

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

October 2011



Objective

Our objective was to determine if newly hired administrative law judges (ALJ) received training timely to perform their specific duties to adjudicate disability claims at the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review.

Background

ALJs hold hearings at over 160 hearing offices (including 7 satellite offices) and 5 National Hearing Centers (NHC). ODAR has about 1,300 ALJs and over 7,000 support staff.

The Congress and the President provided SSA with an additional \$500 million through the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (ARRA) to process disability and retirement workloads. In Fiscal Years 2009 and 2010, ODAR hired 305 ALJs and 1,626 support staff.

To view the full report, visit <http://oig.ssa.gov/audits-and-investigations/audit-reports/A-12-11-11126>

Training of New Administrative Law Judges at the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (A-12-11-11126)

Our Findings

ODAR created a three-phase training program to develop newly hired ALJs.

Phase One: On-the-job and video-on-demand training.

Phase Two: Four-week traditional classroom training.

Phase Three: Mentoring from experienced ALJs.

Overall, we found that 98 percent of the new ALJs said the training was helpful, 87 percent said the training was timely, and 83 percent said the training was consistent with their expectations. In addition, for each level of the three-phase training program, at least 85 percent of the new ALJs either were satisfied or did not state dissatisfaction (see table).

Question	Percent Satisfied or Not Dissatisfied
Satisfaction with Phase One	88
Satisfaction with Phase Two	94
Satisfaction with Phase Three	85

While most of the ALJs completed Phase One training, 13 ALJs stated they did not complete Phase One training because they lacked sufficient guidance from hearing office management. For Phase Two training, 25 percent of the ALJs commented that the formal classroom training should be modified to account for ALJs with previous ODAR experience. Most ALJs were satisfied with Phase Three training, though 16 ALJs stated they were dissatisfied because either they were not assigned a mentor or the mentor had little time to give them guidance. Finally, about one in five ALJs said they had not discussed their training needs with management.

Our Recommendations

We made four recommendations related to improving the three-phase training program and providing ALJs with an opportunity to discuss future training needs. SSA agreed with all four recommendations.