

# Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

November 2011



## Objective

To provide a summary and assessment of the most serious management and performance challenges facing the Social Security Administration (SSA).

## Background

Per the Reports Consolidation Act of 2000, the Inspectors General provided an assessment of the most serious management and performance challenges facing SSA in Fiscal Year (FY) 2011.

- Implement the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* Effectively and Efficiently
- Reduce the Hearings Backlog and Prevent its Recurrence
- Improve the Timeliness and Quality of the Disability Process
- Reduce Improper Payments and Increase Overpayment Recoveries
- Improve Customer Service
- Invest in Information Technology Infrastructure to Support Current and Future Workloads
- Strengthen the Integrity and Protection of the Social Security Number
- Improve Transparency and Accountability

To view the full report, visit <http://oig.ssa.gov/audits-and-investigations/audit-reports/A-02-12-11231>

## *Fiscal Year 2011 Inspector General Statement on the Social Security Administration's Major Management and Performance Challenges (A-02-12-11231)*

### Our Findings

While SSA made progress during FY 2011 in addressing these challenges, some improvements are still needed.

- The General Services Administration planned to purchase the required land for a new data center in June 2011, but did not purchase it until August 2011, thus delaying the start of construction. The timely completion of a new data center is critical to SSA's ability to continue to provide the level of service the American public expect and needs.
- Members of Congress have expressed concerns about administrative law judge (ALJ) adherence to the Agency's policies and procedures, as well as their ability to demonstrate good stewardship of taxpayer dollars. Other concerns, such as ALJ workloads, variances in ALJ decisional outcomes, management controls over the hearings process, and quality reviews of ALJ decisions have also come to the forefront.
- We estimated that from Calendar Years 2005 through 2010, SSA made benefit payments of between \$1.3 and \$2.6 billion that could have potentially been avoided if the full medical continuing disability reviews in the backlog had been conducted by state Disability Determination Services when they became due.
- SSA acknowledges that it has struggled to maintain the level of customer service the American people deserve. Many factors challenge SSA, including growing workloads, changing customer expectations, an aging workforce, and budget constraints.
- SSA's Fiscal Year 2011 Financial Statement Audits reported a significant deficiency in the Agency's control of access to its sensitive information. For example, some employees and contractors had greater access to systems than they needed to perform their jobs.

### Our Recommendations

No recommendations are included in this report.