Polk  
Freedom of Information Officer

Enclosure

## NONAGENARIANS

The Nonagenarian Project was an SSA initiative that began in 1989 for the purpose of verifying that the Agency's oldest beneficiaries were properly receiving their benefits, that any needed representative payees were in place, and to eliminate any possible fraud activities. It was another tool in the Agency's "seamless attack" against fraud, waste, and abuse.

In 1999, the project required FOs to contact Titles II and XVI beneficiaries who were born in 1900 and 1901 and attained ages 99 and 98, respectively in 1999. The Agency began using its Intranet to control Nonagenarian cases and information more efficiently. Results of the 1999 project were as follows:

- 87,955 beneficiaries were initially selected.
- 17,590 cases were terminated for death before the FO attempted the contact, 119 cases were identified as already having a personal contact, and 64 cases had an erroneous date of birth. This left 70,038 to be contacted.
- 5,944 of those contacted—8.4 percent—were found to be in need of a representative payee.
- 144 claimants died at least six months prior to the compilation of the initial data files, but their death had not yet been reported to the Agency. Out of the 144 cases, 90 claimants were receiving direct deposit. In addition, 118 claimants were receiving Title II benefits only; seven were Title XVI recipients only, and 19 claimants were receiving both types of benefits. These cases involved monthly benefits totaling \$78,021.10 and overpayments totaling \$4,897,850.43 as of November 30, 1999. Of this amount, \$614,269.85 has already been recovered.
- Another 165 beneficiaries, involving monthly benefits totaling \$102,132.01 were suspended because the FO, after extensive research, was unable to locate them. Some 40 of these cases were referred to OIG for investigation. The remaining cases were to be referred to OIG if the claimants were still not located within 45 days of the suspension action.

The Agency decided to suspend the Nonagenarian Project as of May 25, 2000 due to budget constraints. The Project was scheduled to include people born in 1902 with an estimated nationwide volume of 48,947, including both Titles II and XVI benefit cases.

Negotiations continued with HCFA to pursue a national Medicare Non-Utilization computer matching agreement as part of the Nonagenarian Project. Initially, SSA would use this agreement to request data on current beneficiaries on SSA roles over age 90 with

three years of non-utilization of their Medicare Card. The Agency sought to have the agreement in place by the end of the summer of 2000 with the first report provided by the start of FY 2001.

To ensure everything was in place as early as possible for the next fiscal year, SSA continued to work to perfect the Intranet site and the link with OIG. Fraud referrals had been submitted to OIG via the Intranet since June 1, 2000. In November 2000, Operations notified employees that the Intranet system was working properly and that it was now mandatory for all fraud referrals to be submitted to OIG via the Intranet. A final decision was made to go forward with FY 2001's Nonagenarian Project. The Project was tentatively scheduled to include people born in 1902 and 1903 who received Title II and SSI benefits. The Agency planned to house nationwide case information on one Intranet site.

The Agency made tremendous strides in improving its stewardship of the Trust Funds during President Clinton's Administration by reinventing or improving many of its business practices and responding to the public's expectations.