

OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Our Mission

Deliver Social Security services that meet the changing needs of the public

Social Security Benefits America

Few government agencies touch as many people as we do. The programs we administer provide a financial safety net for millions of Americans, and many people consider them the most successful large-scale Federal programs in our Nation's history.

Social Security initially covered retired workers. Later expansions added dependent and survivor benefits, as well as disability insurance (DI). We also administer the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, a Federal needs-based program financed through general revenue funds.

OLD-AGE, SURVIVORS, AND DISABILITY INSURANCE PROGRAM

Retirement Insurance Program

The basic benefit structure of retirement benefits has remained essentially unchanged since 1939. When people work and pay Social Security taxes, they earn credits toward Social Security benefits. Most people need 40 credits, or 10 years of covered work, to qualify. Social Security taxes fund the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Program (OASDI) Trust Funds that we use to pay OASDI (Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance) benefits.

Survivors Insurance Program

A loss of a family's primary wage earner can take a financial toll. Survivors benefits provide income to family members of workers who die. Survivors eligible for benefits include widows or widowers, minor or disabled children, and surviving divorced spouses. In 1939, we began paying survivors benefits; disabled widows and widowers benefits began in 1968.

How Social Security Benefits America for Fiscal Year 2011

- Over 60 million Social Security beneficiaries and SSI recipients received a combined total of about \$770 billion
- 87 percent of the American population age 65 and over receive Social Security benefits
- Among elderly Social Security beneficiaries, 23 percent of married couples and 43 percent of unmarried individuals rely on Social Security for 90 percent or more of their income
- 69 percent of the total benefits paid go to retired workers and their dependents
- 94 percent of all workers are covered by Social Security

Disability Insurance Program

In 1956, Social Security expanded to include a disability benefit program for disabled workers ages 50-65. These changes included benefits for disabled adult children of retired or deceased insured workers. In 1960, disabled workers of all ages could apply for DI benefits. We pay benefits to people who cannot work because they have a medical condition expected to last at least one year or result in death.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME PROGRAM

SSI is a means-tested program designed to provide a monthly payment to aged, blind, or disabled people with limited income and resources. Adults, as well as children, can receive payments based on disability or blindness.

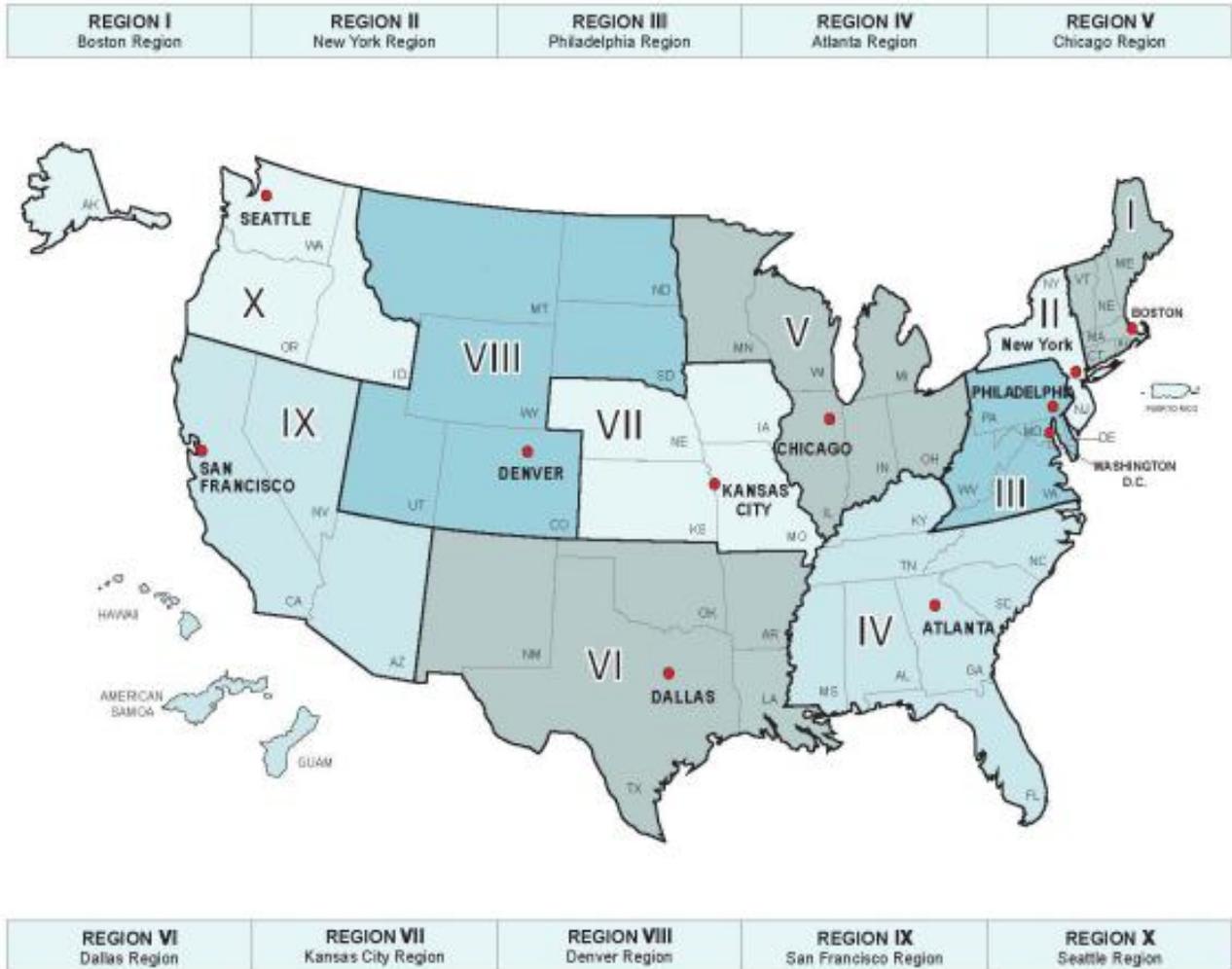
For more information on all of our programs and benefits, please visit our [Understanding The Benefits web page](http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10024.html) at www.ssa.gov/pubs/10024.html.

How We Served America in Fiscal Year 2011

- Issued 16.4 million new and replacement Social Security cards
- Performed 1.3 billion automated Social Security number verifications
- Posted 216 million earnings items to workers' records
- Completed more than 62 million transactions on our National 800 Number
- Assisted 44.9 million visitors
- Received 4.8 million retirement, survivor, and Medicare applications
- Received 3.2 million initial disability claims
- Completed 2.4 million SSI non-disability redeterminations
- Completed over 1.4 million continuing disability reviews
- Completed 3.4 million overpayment actions
- Reconsidered 828,010 denied disability applications
- Completed 126,992 Appeals Council reviews
- Conducted 644,957 hearings
- Defended 12,000 new Federal court cases
- Oversaw approximately 6.6 million representative payees
- Distributed nearly \$1.4 billion in attorney fees

Our Organization

We touch the lives of nearly every American, including many people living abroad. We administer the largest social insurance system in the world. Our current organization is comprised of more than 65,000 employees. We deliver services through a nationwide network of 1,500 offices that include regional offices, field offices (including card centers), teleservice centers, processing centers, hearing offices (including satellite offices and National Hearing Centers), the Appeals Council, and our headquarters located in Baltimore, Maryland. We also have a presence in several U.S. embassies around the globe.



Our field offices and card centers are the primary points of contact for in-person interactions with the public. Our teleservice centers primarily handle telephone calls to our National 800 Number. Employees in our processing centers primarily process OASDI payments but also perform a wide range of functions, which include answering telephone calls to our National 800 Number. Our immediate claims taking units primarily take claims over the phone and assist with processing claims filed over the Internet. The Appeals Council and administrative law judges in our hearing offices and hearing centers make decisions on appeals of denied Social Security and SSI claims. Most of our employees serve the public directly or provide support to employees who do. We depend on over 17,066 employees in our 54 State and territorial Disability Determination Services (DDS) to make disability determinations. The accompanying table depicts the types of contact we provide to the public by office type. A chart illustrating our [organizational structure](#) and the function of each component is available on our website at www.socialsecurity.gov/org.

Type of Contact with the Public					
Office Type	In-Person	Local Phone Calls	National 800 Number Calls	Makes Decisions on Claims	Supporting Functions
Regional and Area Director Offices	✓	✓			✓
Field Offices	✓*	✓		✓	
Processing Centers			✓	✓	✓
Teleservice Centers			✓		✓
Immediate Claims Taking Units			✓	✓	✓
Social Security Card Centers	✓	✓			
Hearing Offices	✓	✓		✓	
National Hearing Centers	✓*	✓		✓	
Satellite Hearing Offices	✓	✓		✓	
National Case Assistance Center	✓				✓
Disability Determination Services				✓	
Headquarters					✓

*In-person contacts include video service delivery and video hearings.

Eighty-six percent of our employees serve the public directly or make decisions on benefit claims. The remaining employees support the staff who serve the public directly. Refer to the chart below for an employee breakdown by contact type.

