

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

September 2011



Objective

To determine (1) the events that led the Social Security Administration (SSA) to find a software error in its Simplified Disability Internet Application, (2) what actions SSA took to correct the error, (3) the status of cases impacted by the error, and (4) what actions the Agency implemented to ensure future development efforts do not contain similar errors.

Background

SSA's Disability Insurance program provides monthly benefits to qualified individuals who are unable to work. Since 2002, Disability Insurance applicants can fill out a Form SSA-3368-BK on the Internet to file for benefits and provide medical and work history.

Field office personnel electronically transmit i3368 data into the Electronic Disability Collect System (EDCS) when they initiate work on a claim.

To view the full report, visit
<http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO/BEPDF/A-14-11-21137.pdf>

The Social Security Administration's Simplified Disability Internet Application (A-14-11-21137)

Our Findings

In December 2009, SSA released the Simplified i3368 Internet application for public use. However, the Agency identified a software error in the Internet application that potentially impacted approximately 47,300 disability claims. The Agency fixed the software error and released the updated version of the Simplified i3368 in May 2010. Based on additional medical evidence, SSA made a substantive change to the disability determination for 94 claims. To ensure future i3368 application releases do not contain a software error, the Agency changed the i3368 and EDCS testing procedures.

Based on our validation of different scenarios in the test environment and verification of new claims with the doctor's name fields left blank, we found that claims transmitted correctly into EDCS. However, we believe that for future Internet software releases, SSA should build interface controls to ensure data entered transmits completely to the appropriate SSA systems and implement more stringent test requirements to validate changes in its systems.

Our Recommendations

SSA should:

1. Develop and implement an interface processing control strategy to confirm that all data entered by the user in one system transmits completely to the intended system(s); and
2. Use comprehensive test data that reflects system requirement changes to validate the application and all associated systems.

SSA agreed with the recommendations.