

## DESCRIPTION OF NCHS-SSA LINKAGE

NCHS has conducted a linkage of its population based surveys with the Social Security Administration (SSA). The linked survey files create an analytic tool for evaluation of the needs of the elderly and other persons with disabilities. These files provide the data needed to formulate and answer vital research questions by identifying the characteristics of Social Security disability applicants and recipients.

SSA administrative data are available for those NCHS respondents who were willing to provide personal identification data to NCHS and for whom NCHS was able to validate and match with Social Security Administrative records. The Social Security Administration provided NCHS with benefit history data from 1962 through December 2003.

The NCHS health surveys were linked to three SSA Data Files: the Master Beneficiary Record (MBR) file, the Supplemental Security Record file (SSR), and the Payment History Update System (PHUS) file. The MBR is the main file for administering the Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (RSDI) program, also known as Title II, and contains the data needed to generate Social Security Benefit checks. The SSR is the main file for administering the Supplemental Security Income (SSI), also known as Title XVI, and maintains information on all persons who have ever applied for and or received benefits for the Title XVI program. The PHUS file maintains historical payment data needed to determine when a person actually received payments and the amount of payment actually given. A more detailed description of these files and the variables contained in each file can be found on the NCHS-SSA data codebook.

**Special Note:** Social Security data in these records are extracted from files designed for program administration, and not for research. They are inherently not "user friendly" and are easy to misunderstand. To a great extent that is because the programs are far more complicated than they appear initially. Users are urged to review the documentation carefully and to consult basic program information. Much is available at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov); in particular, see Social Security Program Rules at [www.ssa.gov/regulations/index.htm](http://www.ssa.gov/regulations/index.htm). In addition, see the Rand Corporation's SSA Program Data User's Manual (Panis et al., 2000) and the Social Security Bulletin's Annual Statistical Supplement.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Panis, Constantijn; Euler, Ronald; Grant, Cynthia; Bradley, Melissa; Peterson, Christin E.; Hirscher, Randall; and Paul Steinberg. 2000. SSA Program Data User's Manual. Rand Corporation Contract PM-973-SSA.