



# OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

## OUR MISSION

*Deliver quality Social Security services to the public.*

## SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS AMERICA

Few government agencies affect the lives of as many people as we do. In accordance with law and regulations, we administer three programs under the *Social Security Act*:

- **Old-Age and Survivors Insurance:** Established in 1935, the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) program provides retirement and survivors benefits to qualified workers and their family members. In fiscal year (FY) 2020, we paid OASI benefits to an average of approximately 55 million beneficiaries each month, and paid about \$944 billion to OASI beneficiaries through the fiscal year. Learn more about retirement benefits on [our website \(www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/\)](http://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/). Also, learn more about survivors benefits on [our website \(www.ssa.gov/benefits/survivors/\)](http://www.ssa.gov/benefits/survivors/).
- **Disability Insurance:** Established in 1956, the Disability Insurance (DI) program provides benefits for workers who become disabled and their families. In FY 2020, we paid DI benefits to an average of approximately 10 million beneficiaries each month, and paid about \$145 billion in DI benefits through the fiscal year. Learn more about DI benefits on [our website \(www.ssa.gov/benefits/disability/\)](http://www.ssa.gov/benefits/disability/). Also, read stories from DI beneficiaries on [our website \(www.ssa.gov/disabilityfacts/stories.html\)](http://www.ssa.gov/disabilityfacts/stories.html).
- **Supplemental Security Income:** Established in 1972, the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program provides financial support to aged, blind, and disabled adults and children who have limited income and resources. In FY 2020, we paid SSI benefits to a monthly average of approximately 8 million recipients (approximately 2.7 million of whom concurrently receive DI benefits), and paid about \$55 billion in SSI Federal benefits and State supplementary payments through the fiscal year. Learn more about SSI benefits on [our website \(www.ssa.gov/benefits/ssi/\)](http://www.ssa.gov/benefits/ssi/).

In addition, we support national programs administered by other Federal and State agencies, as required by law, such as Medicare, *Employees Retirement Income Security Act of 1974*, *Coal Act*, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly Food Stamps), *Help America Vote Act*, State Children's Health Insurance Program, E-Verify, Medicaid, and Federal Benefits for Veterans.



### Did You Know? We're With You from Birth

Most parents apply for a child's Social Security number at birth, usually through the hospital. When the time comes for that first job, the number is already in place.



## HOW SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITED AMERICA IN FISCAL YEAR 2020

- We paid a combined total of over \$1 trillion in Social Security and SSI benefits.
- Approximately 87 percent of the American population age 65 and over received Social Security benefits.
- On average each month, about 1.1 million blind or disabled children under age 18 received SSI benefits.

## HOW WE SERVED AMERICA IN FISCAL YEAR 2020

- Completed nearly 13 million applications for new and replacement Social Security Number cards;
- Performed over 2.3 billion automated Social Security number verifications for employers;
- Posted over 288 million earnings items to workers' records;
- Handled over 34 million calls on our National 800 Number;
- Assisted over 20.6 million visitors in field offices;
- Mailed an estimated 350 million notices;
- Registered over 7 million users for *my Social Security*, our online portal for the public to conduct business with us;
- Processed nearly 221 million online transactions;
- Completed over 8.2 million claims for benefits;
- Completed nearly 586,000 hearing dispositions;
- Reviewed over 192,000 cases in the Appeals Council;
- Defended almost 12,000 disability cases in Federal court;
- Conducted over 463,000 full medical continuing disability reviews (CDR);
- Performed over 2.1 million non-medical redeterminations of SSI eligibility;
- Conducted 24 computer matching agreements for data exchanges with various Federal partners, resulting in \$7.9 billion in annual savings; and
- Provided access to the *Social Security Statement (Statement)*, mailing approximately 19 million paper *Statements* and allowing beneficiaries to access their *Statements* online more than 63 million times.

### Did You Know? We're With You When You Start Work



Your employer verifies your Social Security number with us at every new job. Doing so helps reduce fraud and improves the accuracy of your earnings records. Employers collect *Federal Insurance Contribution Act or FICA* withholdings, and report earnings electronically, which is how we track your earnings and you can earn Social Security retirement, disability, and survivors coverage for you and your family. A worker earns up to four Social Security credits each year and needs 40 credits, or 10 years of work, to qualify for retirement benefits. Keep track of your earnings record or obtain an estimate of your benefits by creating a *my Social Security* account on [our website \(www.ssa.gov/myaccount\)](http://www.ssa.gov/myaccount).



## OUR ORGANIZATION

Approximately 62,000 Federal employees and 15,000 State employees serve the public from a network of more than 1,500 offices across the country and around the world. Most of our employees directly serve the public or provide support to employees who do. We normally serve over 40 million visitors each year in our offices nationwide. However, this year we did not have as many visitors in our offices because we suspended in-person service due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. We are handling most work online or over the telephone, with limited in-person service for critical needs by appointment only. We focused our efforts on making more of our work electronic so that we can handle it remotely. To help support the public's access to the local offices, we made our local office phone numbers available. As a result, our field office employees answered a significant increase in phone calls while maintaining a low busy rate.

Our National 800 Number handled over 34 million calls in FY 2020. Callers conducted various business transactions by speaking directly with a customer service representative. Customers also used our 24-hour automated services, some of which include requesting benefit verification letters, ordering replacement Medicare cards, and obtaining claim status updates. In March 2020, we moved our physical telephone service center operations to a virtual environment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We experienced a significant increase in call volume due to service changes in our field offices. However, we quickly identified a creative solution where we began routing calls on a parallel network, which allowed us to increase the phone answering capacity on our National 800 Number and reduce wait times.

The public can also do business with us online. Our suite of online services is available 24 hours a day, providing a convenient, safe option for anyone interested in conducting business with us online. Online services allow customers to view their Social Security records, find information about our programs and services, or file for benefits. In FY 2020, the public conducted nearly 221 million transactions through our online services.

Our processing centers (PC) handle complex Social Security retirement, survivors, and disability claims and a number of actions that ensure beneficiaries are paid accurately. The PCs have been focusing on reducing a backlog of pending actions. At the end of FY 2020, there were over 3.7 million actions pending.

State agency disability determination services (DDS) make disability determinations for initial claims, reconsiderations, and CDRs. Many of the DDSs were not ready for remote work at the beginning of the pandemic. We quickly worked with our DDS partners in each of the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia, all of whom were under different guidelines for stay-at-home orders and re-opening. We provided creative solutions to maintain mission critical workloads in a remote environment.

Administrative law judges (ALJ) in our hearings offices and administrative appeals judges in our Appeals Council decide appealed cases. In response to the pandemic, we transitioned to telephone-only hearings. This transition was critical in allowing us to continue to hear cases. We are implementing online video hearings to offer secure hearings from any private location with a secure internet connection. For more information about our organization and its functions, visit [our Organizational Structure webpage \(www.ssa.gov/org/\)](http://www.ssa.gov/org/).



### **Did You Know? We Provide Service Updates during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

*Subscribe* to receive alerts from us when we add or change information on [our COVID-19 Updates webpage \(www.ssa.gov/coronavirus/\)](http://www.ssa.gov/coronavirus/). You also may follow us on [Facebook \(www.facebook.com/socialsecurity\)](https://www.facebook.com/socialsecurity) and [Twitter \(www.twitter.com/socialsecurity\)](https://www.twitter.com/socialsecurity) and subscribe to our [blog \(blog.ssa.gov\)](http://blog.ssa.gov).