

OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY PANEL



F A C T S H E E T

OFFICIAL DESIGNATION & CHARTER

The Occupational Information Development Advisory Panel (the Panel) was established by Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of the Social Security Administration (SSA), on December 9, 2008 to:

“... provide advice and recommendations related to SSA’s disability programs in the following areas: medical and vocational analysis of disability claims; occupational analysis, including definitions, rating, and capture of physical and mental/cognitive demands of work, and other occupational information critical to SSA disability programs; data collection; use of occupational information in SSA’s disability programs; and any other area(s) that would enable SSA to develop an occupational information system suited to its disability programs and improve the medical-vocational adjudication policies and processes.”

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In the first year, the Panel presented general recommendations regarding an occupational information system (OIS). It also identified attributes of occupations and people that should be measured for purposes of disability adjudication. For occupations, these attributes included the *work activities* and related demands that a job requires of workers. For people, these attributes described characteristics that individual *workers* bring to the job situation that may be involved when performing the job successfully. The following seven recommendations were presented to the Commissioner. Both the recommendations and the proposed OIS are specific to the needs of the Social Security Administration.

1. A NEW OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM: TECHNICAL, LEGAL, AND DATA REQUIREMENTS

A new OIS is needed to replace the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* for SSA’s disability adjudication system. To meet SSA’s disability adjudication needs, the new OIS must be designed as to assure its data are not only useful, but also reliable, valid, and able to withstand any legal challenges.

Characteristics to support these requirements include: a) grouping of occupations at a level to support individualized disability assessment; b) cross-referenced to the Standard Occupational Classification; c) precise occupationally-specific data; d) core work activities; e) minimum levels of requirements needed to

perform work; f) discrete, observable measures of both work activities and worker characteristics; g) a manageable number of data elements; h) sampling methodology capturing the full range of work; i) measures that are psychometrically sound; j) data collection of high quality data; k) valid, accurate, and reproducible data; l) information about whether core work activities could be performed in alternative ways; and, m) terminology that is consistent with medical practice and human function.

2. DATA ELEMENTS FOR THE NEW OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

Based upon previous research related to job analytic techniques, the Panel derived a listing of work activities applicable to all occupations. It is recommended that this taxonomy serve as a stimulus to develop SSA-specific instruments that measure the requirements of work. It is recommended that new instruments include not only work activities, but also the physical and psychological abilities required to do work, work context, and any other attributes appropriate to disability adjudication.

3. THE CLASSIFICATION OF OCCUPATIONS

Once a large database representative of all work in the national economy is available, SSA should use various methods to classify jobs based upon work activities. Work activities will be a common language that should allow for the abilities of people to be matched to appropriate work available within the economy.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNAL & EXTERNAL EXPERTISE FOR THE CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE NEW OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

To create and maintain an up-to-date and legally defensible OIS and the development of an independent internal unit at SSA, staffed with experts on work analysis and other related disability research needs, should be a priority. It is also recommended that SSA develop and maintain online researcher and professional communities to inform the unit's emerging and ongoing ideas, research, and methods.

5. NEED FOR BASIC & APPLIED RESEARCH

Developing a new OIS requires significant research by SSA. Early research should focus on the development and pilot-tests of measures of work requirements, usability analysis of these measures, and creation of an appropriate sampling plan. Research will also be required to determine the most accurate and defensible sources of data for the OIS, the best methods for measuring the required work attributes, and if any other attributes are appropriate for study due to their potential for use in the adjudication process. Other research focused on exploring and validating the link between the work requirements and attributes of the person, the environment, and other job-related factors is needed. Finally, applied research examining user needs and the effects of new instruments on SSA's disability process and programs are necessary.

6. MEASUREMENT CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to the research needs described in Recommendation 5, SSA should consider research related to appropriate scales for inclusion in any new instruments developed (e.g. scales of absolute frequency, absolute duration, etc.). Any new instruments should be composed of scales that are legally defensible for SSA's needs and therefore focus on observable, discrete characteristics.

7. COMMUNICATION WITH USERS, THE PUBLIC & THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

SSA should use both traditional and emerging government and private media outlets to inform or solicit input from various audiences about SSA and Panel activities regarding the OIS development.

CONCLUSION

The Panel recommendations were presented to Commissioner Astrue in September 2009. The Panel is soliciting feedback related to these general recommendations from interested parties and welcomes your comments. As the Panel continues to move forward to provide guidance to SSA regarding the new OIS development, additional Summary Fact Sheets will be forthcoming. To read the full report, please visit the Panel website (www.ssa.gov/oidap).

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