



Report Summary

Social Security Administration
Office of the Inspector General

Assessment of the Adequacy of the Social Security Administration's Controls Over the Use of Signature Proxies on Applications for Benefits (Limited Distribution) (A-14-05-15078)

Our objective was to determine the adequacy of controls over the use of signature proxies as alternatives to the pen-and-ink or "wet" signatures on applications for benefits.

The Social Security Administration's (SSA) claim-taking process is evolving to an electronic environment. To eliminate the need for retaining paper applications, SSA implemented signature proxy alternatives to the pen-and-ink or "wet" signatures required on applications for Title II and Title XVI benefits. The signature alternatives applied to cases processed on or after June 21, 2004, in SSA's automated claims systems, the Modernized Claims System and the Modernized Supplemental Security Income System.

We assessed the adequacy of SSA's controls over the risks of using signature proxies to sign applications for benefits. We recognize SSA's efforts to improve claims processing efficiencies. While additional claims processing controls were implemented, such as modifications made to annotate the Agency's claims systems for signature proxies and the retention of a record of the application in the Online Retrieval System, we believe the Agency should take additional steps to improve the process to help mitigate risks.

We made seven recommendations to the Agency. The Agency agreed with six recommendations and considered our remaining recommendation, but chose to not implement it.

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