

Fiscal Year 2019 Inspector General's Statement on the Social Security Administration's Major Management and Performance Challenges

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To summarize and assess the most serious management and performance challenges facing the Social Security Administration (SSA).

Background

The *Reports Consolidation Act of 2000* requires that Inspectors General summarize and assess the most serious management and performance challenges facing agencies and the agencies' progress in addressing those challenges.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, we focused on the following management and performance challenges: Improve Administration of the Disability Program; Minimize Payment Errors and Improve Management of Payment Workloads; Improve the Prevention, Detection and Recovery of Improper Payments; Improve Service Delivery; Secure Information Systems and Protect Sensitive Data; and Modernize Information Technology.

Challenges

SSA faced the following challenges in FY 2019.

- The Agency continues to face challenges with pending disability hearings and related processing times. Continued focus is necessary to simplify work incentive regulations and create new opportunities for returning beneficiaries to work.
- The Agency is challenged by administrative mistakes and computation errors, which are major causes of over- and underpayments. SSA estimated that computational deficiencies resulted in \$942 million in combined over- and underpayments.
- Beneficiaries and recipients are required to report any change in circumstances that may affect their benefits; however, they do not always comply. To combat this, SSA needs to identify and prevent improper payments using third-party data, automation, and data analytics. Preventing improper payments is more advantageous than detecting them since additional resources are not spent in recovering the overpayments.
- SSA faces challenges as it pursues its mission to deliver quality services to the public, including growing workloads as experienced employees are expected to retire.
- SSA must ensure its information systems are secure and sensitive data are protected.
- SSA must modernize its information technology to accomplish its mission despite budget and resource constraints.