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# OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

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## Our Mission

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

## Social Security Benefits America

Considered by many to be one of the most successful large-scale Federal programs in our Nation's history, the programs we administer provide a financial safety net for millions of Americans. In fact, about 9 out of 10 individuals age 65 and older receive Social Security benefits. During fiscal year 2015, we paid more than \$932 billion to almost 65 million beneficiaries each month.

## Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Program

### Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Program

Today, most people plan their retirement based on the date they can receive their Social Security benefits. The Old-Age and Survivors Insurance program (which provides what most people think of as their Social Security benefit), created in 1935, provides retirement and survivors benefits to qualified workers and their families. Working and paying Social Security taxes earns workers credits toward Social Security benefits. Most people need 40 credits, or 10 years of covered work, to qualify for retirement benefits.

A person qualifies for full retirement benefits between the ages of 65 and 67, depending on the year he or she was born. Reduced retirement benefits are payable as early as age 62. Certain members of retired workers' families may also receive benefits. Spouses (including divorced spouses), minor children, and children who became disabled before age 22 may also be eligible for benefits.

Social Security also provides income for families of workers who die. We added survivor's benefits in 1939 and benefits for disabled widows and widowers in 1968. Widows, widowers (and divorced widows and widowers), dependent parents, and children may be eligible for survivor's benefits. In fact, 98 of every 100 children could get benefits if a working parent dies. Social Security pays more benefits to children than any other Federal program.

### Disability Insurance Program

Social Security Disability Insurance provides benefits to people who cannot work because they have a medical condition expected to last at least one year or result in death. People who have worked long enough and paid Social Security taxes and certain members of their families can qualify for Social Security Disability Insurance benefits. The disability program began in 1956 as a benefit for disabled workers between the ages of 50 and full retirement. The program expanded in 1960 to include disabled workers of all ages.

## Supplemental Security Income Program

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, established in 1972, is a Federal program providing monthly payments to people with limited incomes and resources who are aged, blind, or disabled. Adults and children under the age of 18 can receive payments based on disability or blindness.

General tax revenue, not workers' Social Security taxes, funds the SSI program.

## How Social Security Benefited America in Fiscal Year 2015

- On average each month, almost 65 million individuals received Social Security or Federal SSI benefits. A combined total of about \$932 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, 52 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 age 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 2015

- Issued 17 million new and replacement Social Security cards;
- Performed over 1.9 billion automated Social Security number verifications;
- Posted over 275 million earnings items to workers' records;
- Handled nearly 37 million calls on our National 800 Number;
- Assisted 41 million visitors in field offices;
- Mailed nearly 350 million notices;
- Registered over 6.64 million users for *my Social Security*, a personalized online account;
- Processed over 87 million online transactions;
- Received approximately 5 million retirement, survivor, and Medicare applications;
- Completed over 2.7 million initial disability claims;
- Completed 723,485 reconsideration disability claims;
- Through data exchange partnerships with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, we identified over \$49 million in estimated incorrect payments;
- Used predictive modeling in the redetermination process to prevent and recover an estimated \$3.9 billion in expected retroactive and five-year future recurring SSI overpayments;
- Provided online access to the Social Security Benefit Statement, allowing beneficiaries to access their statements online more than 624,000 times;
- Completed 150,673 Appeals Council requests for review; and
- Completed 663,129 requests for hearings.

## Our Organization

Serving the American public requires a vast network of facilities, technology, and skilled staff. Every day, more than 65,000 Federal and State employees provide service to our customers. Nationwide, we have a network of more than 1,500 offices, including regional offices, field offices, 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. Internationally, we deliver services in U.S. embassies in hundreds of countries.

Customers receive in-person service mainly at our field offices and Social Security card centers. Our teleservice centers primarily handle calls to our National 800 Number. Employees in our processing centers typically handle Social Security retirement, survivors, and disability payments. These employees also provide a wide range of other services, including handling telephone calls to our National 800 Number. To locate your nearest local office, visit the [Social Security Office Locator \(www.secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp\)](http://www.secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp).

We have created strong partnerships with State agencies, and we depend on State employees in 54 State and territorial disability determination services offices to make disability determinations. Administrative law judges in our hearing offices and the administrative appeals judges at our Appeals Council decide appeals involving Social Security and SSI issues. For more information about our components and their functions, visit our [Organizational Structure webpage \(www.socialsecurity.gov/org\)](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/org).

The following chart illustrates our organizational structure:

