

Progress in Developing the Disability Case Processing System as of November 2016

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To evaluate the Social Security Administration's (SSA) progress toward developing and implementing its Disability Case Processing System (DCPS) as of November 2016.

Background

SSA partners with State disability determination services (DDS) to evaluate disability claims and make disability determinations. The DDSs use various customized systems to process disability cases.

DCPS is an SSA initiative to develop a common system the Agency expects will simplify system support and maintenance, improve the speed and quality of the disability process, and reduce the overall growth rate of infrastructure costs.

Results

In May 2016, SSA estimated the first release of DCPS would be available in December 2016—at a cost of less than \$38 million—and would support initial claims and reconsiderations. However, while SSA now expects the actual development costs for the December 2016 release to be about \$36.6 million, the release will only include functionality needed to support a limited number of cases. SSA will need to make further investments in the product before it will support initial claims and reconsiderations.

SSA reported completing a significantly higher number of story points in the four bi-weekly sprints ended November 8, 2016 as compared to the previous sprints. While the recent results are encouraging, we cannot conclude whether these increases will continue, level, or further fluctuate in future sprints.

Conclusion

SSA's vision for DCPS is a common system to be used by all DDSs that will enable the Agency to simplify system support and maintenance, improve the speed and quality of the disability process, and reduce the overall growth rate of infrastructure costs. SSA expects to achieve cost savings through DCPS by enabling DDSs to discontinue using their legacy systems. However, as of the date of our report, SSA had not estimated the costs it will incur to develop sufficient functionality into DCPS to retire the legacy systems, nor the associated timeframe.

According to the Office of Management and Budget, agencies should update their alternatives analyses periodically to capture changes in context for an investment decision. We believe SSA should evaluate its plans to ensure it can demonstrate to Congress and the public that it has chosen the most cost-effective alternative to achieve its goals and continue to do so as new challenges or opportunities occur.