

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

February 2011



Objective

To address a request from the House Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Social Security, regarding the first in/first out (FIFO) scheduling procedures at the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR).

Background

ODAR administers the hearings and appeals program for the Social Security Administration. ODAR operates over 150 hearing offices and related remote sites, as well as 5 National Hearing Centers. About 1,400 administrative law judges (ALJ) conduct hearings and issue decisions.

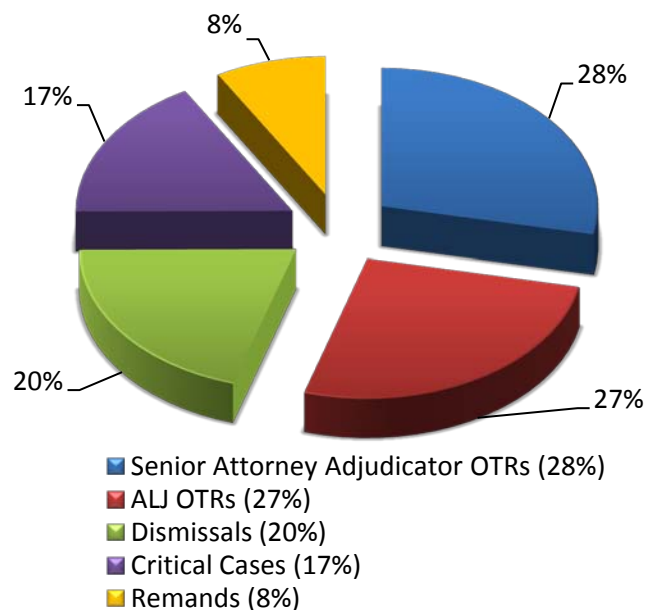
The Hearing Office Chief ALJ generally assigns cases to ALJs on a rotational basis, with the earliest (that is, oldest) requests for hearings receiving priority, unless there is a special situation that requires a change in the order in which a case is assigned.

To view the full report, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO/BEPDF/A-12-10-20169.pdf>

Congressional Response Report: Office of Disability Adjudication and Review's Scheduling Procedures for Hearings (A-12-10-20169)

Our Findings

Our review of a nationwide sample of hearing cases found that ODAR was not always processing the cases in FIFO order, but this departure from FIFO was consistent with the Agency's policies and procedures. We reviewed 2,979 hearing cases with a hearing request date of October 13, 2009 and found 1,208 were closed by the end of Fiscal Year 2010. Of these closed cases, 613 cases (about 51 percent) were processed using the exceptions to FIFO order because they met exceptions to the FIFO policy, including on-the-records (OTR), critical cases, remands, and dismissals.



ODAR's 10 regional management teams told us that hearing offices followed the FIFO process as much as possible. The managers stated that other issues could affect a hearing office's ability to follow the FIFO process in every case, including hearings held at remote hearing sites, scheduling multiple parties, and misplaced and delayed cases at field offices. ODAR has been working to standardize and automate core operational activities in ways that should improve hearing case processing, such as the planned auto-scheduling initiative.