

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

December 2011



Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) (1) had a policy in place to determine the suitability of disability determination services' (DDS) employees and contractors; and (2) performed oversight reviews of the disability determination services' suitability processes.

Background

SSA has a responsibility to safeguard its records, data, systems, and personally identifiable information. SSA expects that each DDS will maintain and administer an effective suitability program. In October 2008, SSA enhanced its guidance to require DDSs to conduct statewide criminal background checks on all prospective full- or part-time employees and contractors, including medical consultants.

To view the full report, visit
<http://oig.ssa.gov/audits-and-investigations/audit-reports/A-15-11-21180>

State Disability Determination Services' Employee and Contractor Suitability Program (A-15-11-21180)

Our Findings

Although the Agency had a limited policy in place that required a statewide criminal background check, we noted a number of vulnerable areas in the policy that could pose a risk to SSA data and systems. We found that State policy regarding suitability determinations for employees, contractors, and other DDS staff varied widely from State to State. Some States had yet to implement a policy requiring statewide criminal background checks. Additionally, we found that although most States had a policy in place for prospective employees, the policy did not require criminal background checks for existing employees.

SSA performed some oversight of the DDS suitability process. Regional Office staff should review the DDS' self-assessments, but beyond this, Regional Office staff stated they leave the suitability determinations to the DDSs. According to SSA, Regional Office staff is responsible for conducting the day-to-day monitoring of the DDSs.

Our Recommendations

We recommend that SSA require that all individuals with access to SSA's systems and data have an appropriate suitability determination. If an individual does not have a determination by an established date, access to SSA's systems and data should be removed.

SSA agreed with our recommendations.