

Summary of Fiscal Year 2012 Inspector General Statement on the Social Security Administration's Major Management and Performance Challenges

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Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

Objective

To provide a summary and assessment of the most serious management and performance challenges facing the Social Security Administration (SSA).

Background

Per the Reports Consolidation Act of 2000, the Inspectors General provided an assessment of the most serious management and performance challenges facing SSA in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012.

- Reduce the Hearings Backlog and Prevent its Recurrence
- 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
- Improve Transparency and Accountability
- Strengthen Strategic and Tactical Planning

Our Findings

While SSA made progress during FY 2012 in addressing these challenges, some improvements are still needed.

- While SSA has a plan to eliminate the hearings backlog by 2013, budgetary challenges have affected its ability to do so. In addition, there is a growing concern with administrative law judges' adherence to SSA's policies, as well as the variation in their decisional outcomes.
- SSA is one of the top three Federal agencies with high improper payments. In FY 2011, SSA reported about \$8 billion in improper payments, and the Agency incurred an administrative cost of \$0.07 for every overpayment dollar it collected.
- Many factors challenge SSA's ability to provide quality customer service to the public, including budget constraints, growing workloads, changing customer expectations, an aging workforce, and shifting demographics.
- With a growing budget deficit and a climate for deficit reduction, SSA faces major challenges to mitigate a material weakness in its logical access controls, provide additional electronic services to meet the growing needs of its customers, and strategically plan to modernize its systems.
- SSA faces a number of challenges ensuring accountability, including concerns over its internal controls, systems security, and administrative cost allocations.
- While SSA has plans to address its operations in the next 4 to 5 years, it does not have strategic or tactical plans that address how the Agency will operate in 10 years and beyond. While near-term planning is important, SSA needs long-range plans that address long-term challenges.

Our Recommendations

No recommendations are included in this report.