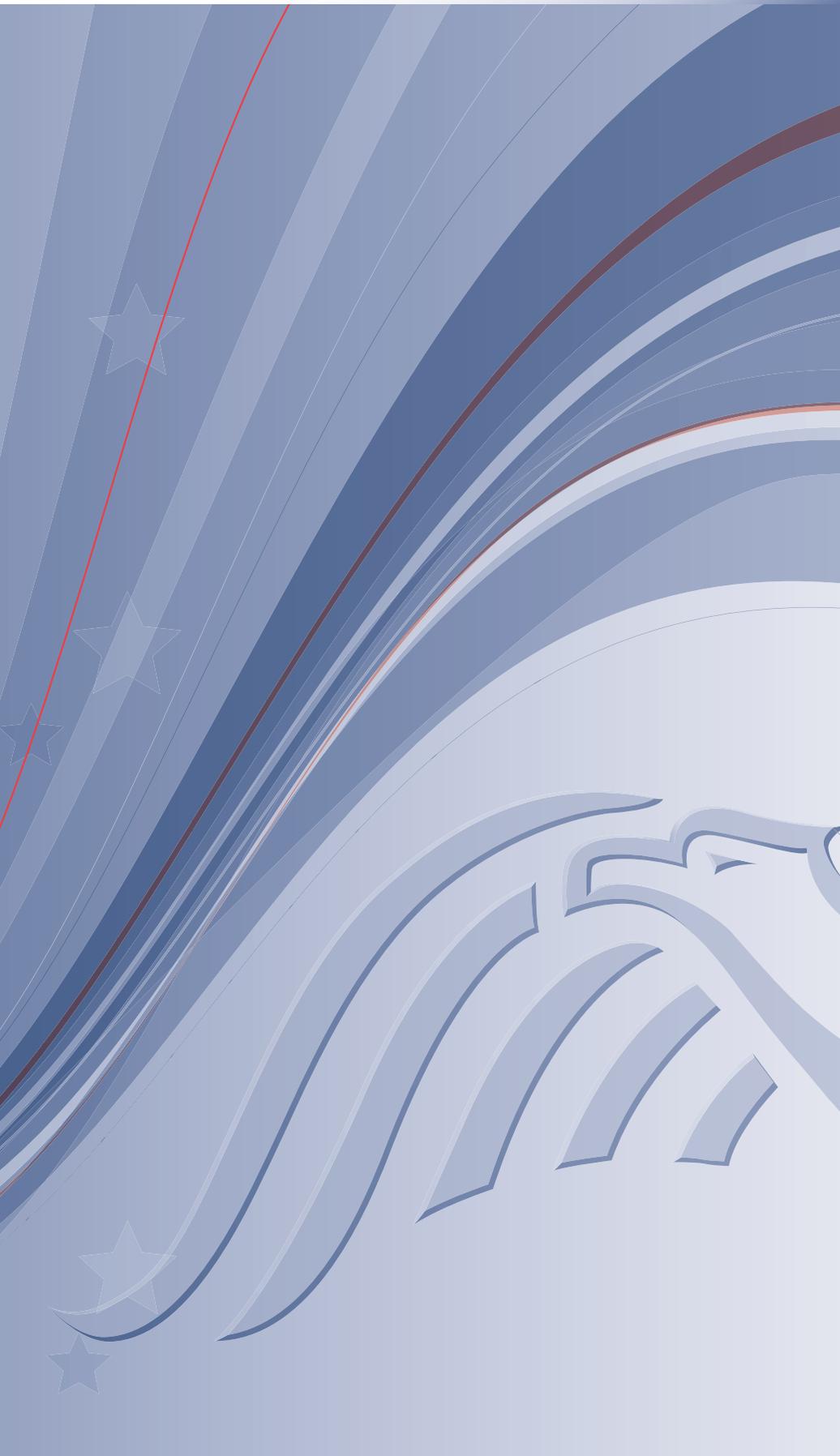




Social Security



*Results*

*at the*

*Social Security  
Administration*

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*GETTING IT DONE*

# Results at Social Security

## Introduction

Social Security is committed to providing the type of service that the American people expect and, more importantly, deserve. As a Federal agency that touches nearly every person in this country at some point in their lives, Social Security takes seriously the quality of its service to the public. Social Security's hard work and effort to provide not only timely service, but also well managed programs and accurate payments, safeguard the trust the American people have in the Agency.

It is a trust that the Agency does not take lightly. Over the past 70 years, Social Security has become a mainstay of American life. Today, with over 1,500 offices in communities nationwide, for most Americans Social Security is the nearest and most familiar representative of the Federal government. And Social Security touches the lives of nearly every person in America, from the young to the old. Social Security's programs provide a base of economic stability for retirees and disabled workers and their families and for the survivors of deceased workers. Currently, over 158 million Americans are earning benefits by paying Social Security payroll taxes, and last year Social Security paid more than \$490 billion dollars in benefits to 48 million people. The Agency also makes Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments to the Nation's most financially vulnerable citizens.

"We understand that every check, every application, every number represents a person, someone whose life will be affected by the work we do, and how well we do it," said Jo Anne Barnhart, Commissioner of Social Security.

Several initiatives are underway at Social Security to maintain and to improve service to the public. The Agency's Strategic Plan, based on four long-term goals - Service, Stewardship, Solvency and Staff - provides the framework for these efforts. Social Security has incorporated the President's Management Agenda into Social Security's Results Agenda, the Agency Strategic Plan, the Informational Resources Management Strategic Plan, the Commissioner's Service Delivery Assessment and more.

Social Security's commitment to achieving measurable results has improved service to American taxpayers and beneficiaries. Over the last several years, the Agency has increased overall productivity by at least 2 percent a year. It has also more than tripled the number of transactions that it processes over the Internet. And Social Security is well into the process of transforming the disability determination process from one tied to voluminous paper folders to an entirely electronic system. The Electronic Disability (eDib) process will provide better service to claimants, while creating the world's largest repository of electronic medical files.

- Social Security also is committed to providing convenient and compassionate service to the American public in the way that best serves their needs - through face-to-face contact at Social Security field offices across the country, through calls to the toll-free 800 number or through the information and services available on the Agency's website.

Social Security believes, in the words of President Bush, that what matters is "Results. Not just making promises, but making good on promises."

## **A Focus on Results at Social Security**

### **Social Security's Mission and Strategic Plan**

The primary and most significant results for Americans are Social Security's superior service, accountability and accessibility. Social Security's vital mission demands it. The strategic plan ensures it.

Social Security's mission is: "**To advance the economic security of the nation's people** through compassionate and vigilant leadership in shaping and managing America's social security programs."

The dedication of the Agency's leadership and workforce has resulted in steady advancement toward reaching the Agency's four strategic goals:

- To deliver high-quality, citizen-centered **service**;
- To ensure superior **stewardship** of Social Security programs and resources;
- To achieve sustainable **solvency** and ensure Social Security programs meet the needs of current and future generations;
- To strategically manage and align **staff** to support our mission.

The Agency has established an accountability structure to guide the implementation of the Strategic Plan. There are nine objectives supporting the four strategic goals, and each objective has specific targets to assure success. A system of executive sponsorship ensures that a high-level Agency executive is accountable for achieving each objective. The importance of these goals and objectives in accomplishing results is emphasized in a one-page desk aid given to every Social Security and Disability Determination Services (DDS) employee to communicate the Agency's performance measures and targets for FY 2005 and FY 2006.

### **Results Driven Employees: The Agency's Key to Success**

The 65,000 dedicated men and women of the Agency, and the 16,000 State DDS employees, work hard to give the American people the service they expect and deserve - and they succeed. Social Security's employees take pride in administering America's most important and successful domestic government program, knowing that they provide service to individuals at critical junctures in their lives - whether at the onset of unexpected disability, at the untimely loss of a spouse or parent, or when making the transition from work to retirement.

Social Security recognizes that strong, two-way communication with all employees is needed to reach its goals. Not only must Social Security executives share with staff their vision and goals for the Agency, but employees must be encouraged to provide suggestions and feedback to management. Further, the recognition of high-performing employees serves as an incentive for achievement.

## **Agency Goals and Results Are Communicated Directly to Employees**

Social Security uses many different modes of communication to keep employees fully informed about the performance of the Agency in serving the needs of the public. One of the most effective ways Commissioner Barnhart communicates with employees is to travel extensively, visiting Social Security offices throughout the country, making presentations and engaging employees on the performance of the Agency in serving the American public. Altogether, the Commissioner has visited more than 100 offices, where she has met personally with managers and staff to discuss Agency priorities and to listen to employees' concerns.

The Commissioner also makes use of the Agency's satellite television network to communicate directly with Agency employees. In addition, the Commissioner and Agency executives meet frequently to discuss important issues, both at Headquarters and throughout the country through the Agency's nationwide videoconferencing network.

Other effective communication vehicles include electronic transmissions such as the *Commissioner's Broadcast*. *Commissioner Broadcasts* are sent from the Commissioner to all Agency employees when there is a need to communicate important information on significant issues.

## **The Intranet Provides Helpful Information on Agency Results**

The delivery of information about Agency results and activities via the Intranet ensures immediate, on-demand availability to all interested executives, managers, analysts and employees.

The Social Security: Quality Matters Report is used to highlight Agency quality initiatives. Managers and employees can access information about the many processes, pilots and initiatives underway which are aimed at improving the quality of Agency work, and obtain ideas to implement individually or as an office.

A monthly Tracking Report provides the status of 47 key performance targets, including workload, budget, productivity and Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) measures to the Commissioner and executive staff. It is also made available to all employees on the Intranet. The timeliness of the data allows managers to refresh work plans to achieve desired outputs and outcomes and it communicates to all employees how the Agency is doing in terms of meeting its most important performance commitments to the public and to Congress.

In addition to the monthly Tracking Report, the Agency produces a number of periodic and ad hoc internal reports that address performance. These include trend analyses and quality assurance reports used to measure the health of Agency programs. An increasing number of these online report sites are linked to databases in a way that allows users to drill down to the level of detail that they need to respond to particular questions and local issues.

An Executive Management and Information System puts current information in the hands of Agency decision makers. Data is extracted from the Agency's various management information systems, tailored to meet the specific needs of top Agency executives and presented in an executive summary which is updated as new data become available.

The Agency's President's Management Agenda (PMA) website explains the importance of the PMA to the Agency's work. By visiting the website, employees can follow the Agency's progress in "getting to green." The website also includes a summary of the criteria for meeting the President's goals, a government-wide progress report, a link to the White House website at [www.results.gov](http://www.results.gov) and a presentation on the PMA by the Deputy Commissioner.

The Office of Communications shares additional information with employees on a regular basis. A Meeting on Main Street is an employee information video series, provided electronically over the Agency's Interactive Video Teletraining network. The first Main Street was broadcast in May 2004 and focused on the new Medicare prescription drug card. Subsequent Main Street broadcasts have focused on such diverse topics as signature proxy, Internet services, the accelerated eDib project and Results at Social Security.

The Deputy Commissioner for Legislation and Congressional Affairs delivers information to Agency employees through staff reports on Congressional hearings of Agency-wide interest, and Legislative Bulletins that keep employees up-to-date on proposed legislation affecting Agency programs.

## Soliciting Ideas from Employees and Recognizing their Contributions

The new and improved Employee Suggestion Program has resulted in the improvement and streamlining of Social Security programs, operations, systems and services. In an easy-to-use online format, employees submit suggestions that have the potential for saving taxpayers' money and enabling the Agency to provide better service. Employees receive a response to their suggestions within 90 days, and those whose ideas are adopted receive a cash award tied to the projected savings.

Since the implementation of the revitalized program, the Employee Suggestion Program has received nearly 26,000 suggestions from employees. The number of suggestions submitted increased nearly three-fold, from 2,053 in 2001 when the Agency operated under a paper-based system, to approximately 6,000 in 2004 under the automated system. Further, savings to the Agency (tangible and intangible) increased from \$190,000 to an average of \$500,000 per year, and the number of suggestion awards increased nearly five-fold, from 55 in 2001 to 264 in 2004.

Employee suggestions address a myriad of topics and benefit untold numbers of citizens while resulting in significant savings to the Agency and taxpayers. One recently adopted suggestion led to the use of a sophisticated software package in the conduct of Continuing Disability Reviews. Savings to the Agency were estimated to be \$9 million annually. Use of this software has since migrated to an even more beneficial systems solution, and the Agency continues to reap benefits by continually reducing its processing time. Another suggestion involved systems software installation through a shared network drive and has saved over \$1 million in the first year. And still another employee suggestion resulted in the automation of the Medicare buy-in process, resulting in \$100,000 in estimated savings.

At Social Security, employee performance is rewarded commensurate with contribution. Employees understand their role in the Agency's mission and that their performance is tied to accomplishing Agency goals. They also understand that performance is tracked and recognition is given for accomplishment, in the form of both monetary and non-monetary awards. By the type of award given, the Agency makes distinctions among employees and differentiates levels of performance and magnitude of contribution.

- Recognition of Contribution Awards, which are performance awards/bonuses and Quality Step Increases, are given to the highest performers who make the most significant contributions to Agency goals and objectives and perform at an exceptionally high level throughout the year.
- Commendable Act or Service Awards are granted to employees, as an individual or as a member of a group, to recognize major accomplishments or contributions which have promoted the mission of the organization.
- On-the-Spot Awards, which range from \$50-\$200, recognize employees for noteworthy accomplishments or contributions on individual tasks or assignments.
- The Agency culture places a high value on our Honor Awards program. Each year, the Commissioner hosts an awards ceremony and luncheon to recognize the highest performing employees in the Agency. At this annual event, nearly 500 of the agency's top performers

from headquarters and around the county receive the Commissioner's Citation, the most prestigious award an employee can receive at Social Security. The awards are given for superior individual contributions or as part of a team that produced outstanding accomplishments that furthered the Agency's mission. In addition, the Commissioner presents other esteemed awards, such the Ewell T. Bartlett Humanity in Government Award and the Larry G. Massanari Leadership Award. Such awards recognize executives whose contributions are essential to serving the American public, as well as employees who exhibit the character and compassion so important and necessary in government service. Commissioner Barnhart best described the significance of these honor awards with these words:

**The people of Social Security embody the values of true public service. They understand that the folders on their desks represent living, breathing, feeling human beings and that the work they do affects those people-often at critical junctures in their lives. Those who we honor today are an exceptional group of individuals who have excelled this past year in demonstrating the commitment, creativity and innovation that are essential to providing the quality service that is Social Security's hallmark.**

# Social Security's Results Agenda

## A Foundation of Good Management Disciplines

The Agency's Results Agenda provides a foundation of sound management disciplines upon which a culture of results is built. The Results Agenda incorporates the PMA, which addresses five management issues: strategic management of human capital; competitive sourcing; improved financial management; expanded electronic government; and budget and performance integration. Social Security's Results Agenda also addresses one program initiative: eliminating improper payments.

The Results Agenda goals, as originally articulated in the PMA, are:

- To attract, motivate and retain top-flight employees.
- To compare government and private organizations to see which can do commercial functions more efficiently and award a "contract" for that work to the most efficient organization.
- To improve how government manages money.
- To expand the use of the Internet to provide faster and better access to government services and information.
- To produce a performance-based budget that links resources to performance.
- To improve the accuracy and integrity of Federal payments.

There are clear standards for success for achieving these goals. Under each standard, an agency is "green" if it meets all of the criteria for success, "yellow" if it has achieved some but not all of the criteria, and "red" if it has any one of a number of serious flaws.

Social Security has received a green - the highest rating possible - for overall current status in management of human capital, financial management, electronic government, and budget and performance integration, and is yellow for competitive sourcing. Social Security has received a total of six upgrades in status since the original grades were released, almost four years ago. In addition, the Agency has achieved green for progress in three categories. Social Security is proud of these scores and committed to doing even better. The Agency emphasizes the government-wide management reforms of the Agency's Results Agenda in its strategic planning and budget preparation. The Agency's goal is to get to green on all five of the President's integrated goals to ensure the success and fulfillment of its mission.

## Strategic Management of Human Capital (Status: Green; Progress: Green)

The Agency was upgraded to green in status in June 2004 and continues to maintain that rating in recognition of sustained efforts over the years to successfully meet the challenge of hiring, developing and retaining a highly-skilled, high-performing and diverse workforce. Social Security's 2005 "Retirement Wave" analysis shows that 22 percent of its employees are currently eligible for retirement. By 2009, 40 percent of current employees will be eligible for retire-

ment and 21 percent are projected to retire. To respond to this challenge, Social Security has developed an overarching Human Capital Plan, with specific activities tracked through its Future Workforce Transition Plan.

**Result! Social Security was honored at the President's Quality Award ceremony in Washington, D.C. for Strategic Management of Human Capital**

In recognizing Social Security's performance in Strategic Management of Human Capital, the President's Quality Award read in part: "*SSA has moved aggressively to forecast its future workforce needs and to implement strategies to meet them. The foundation of SSA's success in human capital management is its use of analytical techniques and structured planning.*" The award cited the Agency's human resource achievement in such areas as workforce planning (*SSA Retirement Wave and Future Workforce Transition Plan*), national recruitment and marketing, Interactive Video Tele-training and the Online University.

Social Security has been authorized to hire approximately 2,700 full-time staff to assist with Medicare-related work - 2,200 for the field offices and approximately 500 for systems and other positions. The Agency's national recruitment strategy includes bringing the best and brightest to the Agency. As part of its efforts to attract a new, talented and diverse workforce, the Agency developed a new recruitment plan and national marketing campaign. The objective: to let potential employees know that Social Security is one of the premier Federal agencies, offering challenging and rewarding careers. Using the tag line *Make a Difference in People's Lives and Your Own*, highly-professional recruitment products were developed for recruiters across the nation. They included exhibits, posters, brochures, mini CD-ROMs, professional signage and other items. The Agency's Internet Careers webpage was also redesigned and has become the centerpiece of the Agency's marketing campaign: a place where the public may obtain comprehensive information about the Agency, its mission, culture, benefits compensation package and career opportunities.

Social Security has one of the most diverse workforces in the Federal government, including approximately 71 percent women, 27 percent African Americans, 13 percent Hispanics, 4 percent Asians, 1 percent American Indians and 8 percent people with disabilities. The Agency's success in achieving workforce diversity is reflected in a report by the Partnership for Public Service, *The Best Places to Work in the Federal Government*. Social Security was ranked second by minorities as a desirable place to work.

Social Security is also focused on developing and retaining its high-performing workforce, in particular, the direct service employees who are critical to the Agency's mission. The public's high level of satisfaction with Agency service is due in large part to the skilled and dedicated employees in every location where Social Security interacts with the public. Social Security is committed to improving its training and development programs so that employees at all levels have the skills they need to deliver quality service in an increasingly technological environment. To fill emerging skills gaps, Social Security is focusing on improving the training it provides all employees to ensure each and every one effectively supports the Agency's mission.

Social Security is currently developing and implementing competency-based training for front-line employees. In addition to this training, the Agency is expanding learning opportunities for

employees by moving from its Online University to the government-wide GoLearn online learning system. Social Security employees nationwide will be able to select from over 2,000 courses to further improve their knowledge and skills.

Social Security's new leadership development strategy will enhance the Agency's nationally acclaimed career development programs to ensure that the Agency has the number of well-rounded, competent leaders it needs.

## **Competitive Sourcing (Status: Yellow; Progress: Yellow)**

Over the past three years, Social Security has built an infrastructure to allow for the strategic use of competitive sourcing as a management tool to help reduce costs and improve performance.

In 2003, the Agency established the Office of Competitive Sourcing to coordinate all activities, guided by three basic principles:

- The Agency will make informed choices based on careful business case analysis of each activity.
- Where competition makes sense, Social Security will use competitive sourcing as a management tool to improve effectiveness for, and provide savings to, the taxpayer across its commercial competitive activities.
- The Agency will ensure continuous, open communication with employees affected by competitive sourcing activities.

### Strategic Approach to Competitive Sourcing

Several years ago, the Agency instituted a strategic approach to competitive sourcing that included a comprehensive review of the Agency's competitive sourcing plan and Federal Activities Inventory Reform (FAIR) Act inventory. The review included identifying additional functions to be competed, conducting research on the duties of the positions involved, assessing the effect of attrition on the number of incumbents in the position, and determining the extent to which these positions were held by individuals with disabilities. (As a general matter, the Agency excludes from consideration for competition positions occupied by individuals with disabilities who were hired non-competitively on the basis of their disabilities using Schedule A authority and who require ongoing and continuing employment accommodation.) Discussions were held with Agency executives to identify the functions believed to be suitable candidates for study. Component representatives were contacted to validate the results of market research used to identify whether sufficient private sector service providers were available. In each instance, a business case analysis was developed that indicated whether Social Security should proceed with a study for the functions identified. This strategic approach has resulted in Agency decisions to compete additional functions in FY 2005.

## Effective Use of Alternate Approaches to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Guidance

During the FAIR Act Inventory development process, Social Security recognized that many small, full-time equivalent (FTE) functions existed over a geographically dispersed area, making them more difficult to compete. Working with OMB, Social Security developed a pilot to examine whether limited modifications to the Circular's costing methodologies might provide a better tailored application of competition to very small functions. The Agency is tracking progress.

### Functions Competed or Converted/Savings

Since 2001, the Agency has competed or converted 118 positions through four competitions and two direct conversions: Systems Software Validation (retained in-house), Headquarters Parking and Badging (awarded to private sector), Systems Help Desk (retained in-house), Performance Audits (direct conversion) and Magnetic Media Support (direct conversion). Most recently, Social Security has completed a study of the Dallas Regional Office Mailroom (awarded to private sector). As a result, Social Security saved taxpayer money while improving mail service within the Agency.

Social Security's annual net savings for completed competitions as shown in the annual 2004 Report to Congress were:



### Effective Communication/Training/Briefings

As part of the Agency's effort to provide continuous, open communication to employees affected by competitive sourcing, the competitive sourcing website has been enhanced to create a comprehensive resource for competitive sourcing information. Social Security's communication efforts have made it clear to employees that the focus of competitive sourcing is the efficient and effective delivery of services to the American public. In addition, the Commissioner's goal is to provide jobs for all current Agency employees.

The Agency continues to train employees related to competitive sourcing. Social Security held a National Competitive Sourcing Videoconference where representatives from each of the Agency's 10 regions, competitive sourcing workgroup members, and contract support staff shared information and experiences related to the A-76 process.

Other proactive communication/training activities included training sessions conducted by the Agency's General Counsel regarding firewall issues for employees within the Office of Human Resources who support competitive sourcing studies.

Additionally, several comprehensive workshops/presentations for the American Federation of Government Employees General Committee (comprised of union presidents or their representa-

tives) were conducted. The presentations addressed questions related to the FAIR Act Inventory, function codes/definitions, the challenge/appeal process, studies being conducted and other competitive sourcing issues.

### Benchmarking: Effective Use of Other Agencies' Experiences

Social Security continues to learn from the experiences of others by benchmarking to identify other agencies' competitive sourcing practices in a number of areas. Some of those areas involved determining how other agencies handle competitions for certain functions, identify contracting practices, handle union requests, develop their FAIR Act Inventories, and group functions for study.

### **Improved Financial Management (Status: Green; Progress: Green)**

Over the years, Social Security has worked hard to improve its financial management. The Agency's FY 2004 Performance and Accountability Report earned the Agency its seventh consecutive Certificate of Excellence in Accountability Reporting (CEAR) from the Association of Government Accountants. Social Security is the only Federal agency to receive the prestigious CEAR every year it has been awarded. Social Security attained a status score of "green" for the Improved Financial Performance PMA initiative as of the third quarter of FY 2003. The Agency's achievement of "green" status was the culmination of efforts over more than a decade in implementing sound financial management practices. The Agency has maintained its "green" status by continuing to receive an unqualified opinion on its financial statements with no material weaknesses cited by auditors; ensuring that financial systems are compliant with Federal law; and utilizing integrated financial and performance management systems which allow the Agency to routinely assess performance and financial information in order for managers to make day-to-day decisions.

#### **Result! Social Security received the Certificate of Excellence in Accountability Reporting (CEAR) for the seventh consecutive year**

Each fiscal year since 1998, Social Security has received the Association of Government Accountants' (AGA) CEAR award. AGA presents this certificate to Federal agencies whose Performance and Accountability Reports achieve the highest standards in communicating results, demonstrating accountability, and illustrating assessing program performance effectively. While many agencies have received this award since its inception, Social Security is the only agency that has received it every year.

Several years ago, the Agency had a wide variety of high-quality management and financial information, but it was housed in "legacy systems" that were not integrated, not easily accessible, and not user-friendly. Data and reports were usually not available, except in written form or as attachments to electronic mail messages. The records, systems and databases used to capture and report crucial management information were aging and difficult to maintain and these systems were not responsive to changes in user needs.

One of the most important efforts to improve the quality, consistency and access to information used by managers and analysts to manage work and account for resources is an integrated Managerial Cost Accountability System (MCAS) and the Social Security Unified Measurement System (SUMS) project. MCAS and SUMS are important elements of Social Security's efforts to link costs and results. The overarching vision is to capture, count and measure all work consistently, regardless of where the work is performed. This gives managers user-friendly access to more information that supports their need for analysis, monitoring customer service, resource allocation, and strategic decision-making.

### SUMS/MCAS:

- This fiscal year, Social Security incorporated MI on its medical Continuing Disability Review (CDR) workload into SUMS. This means that for the first time, field office managers were able to get up-to-date data on this critical and sensitive workload from one source. This enables field managers to better control this work to ensure that it is completed in a timely and accurate manner.
- Social Security has created a "one-stop" location for major MI reports, which is called "MI Central." This allows managers-from top-level executives to field office managers-to go to one Intranet site to get MI on their workloads. Managers at the national, regional and area levels are able to drill down to get more detailed level data on offices under their jurisdiction. This gave managers throughout the nation "desktop" access to critical workload information needed to manage their field office operations. This saves managers time that they would otherwise have to spend pulling the data from a variety of sources and gives them a more complete picture of their work.
- Social Security has made major progress toward developing a new methodology for capturing information about the time that employees spend on the wide range of work that they do. This system, known as the Time Allocation System, will substantially replace the manual work sampling that the Agency has done for years to collect this information. In its place, Social Security will collect data from the computer screens that employees use to do their work. This will also give the Agency much more valid data on productivity at the field office level. The prototype for this system is scheduled to be in place in January 2006.
- An MCAS-SUMS Work Measurement Transition (WMT) System provided a conversion of Social Security Integrated Work Measurement System data to a modern, accessible format. Another MCAS-SUMS WMT release provided online access to District Office Workload Reports.
- The Agency developed a "Green Plan" which identified an Agency mission issue, Medicare Part D MI, and indicated how the Agency uses the SUMS/MCAS architecture to provide information related to this new workload to the managers who make day-to-day decisions.

### Social Security Online Accounting and Reporting System (SSOARS):

On October 1, 2003, Social Security's new accounting system, Social Security Online Accounting and Reporting Systems (SSOARS), was implemented as the Agency's System of Record. SSOARS is a Joint Financial Management Improvement Program (JFMIP) certified financial accounting system. Recent accomplishments include:

- The implementation of the first phase of the SSOARS interface with the Travel Manager System. This phase provides realtime validations of employees and accounting data which reduces the number of interface errors.
- The first interface with the acquisition system, which automated batch transfer of obligations from the acquisition system to SSOARS. This eliminates data entry of acquisition obligations, which reduces the lag in recording obligations and improves funds control; and
- The implementation of the Central Contractor Registration (CCR). This updates the Agency vendor file automatically and reduces the data entry time spent on vendor updates.

## **Expanded Electronic Government (Status: Yellow; Progress: Green)**

E Government has changed the way that government operates and the way that citizens relate to government. Americans are taking advantage of e Government services offered to them. A 2002 study conducted by Hart-Teeter on behalf of the Council for Excellence in Government shows that half of all Americans and three-quarters of American Internet users already have used a government website to find information or conduct a transaction.

### **Result! The [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov) Website Among the Best in Government**

The Brown University's annual report on Federal and State e-Government ranked Social Security's Internet site 3rd out of all Federal websites. The report pointed out that the Agency's website includes useful information, such as how to protect against identity theft, along with interesting facts, such as the most popular baby names. Also noted was the volume of services featured on the website--17 separate online services--including the ability to apply for benefits and to request replacement Medicare cards and answers to hundreds of "Frequently Asked Questions." The report acknowledged the varied audiences the website serves--from pointing out how the site is compliant for use by people with disabilities to providing a "Kids' Place" link so children can learn about Social Security.

Social Security is aggressively acting on the initiative to expand electronic government, one of the elements outlined in the President's Management Agenda. The key goals of this element are to improve information technology (IT) planning through the budget process and champion citizen-centered electronic government through initiatives, such as the eDib process.

The Agency was a partner in the cross-agency taskforce which was formed with OMB and the President's Management Council to identify e Government projects that can deliver significant performance and productivity gains across government. Twenty-four projects were selected for initial development, and new lines of business were identified in 2004 and 2005. Information on these initiatives is available at [www.egov.gov](http://www.egov.gov). Social Security is the managing partner for one of these, E-Vital, which seeks to automate and streamline the current paper-bound process used to collect, process and disseminate vital records among government agencies. In addition, the Agency is a supporting partner or participating in 21 of the other efforts.

Social Security has traditionally looked for innovative ways to use technology to achieve increased productivity and improve performance. The Agency uses IT creatively, responsibly and in a manner that demonstrates strong support of the Federal IT vision which is to achieve a dramatic improvement in the Federal government's value to the citizen; with decisions in minutes or hours, not weeks or months.

## **Result! Video Hearings Are Here**

The Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) is in the midst of a national rollout of the Video Hearings (VH) units. Over 15,000 video hearings have already been held at remote sites during the pilot phase of this initiative, and the overall processing time at these sites has decreased between 50 and 100 days. VH will reduce processing times for claimants at permanent remote sites because claimants and their representatives will no longer have to wait until an Administrative Law Judge has a full docket of cases before their case can be heard. Approximately half of the Agency's Hearing Offices and permanent remote sites currently have VH and the national rollout will be completed by the end of FY 2006.

In support of providing high-quality, citizen-centered service, the Agency has created an easy-to-find, single point of access website: [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov). In 1994, Social Security was one of the first Federal agencies to establish an Internet website. By 2004, the Agency's website was attracting over 35 million visitors a year.

Today, people can apply for retirement, disability and spouse's benefits over the Internet, and use Social Security's benefits planners to help determine what benefits they and their families would be eligible for. Services for current beneficiaries include: change of address, direct deposit, replacement Medicare card, replacement 1099, and proof of income letter request. Cumulatively, these and all other online services handled over 1.2 million transactions in FY 2004, a 225 percent increase over FY 2002.

## **Budget and Performance Integration (Status: Green; Progress: Green)**

Social Security has worked diligently to emphasize the relationship between resources and results. The demonstrated progress in this area includes the Commissioner's multi-year Service Delivery Budget Plan, which provides a context for making decisions on needed improvements in service delivery, fiscal stewardship, and the requisite staffing to accomplish both. This budget plan was developed as a multi-year plan to demonstrate the resources required to keep up with core workloads; process special workloads; eliminate backlogs of disability claims, hearings and appeals, and other operational workloads; and to improve productivity and fiscal stewardship. It is updated each year.

The Service Delivery Budget Plan aligns costs and workyears with overarching performance goals in the Agency Strategic Plan. For example, the initial Service Delivery Budget Plan identified the resources required to eliminate backlogs by the end of FY 2008 and took into account savings for efficiencies that Social Security expects to achieve from process and technology changes. Each year through FY 2008, Social Security was able to show the costs of reducing backlogs or simply keeping up with workloads. The Agency's accounting and cost analysis systems, which track the administrative costs of Agency programs by workload, as well as the production rates, were invaluable tools in helping Social Security develop projections.

The Agency's Service Delivery Budget includes a commitment to achieve an average annual productivity improvement of 2 percent through FY 2008. Social Security met its goal in FY 2004, for the third straight year, with a productivity improvement of 2.2 percent. This increase is due to the hard work of employees and the Agency's ongoing efforts to streamline its business processes and automate its workloads.

The FY 2006 Agency budget clearly defines performance commitments, both in terms of the public service and program integrity workloads that the Agency will handle and the outcomes it expects to achieve. Social Security's plans and budgeted activities reflect evaluations and feedback from the Congress, the Social Security Advisory Board, the Government Accountability Office, and the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Accountability is clearly defined for major Agency initiatives and workloads, and productivity and/or process improvements are built in. Agency executives meet monthly to review and discuss performance measures; resource allocation decisions are made based on performance and projected workloads. Furthermore, results from the President's Program Assessment Rating Tool are integrated into the Agency decision-making process, and are included in budget justification materials.

Social Security continues to improve its core budget formulation system. The Agency is currently exploring commercial software solutions that will build on the current financial performance and management information systems. Social Security has developed an in-house interim solution using database technology to provide the Agency with enhanced capability to obtain fully-loaded unit costs and conduct "what-if" analysis of budget scenarios in a short timeframe. As a result, the Agency can quickly determine the impact that budgetary changes would have on its level of service. Social Security also continues to use its macro budget formulation model to help estimate what level of performance to expect at different levels of funding and productivity.

## **Eliminating Improper Payments (Status: Yellow; Progress: Green)**

Introduced in August 2004, this program initiative, previously part of the Improved Financial Management PMA management issue, highlights Social Security's current special projects regarding program integrity. As an agency responsible for benefit payments that exceed \$500 billion dollars annually, the stewardship of these dollars is one of the Agency's primary goals and the focus of much of what it does. Social Security is proud to have achieved green in progress in March 2005. The Agency has special initiatives regarding program integrity, as well as ongoing stewardship efforts that are critical to the overall goal to eliminate improper payments. SSI redeterminations are one of the most effective of these ongoing efforts for detecting and preventing overpayments.

In FY 2004, Social Security completed almost 2.3 million redeterminations. The Agency estimates that this effort will produce more than \$2 billion of overpayment benefits (i.e., estimated recoveries of retroactive overpayments plus prevention of future overpaid monthly payments). Redeterminations are highly cost-effective with an overall benefit to cost ratio of 7:1. Social Security is continually looking for ways to make redeterminations even more effective. The Agency is currently testing a revised process to improve the identification of whom to redetermine, testing the use of the Office of Child Support Enforcement's (OCSE's) "new hires" file to reduce errors due to unreported wages and enhancing redetermination forms.

Additionally, Social Security schedules CDRs of disabled individuals, based on impairment and age, with time frames ranging from 6 months to 7 years. These are also highly cost-effective, with an overall return-on-investment ratio of 9:1. In FY 2004, 1.6 million periodic CDRs were conducted, with an approximate \$5 billion projected life-time savings.

The following are some special initiatives that Social Security is using to further reduce improper payments.

- The Agency is addressing the two highest sources of payment errors - wages and unreported resources. The latter is the focus of the Access to Financial Information proof-of-concept initiative, which is a special study of 4,000 SSI initial claim and redetermination cases. This initiative will provide case characteristic data to target cases that are likely to exceed SSI resource levels. In addition, Social Security piloted an automated monthly wage-reporting method for workers at risk for wage-related overpayments, using voice recognition and touch-tone phone technology. The initial pilot concluded in December 2003 was successful. As a result, the Agency is making software changes to enable participants, including representative payees, to report wages using knowledge-based authentication. This second pilot is scheduled for the fall of 2005.
- Social Security is implementing the cross-program recovery provision of the Social Security Protection Act of 2004 (SSPA). In January 2005, the final regulations of the new cross-program recovery provision of SSPA were released. Based on program operating instructions issued in November 2004, Social Security began recovery of Title XVI overpayments from retroactive Title II benefits. The program savings are estimated to be \$150 million dollars over five years (FY 2005-2009).
- Social Security developed and has begun full utilization of the eWork system as a means of controlling and processing "work" CDRs. The system determines both continued eligibility for benefits and overpayments due to earnings from employment.

## Strategic Results

Social Security has made great strides in meeting its four strategic goals: **service, stewardship, solvency, and staff**. Compared to 2001, the Agency is processing more work in less time, while maintaining a high accuracy rate. Below, are some of the results the Agency has achieved.

### **Goal: To deliver high-quality, citizen-centered SERVICE**

#### *Service Result: To deliver high-quality, citizen-centered SERVICE*

Social Security is currently in the midst of changing from a paper intensive disability claims process to a totally electronic business process. The Electronic Disability initiative, known as eDib, replaces the paper claims folder with an electronic folder that has been integrated with various case processing systems.

The disability claims process begins in the field office (FO). Social Security developed a software application, called the Electronic Disability Collect System (EDCS), to collect data that used to be recorded by FO staff on paper disability report forms. In addition to information that propagates from the Agency's other automated claims systems, EDCS captures critical data (e.g., impairments, treating source names and addresses, work history, etc.) that can now be shared electronically with offices that process disability claims. All Agency FOs use EDCS for approximately 97 percent of the disability workload. To date 7.9 million claims have been submitted using EDCS.

Social Security also provides opportunities for disabled claimants to submit applications and/or disability reports electronically over the Internet. All data keyed into the Internet applications propagates directly into the Agency's claims systems and EDCS. Over 147,000 disability applications have been submitted over the Internet.

EDCS data is stored in Social Security's new Electronic Folder. eDib has provided the interfaces to share electronic folder data with the diverse case processing components. Forty-three DDSs and three additional DDS sites (Puerto Rico, the Federal DDS and the Virgin Islands) can now propagate information from the electronic folder directly into their case processing systems. Claimant information, critical dates, as well as medical source names and addresses are pulled into DDS development worksheets and into their Medical Evidence development screens eliminating rekeying of data. Decisional data is transmitted to the electronic folder when a determination is made. Electronic folder data is also sent to the Disability Case Adjudication and Review System system used in the Disability Quality Branches.

In OHA, Social Security has developed a new Case Processing and Management System (CPMS). Not only does CPMS provide the capability to interface with the electronic folder, but it also provides OHA with national workload monitoring/tracking and hearings scheduling. All OHA offices are now using CPMS to process disability hearings cases.

On January 27, 2005, the Mississippi DDS became the first to convert to the fully electronic disability folder process. In Mississippi, the electronic folder is the Agency's official record for initial disability claims taken in EDCS and any appeals filed on them. FOs in Mississippi no longer prepare paper claims folders for disability claims processed through EDCS and all examiners, doctors and clerical staff in the Mississippi DDS process electronic folders.

The following is just one example of the direct benefits provided to Social Security claimants with the implementation of eDib. A terminally ill claimant filed for disability on November 4, 2004, in an Agency field office. The field office claims representative took the initial claim using EDCS. The claim was then transferred to the DDS, where staff were able to electronically order medical records. The records arrived in an electronic format later that day via the new Document Management Architecture hardware and software. The DDS staff used eView to examine the medical records and was able to make a favorable determination the same day. By November 10, a favorable decision was made for the claimant. Because of the ability to process this claim in a totally folderless environment, it took only six days from the time of the initial interview to benefit payment status.

For a fully electronic case processing system, Social Security must store medical evidence and other related disability information in an electronic format. The Agency is currently building a flexible set of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act tools, which will allow it to obtain and store these documents in an electronic format for timely and accurate adjudication purposes.

By the close of June 2005, the vast majority of Social Security and State DDS employees can process disability claims using the electronic folder. Specifically, this capability exists for staff in 49 State DDSs, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico DDSs, OHA offices in 23 States, and all 10 Office of Quality Assurance and Program Assessment (OQA) offices. To date, sixteen DDSs have trained all of their case processing staff to work disability claims using the eDib electronic folder. It is anticipated that all Social Security and DDS employees will have the ability to process disability cases using the electronic folder by November 28, 2005.

## ***Service Result: Improved Service through Technology***

The Agency's key long-term goal is to substantially increase the use of electronic services. Some examples of success are:

- Increased access to informational e-services (37 million times in FY 2004);
- Increased use of Frequently Asked Questions (20 million inquiries in FY 2004); and
- Online satisfaction survey showed 96 percent of users thought the applications were easy to use and would recommend them to others.

**Result! The Government Accounting Office (GAO) announced that 100 percent of Social Security's systems are certified and accredited to operate.**

This means Social Security is in compliance with the security policies and guidelines issued by OMB requiring all government agencies to certify and accredit their information systems' security. By ensuring the safety and security of its systems, Social Security demonstrates its ongoing commitment to the stewardship of all information stored and shared electronically. Recent audits by GAO found only 7 out of the 24 agencies audited were in compliance with the law.

The Agency has taken steps to provide cost-effective service delivery by better managing its portfolio of electronic services. These include online transaction services such as filing claims via the Internet, change of address, change of direct deposit information, replacement Medicare cards, and benefit verification requests. The suite of online services provides a safe and convenient way to do business with the Agency.

The website at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov) was ranked in the top 10 Federal government websites surveyed in the American Customer Satisfaction Survey. The Agency's Office of Communications continues to aggressively market the website, and to feature it in redesigned public information materials. Large employers and the medical community are encouraged to help promote use of the website.

## **E-Government to Citizen Results:**

The Social Security website attracts more than 30 million visitors a year. Visitors can often find the information they need, or take care of the business they want to conduct online, decreasing the demand for direct service by 800-number and field office staff. For example-

- There were over 20 million inquiries in FY 2004, and there are currently 657 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) in English and 414 in Spanish on Social Security's website. Most people use the FAQs for a single question, and Agency surveys indicate a high level of customer satisfaction with the response. Current enhancements focus on improving the search mechanism and organization to make the FAQs easier for the public to use.

In FY 2004, more than 216,000 people submitted applications for Social Security benefits online.

- In August 2002, Social Security expanded its suite of online services to include a disability application. In February 2005, an on-line disability application became available for professional users who assist the public with filing disability claims.
- An electronic "signature proxy" process is now being used by claimants who file online, by phone or in-person. Signature proxy provides alternatives to a "pen-and-ink signature." Since the introduction of signature proxy procedures in June 2004, Social Security has seen a dramatic reduction in the number of paper folders being created. Creation of a paper claims folder for Retirement and Survivors Insurance claims has declined by about 77 percent during a period of increasing claims receipts.
- The Benefit Eligibility Screening Tool (BEST) helps visitors determine if they are eligible for Social Security, SSI or Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services programs. The process takes about 5 to 10 minutes to answer the questions, and in FY 2004 was used by over 16 million people.
- The Field Office Locator provides instant client access to the location of every field office by Zip Code. An office's street address, telephone numbers and hours of operation are provided through this service, as well as directions to the office (including a map).
- The Agency website is accessible to people with disabilities and to non-English speaking populations. For example, visitors can change the text size on the website to make information easier to view by using the Web Eyes plug-in, available free of charge. And the Multi-Language Gateway at [www.socialsecurity.gov/multilanguage](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/multilanguage) makes available public information materials translated into 15 languages other than English.

Other significant electronic service enhancements include:

- **Screen Pop:** Screen Pop is a feature of Social Security's toll-free telephone service platform that uses computer telephony integration (CTI) to integrate the Agency's voice and data networks. It is the first CTI-related application to be implemented at Social Security. Screen Pop technology simultaneously routes a caller's Social Security Number (entered by the caller via his/her telephone keypad) to the 800 number agent's telephone set and to the Agency's Customer Help and Information Program. Screen Pop was initially implemented in the Indianapolis Teleservice Center during the week of January 31, 2005. It is now available to more than one half of National 800 Number Network answering agents and will be available to all agents by the end of the fiscal year. Screen Pop is expected to save about 10-12 seconds on calls by eliminating the need for agents to collect additional information about the caller in order to respond to the caller's request for service.
- The Automated Appointment Reminder System was implemented nationwide in April 2005. This system makes calls to claimants who have a scheduled appointment at an Agency field office to remind them of the date and time for their appointment. Social Security expects that this will improve service to the public by reducing the number of "no-shows" for appointments and eliminating the time spent rescheduling appointments and preparing for appointments that do not occur.

The FY 2005 volume of transactions for Social Security's electronic services performance measure, the composite total of the usage of seven online applications available to the public, has already exceeded one million transactions. This one million plus transactions in a fiscal year achievement is a first, surpassing the FY 2005 target of 649,500 electronic transactions by a substantial amount. Social Security did not anticipate a transactions volume in excess of one million for at least another year.

## **E-Government to Business and Government Results:**

- For the business community, Social Security has automated employer wage reporting and Social Security Number (SSN) verification. By the end of FY 2005, the Agency expects 60 percent of all W-2s to be filed electronically, compared to 27 percent in FY 2001.
- Government-to-government efforts have usually focused on exchanging information to make sure that benefit programs across government are run fairly and accurately. Information and data exchange between Social Security and more than 4,000 other government agencies results in savings of over \$2 billion each year.
- To this end, the Agency leads the **eVital** project, an effort to establish common electronic processes for Federal and State agencies to automate and share the collection, analysis and processing of vital statistics information.
- Electronic Death Registration (EDR) involves sharing more timely and accurate electronic death records among Federal, State and local agencies. When implemented, the Agency will realize an annual savings of \$36-\$42 million in program funds and about 100 workyears. EDR benefits the private sector through increased service and earlier detection of fraud and identity theft. Social Security has EDR contracts with Washington DC, the City of New York and 15 States: Arizona, California, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Minnesota, Montana,

New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah and Washington. EDR has now been successfully implemented in Washington DC, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, South Carolina and South Dakota.

- Electronic data exchange with State Workforce Agencies (UIQ/IBIQ): Social Security is able to obtain online verification of unemployment benefits and some wage data from unemployment agencies, which prevents overpayments. In exchange Social Security provides Agency payment data and SSN verification, which reduces inquiries to field offices. So far 16 states are participating.
- The i3368 for Professionals, Representatives, and Organizations (i3368 PRO) was released to production on February 5, 2005 in response to requests from third parties for a more user friendly disability report. This Internet application is designed specifically for use by organizations and people that provide assistance to persons filing applications for disability benefits. This application provides improved navigation and allows the organization completing the disability report to print, save and view the completed report. From February 5, through May 29, 2005, a total of 6,444 i3368 PROs were submitted.

### **Social Security's Website Offers Something for Everyone**

Social Security's website - [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov) - offers a variety of online services and provides a wealth of information about the Agency's programs. Commissioner Barnhart has said, "Social Security's programs touch the lives of nearly every person in America, from the young to the old. One of my goals is to ensure that we deliver high quality, citizen-centered service. Our website and online services are a quick, easy and secure way to do business with our Agency."

Social Security's website provides useful online services and valuable information for people at every stage of life, whether they are:

- a young adult first entering the workforce,
- a new bride,
- a new parent,
- a person who has become disabled,
- a family member who has lost a loved one, or
- an older person making the transition from work to retirement.

Young children and teens can have fun and learn about Social Security at [www.socialsecurity.gov/kids](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/kids) - the Agency's Kids and Families page.

## **Result! Social Security delivers most popular baby names**

Each year, Social Security produces a list of the most popular baby names based on Social Security card applications for children born the previous year. For Mother's Day, May 8, 2005, Social Security announced the top baby names in the United States for 2004. The most popular baby names were Emily and Jacob, which have remained at the top of the list for several years. Emily has been the most popular girl's name each year since 1996 and Jacob has been the most popular boy's name since 1999. New to the top ten list for 2004 are Isabella and William. The baby names website has a new look this year. In addition to a list of the 1,000 most popular baby names for 2004 and the most popular names for each state, there is now a list of the top 100 names for twins born in 2004. The other names on the top ten list, the 1,000 most popular baby names and the top 100 names for twins for 2004 can be found at: [www.socialsecurity.gov/pressoffice/pr/baby-names2004-pr.htm](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pressoffice/pr/baby-names2004-pr.htm)

Potential employees can learn about Social Security career paths and about employment opportunities at Social Security at: [www.socialsecurity.gov/careers/index.htm](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/careers/index.htm).

Workers and people nearing retirement can get estimates of their future Social Security benefits at [www.socialsecurity.gov/planners](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/planners) by clicking on "calculators."

People receiving disability benefits, employers and service providers can visit The Work Site at [www.socialsecurity.gov/work](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work) for information about support programs geared towards helping people with disabilities find employment.

People of all ages and life situations can, in fact, find an abundance of information in Agency publications and Frequently Asked Questions.

To help inform the public about the national discussion concerning the future of Social Security, [About Social Security's Future](#) is another useful site. This link to [Social Security's Future - FAQs](#) - provides answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about the future of Social Security.

All of these and more can be found easily at Social Security's homepage [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

### ***Service Result: Employees are More Productive***

The Agency has committed to achieving at least a 2 percent net increase in productivity each year. Social Security met its goal in FY 2004, for the third straight year, with a productivity improvement of 2.2 percent.

In FY 2004, offices processed over 2.5 million disability claims - an increase of more than 400,000 from FY 2001. And Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) productivity rates were the highest in history - at 2.40 cases per day.

**Result! Social Security mainframe systems reached a one-day record high volume of transactions in the 4th quarter of Fiscal Year 2004**

The Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Systems (DCS) provides service to all Social Security offices across the nation. DCS uses the power of Web, mainframe, network and messaging technologies to process daily business, and places great emphasis on the performance of Social Security systems to provide users timely and quality service.

In the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2004, Agency mainframe systems reached a record one-day high number of transactions. The Agency processed 54,235,142 Customer Information Control Systems (CICS) transactions in one business day including:

- 500,000 inbound and outbound Internet mail messages and over 4.5 million Outlook messages daily;
- Over 13 million Master File Queries and over 5 million transactions occurred through the Modernized Claims System;
- Over 7 million keying actions of forms SSA-3368, SSA-3369 and SSA-3820 into the electronic disability process;
- An average of 750,000 transactions were performed (peaking at 938,000 at the close of fiscal year 2004) by the OHA Case Processing Management System;
- Over 2,286,456 medical evidence documents stored electronically in the pilot Document Management Architecture; and
- At the National Computer Center in Baltimore, approximately 70,000 Social Security cards were printed.

By the end of FY 2004, the Appeals Council had reduced its pending requests for review from approximately 51,000 to 45,000, representing a 10 percent decrease. In addition, the Appeals Council had reduced the time it takes to process a Court Case by 40 percent and had substantially reduced the time it takes to provide claimants copies of the administrative records they had requested.

***Service Result: Reduced Processing Time***

One of the Agency's highest priorities is to improve service to the public in the disability program. Each disability claim represents a person, and often a family. Reducing the time it takes to process disability claims lessens the financial and emotional burden on applicants and their families. Social Security has made substantial progress in reducing processing time for the disability claims process. In 2003, processing time was reduced by more than 100 days at the Appeals Council stage. The Agency also reduced processing time for initial disability claims, from an average of 106 days in FY 2001 to 95 days in FY 2004.

The Agency also has initiated other strategies for serving people with disabilities, including:

- Implementing disability process improvements;
- Developing an electronic disability initiative;
- Updating medical listings, (i.e., skin and malignant neoplasm listings); and
- Improving the Hearings and Appeals Process.

The Agency also has other initiatives in place that will further reduce processing time:

- The Agency has approved a "Click and Sign" electronic process for obtaining reports of consultative examinations (CE) that does not require a paper follow-up report to meet the regulatory requirement for the provider's signature. The CE providers will use the Agency's secure eData website, which includes the "Click and Sign" feature, to send a digital version of their report to the DDS. The system will then create an electronic attestation that the report was received from the named source using an approved electronic signature process. For now, the attestation will print out as the last page of the CE report for inclusion in the paper file. The electronic folder becomes the official folder of record once a DDS has undergone validation and is certified. At that time, the audit trail attached to the read-only file of the report will also document the signature. Since CEs are usually the last development step in a large portion of disability cases, any time saved by reducing paper and mail handling will directly translate to reduced overall processing time.
- OHA recently completed a pilot of speech recognition software in order to reduce or eliminate the processing time that accrues on dictated cases waiting for typing. In addition, OHA plans to store the recording of hearings on an Agency-wide file server, making them accessible to OHA personnel nationwide.
- OHA gathers, evaluates and shares innovative ideas and work processes by regularly collecting and disseminating "best quality" practices to the regions and hearing offices. Best quality practices are featured in OHA's Interactive Video Teletraining (IVT) broadcasts, covering topics such as ALJ docket management, CPMS, the use of the bench decision formats, and how to avoid the recurrent reason for remand. Best quality practices are also shared at regional management conferences and training sessions.
- An example of Social Security's current dissemination of best quality practices can be found in OHA's PEER V Attorney Advisor and Paralegal Specialist Supplemental Training for FY 2005. This training provides decision writers with additional tools to effectively and efficiently draft legally sufficient decisions and incorporates "best quality" practices information about decision writing. The training targets the deficiencies in decisions that were noted in OQA's Findings of the Disability Hearings Quality Review Process - ALJ Peer Report V, December 2003. In so doing, the training provides "best quality" practice strategies and techniques in all aspects of decision writing, addressing: use of the Social Security Rulings, avoidance of the recurrent reasons for remands, changes in the law and regulations, the review of the exhibit file, persuasive writing tips, and the use of writing devices like Document Generation System and Favorable Electronic Decisional Shell.
- The Boston Office of Quality Assurance completed a report determining the accuracy of online marriage records in Maine. As a result, in September 2004 the Agency revised its policy instructions to specify that, when a marriage certificate from Maine is required for entitlement, proof of marriage may be obtained directly from Maine's Bureau of Vital Statistics website. The use of this online database will improve productivity when a marriage certificate is required for proof of entitlement.

***Service Result: Additional Work Opportunities and More Timely Return to Work Information***

The Agency is committed to ensuring that beneficiaries with disabilities are provided opportunities to attempt working without the threat of losing their Social Security and medical benefits. To this end, the Agency has implemented a number of initiatives:

- Ticket to Work Program and Work Incentives - increases beneficiaries' choices in obtaining rehabilitation and vocational services to help them go to work and attain their employment goals. At the end of calendar year 2004, over 16,700 Social Security or SSI disability claimants assigned their ticket to one of the Employer Networks that has agreed to work with Social Security to provide services under this program, and these claimants found subsequent employment. Information about the Ticket to Work program is on Social Security's website.
- Early Intervention Demonstration - tests whether early intervention for certain applicants will help them to remain in the workforce and maintain financial independence, rather than the alternative of long-term dependence on the rolls. Interventions will include a cash stipend, access to medical benefits, and a variety of employment supports.
- Youth Transition Demonstration - provides funds for States to develop integrated service delivery systems for youth transitioning to adulthood (ages 14-25) to improve employment outcomes and economic self-sufficiency. The project targets youth currently receiving Social Security benefits based on their own disability, or at risk of receiving those benefits.
- Area Work Incentive Coordinators - specialize in disability work incentives and have a broad scope of responsibility regarding outreach, training and work incentives through monitoring employment support activities in 20-30 Agency field offices.
- Mental Health Treatment Study - will determine the effect of the availability of treatment funding on the health, health care and job-seeking behaviors of disability beneficiaries for whom a mental health disorder is the primary diagnosis.
- Benefit Offset Demonstration - evaluates a program for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries under which benefits payable - based on the beneficiary's disability - are reduced by \$1 for each \$2 of the beneficiary's earnings above a specified amount. Required by the Ticket to Work legislation, this project includes a national study that will test a range of employment support interventions in combination with a \$1 reduction in benefits for every \$2 in earnings and a four-State pilot project that will collect information to assist in the design and evaluation of the national study.
- Accelerated Benefits - will provide immediate cash (i.e., no five-month waiting period) and medical benefits for a specified period (2-3 years) to recent SSDI awardees that are highly likely to benefit from aggressive medical care. This project will provide immediate access to cash benefits and health care coverage in addition to providing employment supports with the goal of enabling more beneficiaries to return to work and maximize their economic self-sufficiency through employment.
- Ongoing Medical Benefits - will test the effects of providing ongoing health insurance coverage to beneficiaries who wish to work, but have no other affordable access to health insurance. The design of a national project is under development and Social Security expects to start a pilot project (focusing on HIV-AIDS) in 2005. This study will test the impact of providing case management services and ongoing medical benefits to disability beneficiaries in California.

The Benefits Planning Query is an Agency resource tool for information retrieval related to earnings and work activities. Analysis of this information is the first step for return to work initiatives. In addition to supporting the Ticket to Work program, this information will enhance the ability of Social Security employees to provide timely information to claimants and recipients on return to work issues.

*Service Result: Outreach to Low-Income Beneficiaries*

Social Security conducts outreach designed to increase enrollment in the Medicare Savings Programs administered by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. These programs are Federal-State initiatives that help low-income beneficiaries pay their Part B (Medical Insurance) premiums under Medicare and, in some cases, assist with other cost-sharing features of Medicare. Outreach efforts include mailing letters to beneficiaries potentially eligible for the savings programs and providing information to States to assist with their outreach. The GAO report "Results of Social Security Administration's 2002 Outreach to Low-Income Beneficiaries" found that outreach efforts in 2002 resulted in over 74,000 low-income persons enrolling in the Medicare savings programs.

The Agency is also responsible for outreach activities under the new Medicare prescription drug

**Result! Homeless Outreach Projects and Evaluation (HOPE) Awards**

In 2004, Social Security awarded \$6.6 million in funding to 34 community-based Homeless Outreach Projects and Evaluation (HOPE) organizations to assist eligible homeless individuals applying for Supplemental Security Income and Social Security disability benefits. The target population for these funded projects is homeless individuals who are members of under-served groups, such as people with severe and persistent mental illness, HIV infection, limited English proficiency, multiple and co-occurring disorders or cognitive impairments and homeless veterans with disabilities. The staff of the organizations that are awarded funding will receive training to improve their knowledge of Social Security's disability programs and application process. The purpose of this assistance to homeless individuals is to improve their quality of life, especially in achieving full community integration, attaining stable housing and promoting employment. The grantees are expected to offer direct assistance to claimants in completing Social Security's disability application, obtaining medical evidence, and maintaining contact with the Agency while a decision is pending. As a result, Social Security expects to achieve faster claim decisions as well as a reduction in the number of claims denied due to the failure of the claimant to provide the information and evidence required under the Agency's eligibility rules.

According to Commissioner Barnhart, "Many homeless individuals suffer from a range of disabling conditions which may prevent them from availing themselves of services that may assist them." Commissioner Barnhart went on to say, "Social Security is committed, through outreach and assistance, to identifying and removing the unique barriers to the disability application process sometimes encountered by homeless individuals. We share President Bush's commitment by doing our part to help end chronic homelessness in the United States...Through its network of over 1,300 field offices, Social Security is uniquely positioned to provide assistance to homeless individuals." HOPE is another example of how Social Security is proactively meeting the needs of the public by improving service to disabled individuals.

legislation. The Agency goal is to ensure that all Medicare beneficiaries with limited income apply for the extra financial help that is available for their monthly premiums, annual deductibles and prescription co-payments. To reach this goal, the Agency has developed a wide-range of public information materials, both online and print, and mailed information and applications to about 19 million Medicare beneficiaries who are potentially eligible. Social Security is also conducting extensive outreach campaigns at both the national and local levels, and has partnered with Federal, State and local government agencies and community based organizations in these outreach efforts.

These efforts have had direct, measurable effects on beneficiaries and contribute to the Agency mission of advancing the economic security of the nation's people.

## **To ensure superior STEWARDSHIP of Social Security programs and resources**

### ***Stewardship Result: SSI Program Removed from GAO's High Risk List***

Because of the Agency's progress in addressing SSI payment accuracy problems, GAO removed the SSI program from its high-risk list of government programs vulnerable to waste in January 2003. Under the direction of the Deputy Commissioner, the Agency developed a Corrective Action Plan and many initiatives over the last few years to prevent and detect SSI overpayments. These initiatives included:

#### Preventing overpayments

- Initiated a proof of concept to test electronic verification of account balances with financial institutions to determine if an applicant or recipient owns unreported assets.
- Testing the use of credit bureaus and other public databases to detect unreported income or resources.
- The Agency piloted an automated monthly wage-reporting method for workers at risk for wage-related overpayments, using voice recognition/touch tone phone technology. The Agency is planning a second pilot of telephone wage reporting to evaluate the impact of knowledge-based authentication and a new enrollment process. In addition, the Agency is testing an alternative mail process.

#### Detecting overpayments

- Increasing the number of SSI redeterminations.
- Increasing the use of online access to data to improve verification of documents and claimant allegations.

#### Collecting debt created by overpayments

- Using a new debt collection measurement tool that will enable the Agency to better target those portions of its debt portfolio that can be collected.
- Continuing cross-program recovery of SSI debt from Social Security benefits.
- Implemented a project that "nets" SSI underpayments from SSI overpayments, reducing the amount of outstanding debt (\$240 million collected through March 2005).
- Recovering overpayments through tax refund offsets and offsets of other Federal payments.

- Implemented administrative offset and credit bureau reporting for SSI debt.
- Exercising authority to hold representative payees liable for overpayments caused by incorrect payments to deceased beneficiaries.
- Implemented administrative wage garnishment to recover up to 15 percent of a debtor's disposable wages.

#### Simplifying the SSI Program

- Published a regulation effective March 8, 2005, so that Social Security would no longer treat gifts of clothing as income, simplify the automobile exclusion to exclude one operating vehicle, and simplify the development required to evaluate the value of household goods and personal effects as resources.
- Implemented in June 2004 provisions in the Social Security Protection Act to increase the interval used in calculating certain infrequent or irregular income, exclude certain interest and dividend income, and enact a uniform nine-month resource exclusion period.

These changes demonstrate the Agency's commitment to improving the management of the SSI program.

#### **Result! 2005 Annual Report of the Supplemental Security Income Program**

On May 27, Social Security issued the 2005 Annual Report of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Program. SSI is a nationwide Federal assistance program that guarantees a minimum level of income for needy, aged, blind or disabled individuals. It acts as a safety net for individuals who have little or no Social Security or other income and limited resources. In January 2005, approximately 6.8 million individuals received monthly Federal SSI payments averaging \$404.

#### ***Stewardship Result: Social Security Numbers are More Secure***

Social Security strengthened the SSN application process by:

- creating Social Security Card Centers in Brooklyn, New York and Las Vegas, Nevada to test if such centers would improve and expedite the document verification process;
- eliminating drivers' licenses as a valid reason for issuing a non-work SSN;
- verifying with the issuing agency any birth certificates submitted by U.S.-born citizens, age one or older, who are applying for an original SSN;
- verifying with the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) all alien documentation submitted by non-citizens in support of applications for an original or replacement Social Security card;
- publishing a regulation in September 2004 requiring additional evidence from foreign students applying for SSNs;
- decreasing reliance on applicant-submitted evidence by using Enumeration-at-Entry, a process whereby the Agency will assign SSNs to new arrivals based on data collected by the Department of State and the BCIS at the time right-of-entry into the U.S. is authorized; and
- implementing new automated tools, such as the Enhanced SS-5 Assistant, which helps ensure consistent policy application in enumeration, strengthening the integrity of the enumeration process.

As of April 2005, 46 State Departments of Motor Vehicles had entered into agreements with the Agency to use the online "Social Security Online Verification System." Of those States, 41 were using the online verification process, one State had begun testing, and four States had entered into agreements but had not begun testing.

***Stewardship Result: Employers Assist in Preventing Errors***

Social Security is undertaking an aggressive educational campaign to inform the wage reporting community of various tools and error detection services available to them. For example, the Agency is encouraging greater use of SSN verification through the Employee Verification Service that allows employers to check a name/SSN combination. The Commissioner has recently announced the nationwide implementation of the Social Security Number Verification Service (SSNVS). This allows all employers the opportunity to verify their employees' names and SSNs securely over the Internet with instant results. Prior to nationwide implementation Social Security held a two-year pilot of SSNVS. Ninety-six percent of pilot participants rated SSNVS excellent or very good.

Business Services Online (BSO) is a suite of Internet services for businesses and employers that provide wage information to Social Security. Registered users are able to submit W-2 wage reports to Social Security online, and subsequently view status and error information for the reports. Increased BSO usage will provide a more accurate and timely way to update earnings to individual records as well as assisting with proper crediting and accounting of trust fund contributions. In October 2004, Social Security placed third for Business Services Online among the Digital Government Achievement Awards announced by the Center for Digital Government. The awards program recognizes outstanding agency and department websites and applications that enhance interactions, transactions and/or services in the area of government-to-business.

***Stewardship Result: The Agency Prevents Fraud and Abuse***

The Social Security Protection Act contained several provisions that strengthen the Agency's oversight of representative payees. These changes are designed to protect Social Security, Title VIII (Special Benefits for Certain World War II Veterans) and SSI recipients from dishonest representative payees who misuse benefits. The legislation holds representative payees liable for the misuse of benefits and places stricter requirements on organizational and individual representative payees. The Agency may impose civil monetary penalties for offenses involving misuse of benefits by a representative payee or for knowingly withholding material facts by a representative payee.

Checks issued by the Department of the Treasury no longer have imprinted SSNs, due to increasing concerns about identity theft. In support of this change, a joint Social Security and Treasury team developed an automated query to facilitate field office check handling processes. The Agency is taking this opportunity to encourage claimants and representative payees to use direct deposit, which also will improve payment timeliness. More than 80 percent of all Social Security beneficiaries now use direct deposit.

In addition, Social Security has taken additional steps to prevent misuse of personal information by removing SSNs from the Social Security Statement (displays the last 4 digits of the SSN only) and no longer releasing SSNs or any personal information to a caller who cannot provide

his or her SSN. Such callers are referred to field offices for further verification of their identity before any information is released.

Significant stewardship results continue to be achieved by the Cooperative Disability Investigations (CDI) Units. CDI Units investigate allegations of fraud, document the claims folder, and undertake legal actions when fraud is demonstrated. Through January 2005, national savings totaled over \$445 million in Agency programs and over \$256 million in non-Agency programs. There are presently 18 CDI Units operating nationwide; additional units will be added on a yearly basis, depending on available funds.

The procedure for handling allegations of non-receipt of SSI checks was automated through the Modernized Supplemental Security Income System (MSSICS). With this new system, employees receive an alert whenever a recipient cashes an original SSI check as well as the replacement check.

The Office of the General Counsel currently has assigned four attorneys to work in the U.S. Attorneys Offices in Atlanta, Chicago, Seattle and Portland prosecuting matters involving program fraud that would not otherwise be prosecuted. The Agency's attorneys have obtained numerous indictments, successfully prosecuted numerous defendants, and secured convictions with orders of restitution amounting to almost \$2 million for FY 2003, and more than \$3 million for FY 2004.

The Agency has enhanced its security and suitability investigations program to better ensure that Social Security only hires employees and/or contractors who are qualified to be Federal employees or perform on Federal contracts. This has enhanced the Agency's ability to better prevent fraud, waste and abuse among its employees and contractors.

**Goal: To achieve sustainable SOLVENCY and ensure Social Security programs meet the needs of current and future generations**

***Solvency Result: The Agency Has Strong Research Capabilities***

Social Security continues to strengthen its research, evaluation and policy development activities by continuously building on its body of program data, research and analysis. Social Security evaluates the potential impact of proposals for change, and continues to maintain an in-house capacity of policy, actuarial and legislative expertise to respond to decisionmakers' questions about the fiscal, distributional and administrative aspects of proposals to reform the Social Security programs; and work with the Administration and Congress as legislative proposals to achieve sustainable solvency are developed.

## **Result! Retirement Research Consortium Holds Conference on the Future of Social Security**

On August 12 and 13, 2004, Social Security's Office of Policy and the Retirement Research Consortium (RRC) sponsored the 6th Annual Conference of the RRC titled "The Future of Social Security." This annual conference serves several purposes: to promote research on retirement issues, to convey findings to the academic and policy communities and to the public, to support the training of a new generation of scholars, and to broaden access to valuable retirement-related data sources.

Social Security created the RRC in 1998 by awarding cooperative agreements to form two research centers, one at Boston College and the second at the University of Michigan. The primary mission of the RRC is to inform the public about retirement and Social Security issues through high-quality research and to disseminate its policy research findings using a variety of media.

### ***Solvency Result: Educating the Public about Solvency***

Every day, Social Security educates Americans of all ages about its programs. The most important issue facing Social Security is the long-range solvency of the program, and the Agency continues its concerted effort to educate the American public about long-range solvency challenges and possible solutions.

For example, Agency executives, including the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and others, have made frequent speeches and presentations on the future of Social Security. Many of these discussions have taken place at town hall meetings across the country at the invitation of Members of Congress. Others have been done at the request of colleges, community groups and interested parties. Social Security has made extensive use of newspaper articles and appearances on television and radio to increase the public's understanding of the present program and the need to strengthen it for future generations. And Agency executives have testified at Congressional hearings on the need to make the program permanently solvent. Social Security also annually conducts a survey to assess the public's knowledge of Social Security programs and facts.

The *Social Security Statement* is one of the Agency's most effective communication tools. The *Statement*, which is now mailed annually to more than 140 million workers, includes clear, concise language on the current Social Security program and the need for changes in the future.

**Result! Social Security has issued more than 783 million automated Social Security Statements since FY 2000**

The Social Security Statement is an easy-to-read, concise, personal record of the earnings on which workers have paid Social Security taxes, and a summary of estimated benefits based on those earnings. The Agency is required to send the Social Security Statement to workers on an annual basis. As of July 2005, Social Security has issued more than 783 million automated Social Security Statements to workers and former workers age 25 and over, about 500,000 released each workday or approximately 125 million annually. The automated Statements have improved public service by increasing the understanding of Social Security programs/benefits in providing current information on work history and estimates of benefits, thereby allowing workers to better plan their financial future.

Millions of visitors to the Agency's homepage, [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov), can visit a portal entitled "About Social Security's Future" where they can read a series of Frequently Asked Questions about solvency. The portal offers a link to a Social Security publication entitled "The Future of Social Security" which addresses various solvency issues.

The Agency has a network of approximately 150 Public Affairs Specialists who are available to speak on this and other issues at community gatherings throughout the nation. The Office of Communications also maintains a website for National Organizations and Groups, located at [www.socialsecurity.gov/organizations](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/organizations). The purpose of the site is twofold: to encourage partnerships with national groups and organizations, and to provide information for them to use in their newsletters, magazines and other membership communications.

**Goal: To strategically manage and align STAFF to support the Agency's mission.**

***Staff Result: Recruiting and Retaining a High-Performing Workforce***

Social Security must stay competitive in the employment market. Recently, the Agency developed a national recruitment guide for managers and human resource personnel, a comprehensive list of over 2,000 Internet links to university/college career centers and a new recruitment outreach program to attract veterans. As more of the Agency workforce retires, Social Security will continue efforts to replace highly-valued and experienced staff with new people committed to public service.

**Result! Social Security was ranked number one by the readers of CAREERS & the disABLED Magazine**

Social Security was ranked number one under the "Top 20 Government Agencies" in the CAREERS & the disABLED Magazine's 13th Annual Reader Survey results. The respondents included undergraduate and graduate students from all geographic areas.

To attract veterans to the Agency workforce, Social Security developed a new recruitment outreach program. Using employees who are also veterans, Social Security created a series of recruitment posters with a military motif and a new mini CD-ROM. A new tag line was created: *Continue to Serve Your Country. . . Join the Social Security Administration.* These

recruitment products are being used at military transition centers, job fairs on military bases, Veterans Affairs Offices and in local communities. And Social Security is a participating employer in the Army Career Alumni Program, which provides a direct Internet link to the Agency Career webpage that can be used by transitioning soldiers.

As part of Social Security's efforts to attract and hire more people with disabilities, the Agency is developing another new recruitment outreach program. In this initiative, Social Security has identified and distributed effective recruitment sources and best practices that have been shared with Agency recruiters. In addition, Social Security is working closely with Agency advisory groups to develop new strategies and recruitment products to support this important initiative.

The Agency continually fine tunes its recruitment program and targets specific occupations as needs dictate. As an example, Social Security has developed a new marketing brochure to attract actuaries. New recruitment posters were created for the Office of the Inspector General, which are being used to hire special agents and auditors. And the Agency has also created new recruitment brochures for the Office of Systems.

In Social Security's quest to employ the best candidates, the Agency has aggressively implemented the Office of Personnel Management's hiring model, which sets a goal of hiring in less than 45 days. Social Security created an Agency-wide system to monitor and record the elapsed time from announcement of a job to making a job offer. In FY 2004, the Agency averaged less than 19 days from the date a vacancy was posted to the date a job was offered to a new hire.

Agency managers have used a broad array of personnel management flexibilities to recruit and retain a high performing workforce. Tools such as recruitment and relocation bonuses, appointments above the minimum salary rate and retention allowances have proven to be invaluable toward attracting and retaining the talented people needed for hard-to-fill positions.

Since 2000, the Agency has received an extension of its special authority from OPM to rehire annuitants with benefit of a waiver of dual compensation salary reduction. This authority, which has only been granted to a limited number of Federal agencies, has been most beneficial by allowing the Agency to reemploy valuable senior employees to train and mentor new staff, perform mission-critical tasks and complete important special projects until new staff with the required expertise is ready to take over.

Social Security continues to hire between 3,000 and 4,000 new employees per year, totaling 11,211 for fiscal years 2002 through 2004. Furthermore, not only is the Agency hiring significant numbers of new employees - it is retaining them. The two-year retention rate for employees hired in 2001 was 86.4 percent. It rose to 89.9 percent for employees hired in 2002.

As of March 2005, Social Security has hired approximately 2,200 new direct service employees, mainly in Agency field offices, as part of the total staff Social Security will use to implement the new Medicare Prescription Drug Improvement and Modernization Act programs.

### ***Staff Result: Employees are Well-Trained***

Of the many influences that are shaping Social Security's future, none may be more fundamental or influential than the training the Agency provides its employees. This shared learning helps the Agency to forge a sense of common purpose nationwide and provides the knowledge and skills employees need to do their jobs. Social Security's future success at meeting the public's increasingly varied needs depends on its ability to open up learning opportunities that make the most of its employees. Because of this, Social Security is continuing to reassess the needs of its workforce and investing time and money in workforce training.

- In FY 2004, Social Security set a goal to provide 40 hours of training to each of its employees. It exceeded that goal by almost 20 percent. The Agency provided an average of 47.8 hours of training per employee over its IVT network and Online University. Social Security employees were particularly interested in new IVT broadcasts that covered the new Medicare prescription drug legislation, security in Social Security's offices, and the growing use of the Internet.
- The Office of Training is continuing to work with the Office of Operations to redesign the training for new or recently promoted employees in mission critical positions. In redesigning training, Social Security has been using results from private sector source surveys and studies to develop a competency-based training program. This approach provides students with the knowledge, skills and abilities they need to do their jobs in an environment that is becoming increasingly automated.

By the end of last year, the entry-level training for Social Security and SSI Claims Representatives, Service Representatives, and Teleservice Representatives were redesigned to reflect this competency-based approach.

These redesigned training lessons improve the way new employees learn their jobs by integrating information about Social Security's programs and policies with structured off-air activities and On the Job Training. This plays a key role in helping new employees master the technology and automated processes that are a critical element of today's Agency work environment. Mentors help guide and support students as they develop new skills by practicing on Agency computer systems, taking part in role-playing, and having on-the-job experiences that will serve them well when they take on their new roles full time.

Currently, the Office of Training is working with the Office of Operations' offices across the country to complete the development of competency-based training for Benefit Authorizers, Claims Authorizers, and Technical Support Technicians in the Program Service Centers by 2006.

- Social Security has improved its fundamentals training. This training provides employees, who do not provide direct services to the public, general information about the Social Security and SSI programs and strengthens the Agency commitment to work purposefully together in shaping and managing these programs.

- During FY 2004 and into FY 2005, Social Security continued to move forward towards realizing its vision of providing IVT nationwide. By the end of 2004, employees in more than 100 additional offices were linked to the IVT network. Today, over 98 percent of Agency and DDS employees have access to IVT. The network continues to generate more than 250,000 individual training opportunities to Agency employees each year.
- The IVT network continues to play an important role in ensuring that employees learn what they need to know, when they need it. The first part of the Medicare Part D Subsidy training on policy was developed and successfully delivered over the IVT network just in time for national implementation in March. The second part of this training, which will cover systems and subsidy changing events, will be delivered soon.
- Social Security is working behind the scenes to improve the delivery of IVT broadcasts. With the conversion of the headquarters' practice studio, the Agency now has a fully functional digital broadcast facility in Baltimore that helps improve the Agency's ability to get up-to-date programs to its employees. Social Security is also upgrading its other six broadcast facilities and enhancing its automated scheduling and evaluation procedures in an effort to better ensure that IVT programs reach the employees who need them.
- IVT provides disability policy training to Social Security and the Disability Determination Services employees. IVT broadcasts provide these employees with help in handling a host of difficult technical issues, including Electronic Disability, Evidence in Childhood Cases, Disability Fraud Detection, and Disability Onset. Social Security also broadcasts Vocational and Adjudicative tips in case development and processing for employees who handle the Agency's disability workloads.
- Because of the continuing changes in the disability programs, Social Security is working to update and expand the disability training materials for new or recently promoted disability adjudicators.
- The Agency also provides a significant amount of training for OHA employees who process disability claims at the appeals levels. Topics that Social Security provides on its IVT network focus on OHA's Case Processing Management System, Speech Recognition Software, Digital Recording, Dismissals, Remands, and Docket Management.

Social Security is expanding the benefits and values of online learning for all employees through the Agency GoLearn training site. GoLearn replaces Social Security's current Online University. The site provides employees and their managers with unprecedented opportunities to take over 2,000 courses at their workstations or at home, at no cost to them or their offices.

Each employee will learn at his or her own pace and be able to select courses that will help them learn and perform better or become eligible for other, more rewarding work. Successful learners will automatically get credit for completed courses on their personnel records, without filling out any paperwork.

### ***Staff Result: Developing Future Leaders***

Leadership and career development opportunities are essential. The Agency's national career development programs were established in 1997 to help prepare employees to assume leadership positions and to narrow the leadership skills gap from the retirement wave.

Programs include a Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program, the Advanced Leadership Program, the Leadership Development Program and the Presidential Management Fellows Program, as well as regional and component level programs. From 1997 to 2001, 133 employees were selected for national career development programs. The Agency significantly increased participants between 2001 and 2004 to 217 employees.

Since 2004, Social Security has ensured that it has the talent it needs to lead the Agency by supporting the expansion of its national leadership development programs. Sixty employees have been selected to take part in the Leadership Development Program (LDP) that will begin mid-year. The GS-9 through GS-11 employees who will participate in the program will have the opportunity to move forward in the Agency by making the most of the training and rotational assignments available to them in the 18-month program.

The latest Senior Executive Service (SES) Candidate Development Program is expected to be announced this fall. In order to develop the qualifications they need to become the government's top executives, Social Security's SES candidates will take a variety of Agency rotational assignments and some will spend time at other Federal agencies to prepare them to successfully lead change within the Federal government.

Finally, approximately 26 top graduate students are expected to be selected by the end of 2005 for the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) 2-year development program.

#### **Result! Selections have been made for the 2005 Capitol Hill Fellowship Program**

The Government Affairs Institute (GAI) at Georgetown University made selections for the 2005 Capitol Hill Fellowship Program. The program is designed for executives and managers, GS-13 or the equivalent, with two years of Federal service in the Executive Branch. Nominations are submitted through the Deputy Commissioners to the Office of Training. The Agency then sends nominations to GAI. Those selected are individuals who require a high-level working knowledge of Congress. The five selections this year are from the Office of Disability and Income Security Programs--the Office of Hearings and Appeals; the Office of Operations--Boston, Seattle, and Kansas City Regions; and the Office of Automation Support. The selected Social Security employees began their congressional assignments on Capitol Hill in January 2005, following an intense three week orientation session. Information about this program can be accessed at:

<http://training.ba.ssa.gov/ot/pages/career/InterAgencyPrograms.htm>

Social Security also offers an array of training opportunities for leaders throughout the organization, including 2-week-long courses that all new supervisors take. One of those courses focuses on leadership roles, such as teambuilding, providing feedback, mentoring, valuing diversity and motivating others. A second course teaches the "nuts and bolts" of supervision - managing time and leave, labor management procedures and other critical administrative procedures. In addition, courses and programs on leadership competencies are offered throughout the year-through classroom training, online resources and IVT broadcasts. Many of the classroom programs are conducted by other agencies (e.g., Office of Personnel Management) or vendors who excel in presenting leadership concepts and practical applications. As a whole, the leadership training opportunities support managers at all levels in honing their ability to foster superior performance.

Social Security is continuing to seek new ways to ensure that the Agency has the leadership it needs to succeed in the 21st century. Earlier this year, a national workgroup of managers and trainers in headquarters and from the field worked together to establish a new strategy for developing leaders. The Office of Training is getting comments on the strategy, which is designed to foster competencies that leaders and managers need to effectively manage people, achieve results and promote performance management. Social Security anticipates implementing this new, improved approach to leadership by the end of this year.

To further our employees' ability to serve a diverse public, the Agency sponsored a 2004 Diversity Training Conference. Participants learned from dynamic speakers, participated in innovative workshops and experienced a variety of cultural awareness activities. Commissioner Barnhart herself conducted a workshop on personal development entitled "Success by Design." The conference also provided valuable information about career planning, professional skills and technological advances.

***Staff Result: Employees Have Necessary Resources Readily Available For Program Purposes...***

The Office of Systems is continuing the workstation refreshment project, replacing 28,000 desktop computers that are now four years old. And, over the next year, more than about 200 additional video teleconferencing systems will be added to the current infrastructure to support hearing process teleconferencing initiatives.

Every two months, an IVT broadcast to all disability adjudicators provides useful, up-to-date training on current medical information and medical evidence, eDib, programmatic and vocational topics from the Office of Disability Programs and other disability program topics requested by viewers.

***For Administrative Purposes...***

Social Security implemented a web-based version of an electronic travel document preparation, routing and approval system. No paper copies of travel authorizations, vouchers, local vouchers and advance of funds requests are necessary. Further, employees with travel cards now have 24-hour Internet access to their Government Travel Card Accounts, where they can view their individual accounts, track charges and payments and print a copy of their statement - before they even receive their bill.

Additionally, FedTrip lets employees book official business government travel through an online system that is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The Agency uses a nationwide workers' compensation case management and information tracking system developed by the Department of Defense that merged approximately 15 separate systems into one. This system allows the Agency to more efficiently manage its employee workers' compensation workloads and assists in containing spiraling workers' compensation costs. As part of its functionality, the system will offer the electronic processing of workers' compensation claims and significantly reduce the inordinate amounts of paper documents associated with the process.

*For Personal Purposes...*

To ensure that all employees have the information they need about the benefits to which they are entitled, a new Center for Employee Benefits was established in the Office of Personnel in fiscal year 2003. This ensures the effective implementation of employee benefits and through seminars, Interactive Video Teletraining and electronic and paper media, and provides nationwide benefits guidance and education to employees. In addition, all permanent Agency employees have access to the Employee Benefits Information System, which provides personal information regarding employees' retirement, Thrift Savings Plan and insurance benefits.

The Job Announcement Status Check is an online application that allows employees who filed for jobs to access a database and determine if they were referred to the selecting official. Detailed information such as scores for those on the best qualified/well qualified lists, selections and cancellation of announcements is available to the applicants. A secure Employee Data website allows employees to view their training, position history, education and awards data.

## *The Future*

Since 2001, Social Security has strengthened its results-oriented culture. The Agency is processing more work, and taking less time to do it, all while maintaining a high payment accuracy rate. The future of service delivery operations at the Agency looks equally promising.

Even though a number of external factors present the Agency with great challenges, they also offer great opportunities. These external influences include:

- Demographics - population growth and aging, which potentially increases the number of people with disabilities and retirees.
- Health and Disability Trends - technological improvements in health care providing greater opportunity for employment of the disabled.
- Technology Changes - increased Internet usage, new technology providing different ways to deliver service, such as wireless and voice over Internet protocol.
- Workforce Trend - "retirement wave" and the challenge and opportunities related to hiring, retaining and developing a skilled workforce.
- Medicare Drug Benefit Program - new prescription drug benefit for millions of Medicare beneficiaries, with concurrent workloads for Social Security.

The commitment to concrete, measurable results in public service delivery will guide the Agency in the future. Social Security will continue efforts to improve the management of the programs it administers and to meet its own four strategic goals - service, stewardship, solvency and staff.

As an integral part of its strategy and the Agency's Results Agenda, Social Security expects to "get to green" and to maintain that status for all Results Agenda goals.

Though Social Security faces many challenges in the years to come, more efficiently administering the disability program will be one of the critical issues. Few question the need for, or the value of, the Social Security and SSI disability programs. But many claimants and advocates continue to urge improvement - especially in the time it takes to determine disability for claimants.

The disability programs consume a large share of Agency resources. For all the progress made, more needs to be done. That is why, in September 2003, the Commissioner proposed a new approach for improving the disability determination process and making the right decision as early in the process as possible. Social Security's goal is to reduce processing time. The Commissioner has met personally with 40 disability advocacy groups and interested organizations in more than 60 meetings to discuss the approach and listen to their suggestions and concerns. On her behalf, other Agency officials have conducted more than 100 similar meetings on the approach.

The Agency will also continue to increase the number of hearings it processes, from 497,000 in FY 2004 to target goals of approximately 525,000 in FY 2005 and 580,000 in FY 2006.

Over the next year, Social Security will increase the use of the electronic disability folder and

further expand the phase-in of the electronic folder as the Agency's official record, resulting in a paperless disability process.

The Agency will continue its efforts to prevent, detect and collect erroneous payments, including implementation of the SSI Corrective Action Plan. Social Security will also continue to process substantial numbers of eligibility reviews and implement additional initiatives designed to improve accuracy even further, including improvements to the redetermination process the Agency uses to confirm individuals' continuing non-medical eligibility.

Efforts to strengthen the integrity of the SSN and address the OIG-identified Major Management Challenge with respect to "Homeland Security, Social Security Number Integrity and Misuse" will also continue. The Agency is strengthening the SSN application by eliminating drivers' licenses as a valid reason for issuing a non-work SSN; verifying with the issuing agency the record of any birth certificates submitted by U.S. born citizens age one and older who are applying for an original SSN; verifying with BCIS all alien documentation submitted by non-citizens in support of an application for an original or replacement Social Security card; decreasing reliance on applicant-submitted evidence by using Enumeration-at-Entry, a process whereby the Agency will assign SSNs to new arrivals based on data collected by the Department of State and BCIS at the time right-of-entry into the U.S. is authorized.

An innovative spirit and commitment to service will guide the Agency in other vital service delivery areas. For example, in FY 2005 and FY 2006, the Agency expects to issue over 17 million new and replacement Social Security cards per year. As a way to streamline and improve service, the Agency has opened two Social Security Card Centers, one in Brooklyn, New York and one in Las Vegas, Nevada. The SSN Card Centers exclusively process requests for new and replacement Social Security cards.

Several of the provisions of the *Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA)* have presented Social Security with new challenges and responsibilities. Social Security has an aggressive national and local outreach plan - which is already being employed - to identify and assist limited-income elderly and disabled Americans apply and become qualified for the low-income subsidy available under MMA.

On the national level, Social Security has developed products and public information materials that include outreach posters available in 14 languages and various publications, including a tri-fold pamphlet that contains general information about the subsidy program and a worksheet that potentially eligible individuals can use to better prepare themselves to complete the actual application. These products are already being used by Social Security employees, as well as other government and third party partners. Social Security continues meeting regularly with advocates and other interested parties on leveraging the resources of Social Security and other governmental, non-profit and private sector organizations that have agreed to assist in the effort.

Social Security has begun mailing applications to nearly 19 million individuals who are potentially eligible for this extra help with prescription drug costs. The mailing includes a scannable application form and a self-addressed, postage-paid return envelope. Social Security worked closely with the advocacy community to develop the simplified application so that it could be completed with minimal or no assistance. Beneficiaries will attest to income and resources and mail the application to a central location where it will be scanned electronically and the infor-

mation matched against various government databases. For most beneficiaries, the entire process will have been completed without the need to contact or visit a Social Security office. And, for those who prefer it, an Internet version of the application is available beginning July 1, 2005.

To determine whether someone might be eligible for the subsidy and should file an application, Social Security has created a "Medicare Subsidy Qualifier" on the Internet. This web-based tool can be used by individuals or third parties. In the short time it has been available, more than 10,000 individuals have accessed the qualifier to determine their potential eligibility.

Because of the significant trust individuals place in their doctors and pharmacists when it comes to issues involving their health care, Social Security has been working extensively with the medical and pharmaceutical community to help educate about the subsidy and the extra help available to their patients and customers.

At the local level, Social Security staff in 1,300 field offices located throughout the country are already conducting educational events and assisting in the completion of applications. In addition to working closely at the local level with advocates and interested third parties, Social Security is holding thousands of outreach events and workshops between now and the end of year. These events will educate and assist limited income elderly and disabled in filing for the extra help with their prescription drug costs.

Social Security also is working with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and with state and local government agencies throughout the country, to assist everyone who might be eligible for the subsidy program to apply.

In 2004, Social Security began to implement two pieces of legislation: the SSPA and the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA). Passed in March 2004, SSPA contained 51 provisions some of which were designed to: (1) strengthen the representative payee process and give Social Security additional tools to help carry out responsibilities for program stewardship; (2) establish higher standards for organizational payees; and (3) impose new sanctions for misuse of benefits. As of April 2005, 45 provisions were implemented/completed and the Agency is continuing to work on the remaining six provisions. Passed in December 2004, IRTPA focuses on document verification, limiting the number of replacement cards, fraud indicators and birth/death records of states. Social Security is currently conducting the analysis and planning necessary for implementation of these.

Social Security will also expand the range of electronic services offered to citizens and employers. The Agency will continue to encourage the public to use Social Security's Internet website, and it expects the trend of sustained and dramatic growth in online transactions, such as retirement applications and changes of address, to continue. For employers, Social Security expects continued increases in the use of electronic W-2 filing, with 60 percent filed electronically by the end of FY 2005 and 70 percent by the end of FY 2006. Social Security will partner with other Federal, State and local entities to promote consolidated service delivery, with e-Government being a big part of its future. The Agency has invested substantially in electronic service delivery and will continue to do so as an efficient means of providing service to the burgeoning population of baby boomers.

In FY 2005, Social Security will achieve a 120 percent growth over the FY 2003 baseline in usage of electronic entitlement and supporting actions and in FY 2006, a 180 percent increase over the FY 2003 baseline.

By the end of the calendar year, all States and the District of Columbia will be processing electronic folders. And plans are underway to begin expansion of the electronic disability folder to include Continuing Disability Review cases.

While most forms and applications are now available online at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov), the Agency is aggressively marketing all of Social Security's online services using many innovative approaches. In addition, Social Security is partnering with other public and private sector organizations to publicize online services. One of the most promising groups the Agency is working with is the human resource professionals in large businesses and organizations.

Social Security will also continue its national and local public information efforts to keep Americans informed about the long-range solvency issues facing the program. Agency employees at all levels throughout the country will continue to communicate with the public at seminars, conferences and forums about Social Security programs and financial facts, as well as the long-range challenges facing the Trust Funds. The Agency will also continue to market *Social Security Online's* expanded products and interactive services.

Social Security is an agency committed to technology and innovation, but it is also an agency which believes that the ultimate resources needed to meet future challenges are the continued dedication and competence of its employees. Those employees understand that every claim and every benefit payment represents an individual. In the past three years, they and the Agency have used the Agency's Results Agenda goals to build a foundation for service delivery that is equal to the demands of a 21st century environment - an environment where results do matter.

