

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

April 2012



Objective

Assess the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Request for Program Consultation (RPC) process used in the quality reviews of disability determinations.

Background

In Fiscal Year 2010, the State disability determination services adjudicated over 4 million Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income claims for SSA. During the same year, SSA's Office of Quality Performance (OQP) reviewed over 500,000 claims, as required by the *Social Security Act*.

If OQP finds a disability claim is deficient (incorrect or inconsistent with SSA policy), it returns the claim to the adjudicating office to change the determination or obtain additional evidence. SSA uses RPC to address disagreements between the Disability Quality Branches in the OQP regional sites and the adjudicating offices (that is, the DDSs and Federal Units).

To view the full report, visit
<http://oig.ssa.gov/audits-and-investigations/audit-reports/A-01-11-1119>

Resolving Issues Identified During the Social Security Administration's Quality Reviews of Disability Determinations (A-01-11-1119)

Our Findings

The RPC process has improved the way SSA resolves disagreements with deficiencies cited by OQP. However, based on feedback from stakeholders, SSA should enhance the process.

Our Recommendations

1. Some adjudicating offices are referring disagreements to RPC that could be resolved at the regional level because they believe OQP offices are inconsistent in responding to informal rebuttals. Therefore, we recommend SSA reduce any inconsistencies between OQP regional sites when receiving or responding to informal rebuttals.
2. Adjudicating offices, OQP regional sites, and the Centers for Disability in the Regional Offices provided several suggestions for improving the RPC process during our review. We shared these responses with SSA after removing all information that would identify any specific office. Therefore, we recommend SSA analyze and consider enhancements to the RPC process based on feedback from the RPC stakeholders.
3. Several offices expressed concerns with RPC staffing and its effect on workloads, such as longer processing times. Therefore, we recommend SSA consider appropriate staff levels for RPC to carry out its objectives.

SSA agreed with the recommendations.