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**OFFICE OF  
THE INSPECTOR GENERAL**

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**SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION**

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**FISCAL YEAR 2001 QUICK  
RESPONSE ACTVITIES  
SUMMARY REPORT**

**May 2002**

**A-13-02-12057**

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**MANAGEMENT  
ADVISORY REPORT**

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## **Mission**

**We improve SSA programs and operations and protect them against fraud, waste, and abuse by conducting independent and objective audits, evaluations, and investigations. We provide timely, useful, and reliable information and advice to Administration officials, the Congress, and the public.**

## **Authority**

**The Inspector General Act created independent audit and investigative units, called the Office of Inspector General (OIG). The mission of the OIG, as spelled out in the Act, is to:**

- Conduct and supervise independent and objective audits and investigations relating to agency programs and operations.**
- Promote economy, effectiveness, and efficiency within the agency.**
- Prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse in agency programs and operations.**
- Review and make recommendations regarding existing and proposed legislation and regulations relating to agency programs and operations.**
- Keep the agency head and the Congress fully and currently informed of problems in agency programs and operations.**

**To ensure objectivity, the IG Act empowers the IG with:**

- Independence to determine what reviews to perform.**
- Access to all information necessary for the reviews.**
- Authority to publish findings and recommendations based on the reviews.**

## **Vision**

**By conducting independent and objective audits, investigations, and evaluations, we are agents of positive change striving for continuous improvement in the Social Security Administration's programs, operations, and management and in our own office.**



## SOCIAL SECURITY

### **MEMORANDUM**

Date: May 9, 2002

Refer To:

To: The Commissioner

From: Inspector General

Subject: Management Advisory Report – Fiscal Year 2001 Quick Response Activities Summary Report (A-13-02-12057)

This Management Advisory Report provides you information on the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) Quick Response (QR) workload. The report describes the sources and types of QR activities and categorizes them in line with issues OIG identified to be among the top 10 challenges facing the Social Security Administration (SSA) management. We prepared this report for your information and therefore it does not require that you take any action.

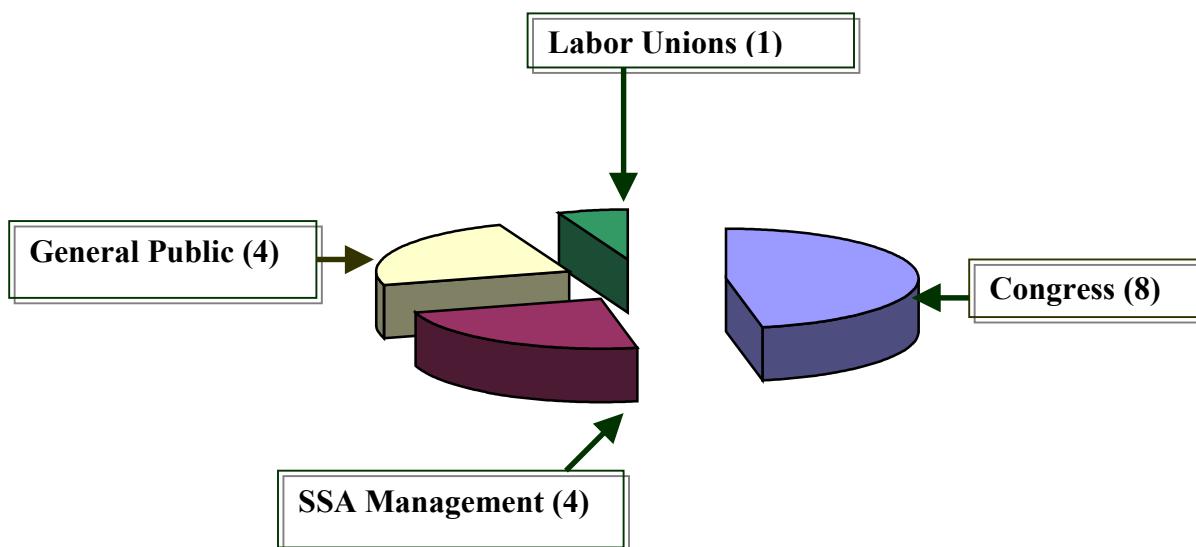
Anticipating an increase in requests to provide information and advice to Congress, SSA management, and the general public, we established the QR Team within the Office of Audit. The QR Team performs short-duration, time-sensitive projects that address requests from the Congress, SSA management, the general public, and others. Unlike traditional audits and evaluations, QR projects are not planned or scheduled in advance.

This report summarizes our QR activities from October 2000 through September 2001.

## NATURE AND SOURCE OF QR WORKLOAD

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2001, the QR Team issued 17 responses. This workload consisted of inquiries concerning SSA's service to the public, issues related to potential fraud, and the Representative Payment Program. Sources of these inquiries included the Congress, SSA management, the general public, and labor unions. The following chart shows the composition of the FY 2001 workload.

### Sources of QR Activities



## AGENCY MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES AND THE QR WORKLOAD

The QR workload does not follow our traditional processes. Usually, Office of Audit activities consist of planned audits and evaluations that directly relate to the management challenges facing the Agency. In contrast, the QR workload consists of unplanned, short-duration, time-sensitive projects. Although unplanned, the QR workload can be correlated to the Agency's management challenges. We categorized our QR workload in line with the following SSA management challenges.

- Service to the Public
- Fraud Risk
- Representative Payee

**Service to the Public** Providing quality service to the public remains a critical management issue facing SSA. SSA recognizes there are several significant issues that affect its ability to deliver world-class service. One is the complexity of the programs SSA administers. Another is the steady reduction in staffing resulting in an aging and work-laden workforce.

Approximately 37 percent of SSA's current workforce is projected to retire by the year 2010. As reported by the Social Security Advisory Board, the combination of growth in SSA's workloads and a large wave of retirements by SSA's aging workforce will place extraordinary pressures on the Agency to meet the public's need for service. SSA will continue processing an increasing number of disability claims. These claims are often difficult to evaluate and require carefully informed judgment.

We received several inquiries from the Congress and the public that relate to SSA's service to the public. Examples of the types of inquiries we received in this area follow.

- An inquiry on behalf of a constituent regarding an erroneous reclamation of her Social Security check from a check-cashing corporation.
- Congressional inquiry on behalf of a constituent regarding an Administrative Law Judge's decision to deny her Supplemental Security Income and Disability Insurance entitlement.
- Claimant inquiry regarding wages that were incorrectly posted under her daughter's Social Security number.
- Congressional Subcommittee's request for status of recommendations emanating from the four Payment Accuracy Task Force reports.<sup>1</sup>
- Several union officials' inquiries concerning the proposed relocation of a hearing office.

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**Fraud  
Risk**

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Each year, SSA pays out almost \$500 billion in benefits. Many unscrupulous individuals target SSA's various benefit programs for their own gain. Realizing its responsibility to protect taxpayers' dollars from losses associated with fraud and abuse, SSA

established the strategic goal "To ensure the integrity of Social Security programs, with zero tolerance for fraud and abuse."

The OIG has worked cooperatively with SSA in its efforts to detect and prevent program fraud. Our QR activities pertaining to this issue include the following.

- Congressional inquiry on behalf of a constituent who requested information about reclamation of benefits for deceased beneficiaries.

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<sup>1</sup> Payment Accuracy Task Force: *Earnings Record Issue Team*, September 1997; Payment Accuracy Task Force: *SSI Earned Income IssueTeam*, September 1998; Payment Accuracy Task Force Report: *Supplemental Security Income Unearned Income*, September 1999; and Payment Accuracy Task Force Report: *Title II Relationship and Dependency*, September 2000.

- Request from SSA to update its Tactical Plan on Key Initiatives the OIG has taken to combat fraud. We provided comments regarding the following OIG initiatives:
  - cooperative disability investigations program,
  - deceased auxiliary beneficiary project (BIC “D”), and
  - Electronic Crimes Team.

**Representative Payee** SSA provides benefits to the most vulnerable members of society—the young, the elderly, and the disabled. The Social Security Act grants SSA the authority to appoint representative payees (Rep Payee) for beneficiaries where there is evidence the beneficiary is incapable of managing or directing the management of their benefits. Rep Payees (organizations or individuals) receive and manage payments on behalf of these beneficiaries. SSA has the responsibility to ensure these payments are used for the beneficiaries’ benefit.

Our QR work in this area included the following.

- An attorney inquiry, on behalf of his client, regarding her removal as Rep Payee. The claimant alleged she was removed as Payee based on false allegations regarding her fitness to serve in that capacity.
- Congressional requests for status on the activities of SSA’s Rep Payee Task Force.

The QR workload provides an opportunity for the OIG and SSA management to work cooperatively and leverage our resources to respond in a timely fashion to the Congress, the general public, and others with a vested interest in SSA’s programs and operations. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Agency as this workload evolves.



James G. Huse, Jr.

# *Appendix*

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## ***Appendix A***

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# **OIG Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments**

### ***OIG Contacts***

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### ***Acknowledgments***

In addition to those named above:

Brian Karpe, Team Leader

Evan Buckingham, Program Analyst

Kim Beauchamp, Writer-Editor

For additional copies of this report, please contact the Office of the Inspector General's Public Affairs Specialist at (410) 966-1375. Refer to Common Identification Number A-13-02-12057.

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Vice Chairman, Subcommittee on Government Management Information and Technology	1
President, National Council of Social Security Management Associations, Incorporated	1
Treasurer, National Council of Social Security Management Associations, Incorporated	1
Social Security Advisory Board	1
AFGE General Committee	9
President, Federal Managers Association	1
Regional Public Affairs Officer	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>

## **Overview of the Office of the Inspector General**

### **Office of Audit**

The Office of Audit (OA) conducts comprehensive financial and performance audits of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) programs and makes recommendations to ensure that program objectives are achieved effectively and efficiently. Financial audits, required by the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990, assess whether SSA's financial statements fairly present the Agency's financial position, results of operations, and cash flow. Performance audits review the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of SSA's programs. OA also conducts short-term management and program evaluations focused on issues of concern to SSA, Congress, and the general public. Evaluations often focus on identifying and recommending ways to prevent and minimize program fraud and inefficiency.

### **Office of Executive Operations**

OEO supports the OIG by providing information resource management; systems security; and the coordination of budget, procurement, telecommunications, facilities and equipment, and human resources. In addition, this office is the focal point for the OIG's strategic planning function and the development and implementation of performance measures required by the *Government Performance and Results Act*. OEO is also responsible for performing internal reviews to ensure that OIG offices nationwide hold themselves to the same rigorous standards that we expect from SSA, as well as conducting investigations of OIG employees, when necessary. Finally, OEO administers OIG's public affairs, media, and interagency activities, coordinates responses to Congressional requests for information, and also communicates OIG's planned and current activities and their results to the Commissioner and Congress.

### **Office of Investigations**

The Office of Investigations (OI) conducts and coordinates investigative activity related to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement of SSA programs and operations. This includes wrongdoing by applicants, beneficiaries, contractors, physicians, interpreters, representative payees, third parties, and by SSA employees in the performance of their duties. OI also conducts joint investigations with other Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies.

### **Counsel to the Inspector General**

The Counsel to the Inspector General provides legal advice and counsel to the Inspector General on various matters, including: 1) statutes, regulations, legislation, and policy directives governing the administration of SSA's programs; 2) investigative procedures and techniques; and 3) legal implications and conclusions to be drawn from audit and investigative material produced by the OIG. The Counsel's office also administers the civil monetary penalty program.