

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

May 2010



Objective

To assess the Social Security Administration's (SSA) efforts to identify and address competency gaps for select mission-critical occupations (MCO). Specifically, we reviewed the Social Insurance Specialist, Contact Representative, Legal Administrative Specialist, and Legal Assistant occupations.

Background

A competency is a characteristic and measurable pattern of behaviors, skills, knowledge, beliefs, values, traits, or motives that cause superior performance and results within a defined job context. When there is a difference between the competencies needed and the competencies possessed, a gap exists. Gaps are an indication of the risks associated with not being able to accomplish mission objectives.

SSA identified 15 MCOs. As of June 30, 2009, of SSA's 65,034 employees, 57,991 served in MCOs.

To view the full report, visit
http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO_BEPDF/A-13-08-28099.pdf

Mission-Critical Occupation Core Competencies (A-13-08-28099)

Our Findings

SSA had taken actions to identify and address competency gaps in MCOs. However, additional efforts were needed. We found the Agency identified competencies for a segment of the selected MCOs—rather than the entire series. Further, SSA did not perform gap analyses or develop an improvement plan for all MCOs. Without identifying the competencies needed for each position and the type or amount of gaps that exist, we believe the Agency cannot be assured that all competency gaps possessed by the employees filling these select positions are reduced or closed. Since these MCOs are essential to SSA meeting its mission and goals, and SSA's programs impact the lives of virtually all Americans, it is imperative that the Agency identify competencies and address gaps in these MCOs.

Our Recommendations

We recommended SSA:

1. Use a risk-based approach to identify competencies for the remaining positions in the GS-0105, 0901, 0962, and 0986 series and develop; and implement a strategy to periodically assess the relevancy of the competencies.
2. Conduct analysis to determine whether competency gaps exist in the GS-0105, 0901, 0962, and 0986 series. If appropriate, develop and implement strategies to address any identified competency gaps.

SSA agreed with our recommendations.