

# Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

May 2010



## Objective

To determine whether the Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) program helped disabled recipients return to work and generated savings for the Social Security Administration (SSA).

## Background

The *Social Security Act* authorizes the exclusion of the income and resources of an individual who has a disability when the individual needs such income and resources to fulfill an approved PASS.

Each PASS must have an occupational goal that must be feasible and should be expected to increase the individual's prospect for self-support.

In April 1996, SSA implemented several changes to the PASS provision, including establishment of a cadre of employees to review all PASS actions.

To view the full report, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO/BEPDF/A-01-09-19034.pdf>

## Plan to Achieve Self-Support Program (A-01-09-19034)

### Our Findings

While the PASS program helped some recipients return to work, the costs of the program outweighed the savings. Based on our review, we estimate that, of the 2,622 recipients who had a PASS in Calendar Year 2005, approximately 2,100 completed a PASS that resulted in about \$28.8 million in additional Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments due to income exclusions. Of these 2,100 recipients, about 1,050 had earnings that led to a reduction or suspension of benefits—resulting in savings of about \$11.6 million to the Agency.

For example, a woman receiving both Disability Insurance and SSI was approved for a PASS in December 2002. The PASS allowed her to set aside income needed to pay for start-up costs related to her occupational goal of becoming a musician. From December 2002 through August 2007, SSA did not count this income in determining her payment amount for SSI. As a result, she received additional SSI payments of \$23,975. Since the PASS ended over 2 years ago, she has had no earnings and therefore her benefits were not reduced.

### Our Recommendation

We recommended SSA reinforce to its PASS cadres that PASSes should be for feasible and realistic goals that are expected to increase (a) the recipient's prospect for self-support and (b) the likelihood of savings to SSA's programs.

SSA agreed with the recommendation.