

Summary of Overall Processing Times for 2010 Childhood Supplemental Security Income Claims

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Objective

To determine the average overall processing times for childhood Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability claims decided in Calendar Year (CY) 2010 by the disability determination services (DDS), hearing offices, Appeals Council, and Federal Courts.

Background

The Social Security Administration (SSA) provides SSI disability payments to eligible children. If the claimant disagrees with the initial disability determination, he/she can file an appeal within 60 days of the date of notification of the determination. In most cases, an individual may request up to three levels of administrative review: (1) reconsideration by the DDS, (2) hearing by an administrative law judge, and (3) review by the Appeals Council. If a claimant is dissatisfied with the Appeals Council's decision, he/she may appeal to the Federal Courts.

Our Findings

In CY 2011, nearly 1.2 million disabled children received SSI payments. By any measure, SSI recipients are among the poorest of our country's citizens. For them, SSI is truly the program of last resort.

We determined the average overall processing times for childhood SSI disability claims decided in CY 2010 by the DDSs, hearing offices, Appeals Council, and Federal Courts. The performance measure we present in this report tracks the time it takes a person to go through the entire disability process. In contrast, SSA's measures track the time it takes a person to go through specific segments of the process so the Agency can manage workloads within each component.

Compared to our prior review of all disability claims completed in Calendar Year 2009, the processing times for our sampled DDS childhood SSI cases were marginally longer, whereas the times for our sampled hearing office, Appeals Council, and Federal Courts cases were shorter than the times we reported for all disability claims for CY 2009.

Using SSA's performance measure for disability claims, we calculated the claim processing time at each of the decision levels—DDS, hearing offices, and Appeals Councils (SSA does not measure processing time at the Federal Court level)—for our sampled claims. We found the processing times for our sampled DDS and hearing office cases were longer than what SSA reported in its FY 2010 Performance and Accountability Report (for all disability claims). However, the processing times for our sampled Appeals Council cases were shorter than SSA's reported times during its FY 2010 performance period.

Our Recommendations

We did not make any recommendations in the report.