

# Fiscal Year 2015 Inspector General Statement on the Social Security Administration's Major Management and Performance Challenges

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Office of Audit Report Summary

### Objective

To summarize and assess the most serious management and performance challenges facing the Social Security Administration (SSA).

### Background

The *Reports Consolidation Act of 2000* requires that Inspectors General summarize and assess the most serious management and performance challenges facing agencies and the agencies' progress in addressing those challenges.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, we focused on the following management and performance challenges: Improve the Responsiveness and Oversight of the Hearings Process; Improve the Timeliness and Quality of the Disability Process; Reduce Improper Payments and Increase Overpayment Recoveries; Improve Customer Service; Invest in Information Technology Infrastructure to Support Current and Future Workloads; Strengthen the Integrity and Protection of the Social Security Number (SSN); and Strengthen Planning, Transparency, and Accountability.

### Findings

SSA faced the following challenges in FY 2015.

- While SSA continues focusing on the quality and consistency of hearing decisions, it is facing worsening average processing times and increasing pending hearings.
- SSA needs to address receipt of millions of initial disability and reconsideration claims and backlogs of initial disability claims and continuing disability reviews, while also protecting its disability programs from fraud and encouraging beneficiaries to return to work.
- Given the large overall dollar amounts involved in SSA's payments, even the slightest error in the overall process can result in millions of dollars in over- or underpayments.
- SSA faces several challenges, such as increasing workloads and representative payee oversight, as it pursues its mission to deliver services that meet the public's changing needs.
- SSA faces the challenge of determining how best to use technology to accomplish its mission within its budget and resource constraints, while ensuring its information systems are secure and sensitive data are protected.
- Protecting the SSN and properly posting the wages reported under SSNs are critical to ensuring eligible individuals receive the full benefits they are due.
- Planning, transparency, and accountability are critical factors in effective management. Failure to plan properly to meet its mission and challenges will lessen the Agency's ability to provide its services efficiently and effectively now and in the future. Similarly, mismanagement and waste as well as a lack of transparency for citizens in Government operations, can erode trust in SSA's ability to tackle the challenges it faces.