



SOCIAL SECURITY Office of the Commissioner

A Message from the Commissioner

I am pleased to present the fiscal year (FY) 2003 Government Performance and Results Act Annual Performance Plan and Revised Final FY 2002 Performance Plan for the Social Security Administration (SSA). This plan serves as the link between our long-range Agency Strategic Plan and the President's FY 2003 budget request for SSA. It describes the specific levels of performance the Agency is committed to achieve through the next two years, as well as the means and strategies for achieving them.

This Annual Performance Plan commits SSA to continually make progress in meeting a wide range of challenges with the help of government-wide management reforms called for by the President. We will continue making strides in meeting the public's evolving expectations for courteous, competent and convenient Service, and we will continue to meet our Stewardship obligation to ensure sound financial management and program integrity.

Today, we face significant stresses on our ability to continue delivering the quality, speed, and accuracy of service the public deserves. In the near term, we will need to make service improvements within our available resources and improve the efficiency of our processes as we fulfill our legislatively mandated duties. As we make improvements in some areas, we must try to prevent degradation in others.

Processing times in our disability claims and appeals workloads remain unacceptably high and improving service to our disabled population remains a top priority. We are reassessing initiatives currently underway and examining our process and policies from beginning to end to identify needed improvements. We will change course as necessary to ensure our programs meet the needs of the American people. We must try to identify and institute improvements that will help us in the near term, while we continue to work on longer-term changes.

We know the stresses facing us will intensify as we prepare to handle significant workload growth this decade as baby boomers reach their peak years of disability risk and begin to retire. We need to rethink how we do business and develop innovative ways to respond to growing workloads and evolving expectations. I am committed to assessing the level of service that SSA should be providing Americans, relating that to current service levels, and determining the necessary action and resources to reach service delivery goals.

These challenges notwithstanding, I am convinced that we can and must do better. This performance plan is an important step in performance-based management at SSA as we work to find the best solutions in our journey to be more responsive to claimants and beneficiaries and more accountable to the nation's taxpayers.

Jo Anne B. Barnhart
Commissioner