

Fiscal Year 2013 Inspector General 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) 2013, we continued our focus on the management and performance challenges from FY 2012. The challenges are: 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 (IT) Infrastructure to Support Current and Future Workloads; Strengthen the Integrity and Protection of the Social Security Number (SSN); Improve Transparency and Accountability; and, Strengthen Strategic and Tactical Planning.

Our Findings

While SSA made progress in FY 2013 in addressing these challenges, some improvements are needed.

- While SSA had a plan to eliminate the hearings backlog by 2013, the number of pending cases has increased, and the average processing time remains above the 270-day goal.
- SSA needs to address millions of initial disability and reconsideration claims, as it still has backlogs of initial disability claims and continuing disability reviews.
- SSA is one of the Federal agencies with a high amount of improper payments. SSA will need to take additional actions related to reducing improper payments.
- The Agency faces several challenges as it pursues its mission to deliver Social Security services that meet the changing needs and demographics of the American public.
- SSA faces major challenges to ensure it has sufficient IT controls, provides secure electronic services, and strategically plans to modernize its systems.
- SSA faces the challenges of protecting the SSN and properly posting wages reported under SSNs, which are critical to ensuring eligible individuals receive the full benefits they are due.
- SSA faces a number of challenges in ensuring accountability, including concerns over its internal controls, systems security, and administrative cost allocations.
- SSA needs a comprehensive vision of how it will provide services in the future.