

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

Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Program

Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Program

Created in 1935, the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance program provides retirement and survivors benefits to qualified workers and their families. 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 for retirement.

Reduced retirement benefits are payable as early as age 62. For people born in 1942 or earlier, full retirement benefits are payable at age 65. For people born from 1943 to 1960, the age at which full retirement benefits are payable increases gradually to age 67.

Benefits are also payable to certain members of retired workers' families and their survivors. In 1939, we began paying survivors benefits, which include benefits to widows or widowers, minor or disabled children, and surviving divorced spouses of deceased workers. Disabled widows and widowers benefits began in 1968.

Disability Insurance Program

In 1956, Social Security expanded to include a benefit program for disabled workers age 50 until full retirement age. In 1960, disabled workers of all ages could apply for Disability Insurance 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

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a means-tested program designed to provide a monthly payment to aged, blind, or disabled people with limited income and resources. Adults and 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 webpage \(www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10024.html\)](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10024.html).

How Social Security Benefited America in Fiscal Year 2013

- On average each month, about 63 million individuals received Social Security or Federal SSI benefits. A combined total of about \$855 billion was paid in Social Security and Federal SSI benefits;
- About 88 percent of the American population age 65 and over received Social Security benefits;
- Among elderly Social Security beneficiaries, 53 percent of married couples and 74 percent of unmarried individuals relied on Social Security for 50 percent or more of their income;
- About 96 percent of persons aged 20-49 who worked in covered employment had survivors protection for their young children and a surviving spouse caring for the children; and
- On average each month, more than 1.3 million blind or disabled children under age 18 received Federal SSI payments.

How We Served America in Fiscal Year 2013

- Issued 16 million new and replacement Social Security cards;
- Performed over 1.6 billion automated Social Security number verifications;
- Posted 251 million earnings items to workers' records;
- Completed more than 53 million transactions on our National 800 Number;
- Assisted more than 43 million visitors;
- Registered 6.2 million users for [mySocialSecurity](#), a personalized online account;
- Received approximately 5 million retirement, survivor, and Medicare applications;
- Completed about 3 million initial disability claims;
- Reconsidered 803,194 denied disability applications;
- Provided support services for 321,218 beneficiaries trying to return to work or improve their earnings through the Ticket to Work program;
- Completed approximately 2.6 million SSI non-disability redeterminations;
- Completed 428,568 full medical continuing disability reviews;
- Completed 252,992 work continuing disability reviews;
- Completed over 3 million overpayment actions;
- Decided 176,251 Appeals Council requests for review; and
- Decided over 793,580 requests for hearings.

Our Organization

Our organization is composed of over 75,000 Federal and State employees. We deliver services through a nationwide network of about 1,500 offices that include regional offices, field offices (including Social Security card centers), teleservice centers, processing centers, hearing offices (including satellite offices and National Hearing Centers), the Appeals Council, and our headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland. We also deliver services in several U.S. embassies around the globe.

Our field offices and card centers are the primary points of contact for in-person interaction with the public. Our teleservice centers primarily handle telephone calls to our National 800 Number. Employees in our processing centers primarily handle Social Security retirement, survivors, and disability payments, but also perform a wide range of other functions, which include answering telephone calls to our National 800 Number. We have created strong partnerships with State agencies and depend on State employees in 54 State and territorial disability determination services to make disability determinations. The administrative law judges in our hearing offices and the administrative appeals judges in our Appeals Council make decisions on appeals of denied Social Security and SSI claims. For more information about our components and their functions, visit our current [organizational structure webpage \(www.socialsecurity.gov/org\)](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/org).

