

Appendix 1

Summary of FY 2001 Performance Goals

Strategic Goal: To promote valued, strong, and responsive social security programs and conduct effective policy development, research, and program evaluation	
<i>Objectives: To promote policy changes, based on research and evaluation analysis, that shape the OASI and DI programs in a manner that takes account of future demographic and economic challenges, provides an adequate base of economic security for workers and their dependents, and protects vulnerable populations.</i>	
Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
<p>Identification, development, and utilization of appropriate barometer measures for assessing the effectiveness of OASDI programs</p> <p>Preparation of analyses and reports on the effect of OASDI programs on different populations in order to identify areas for policy change and develop options as appropriate</p> <p>Preparation of analyses and reports on demographic, economic, and international trends and their effects of OASDI programs in order to anticipate the need for policy change and develop options as appropriate</p> <p>Preparation of research and policy evaluation necessary to assist the Administration and congress in developing proposals to strengthen and enhance the solvency of OASDI programs</p>	<p>Prepare summary and analysis on the barometer measures</p> <p>Prepare reports on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Effect of OASDI programs on various subgroups of beneficiaries, including women, minorities, and low-wage workers; 2. Study on characteristics of people receiving DI benefits; 3. Analysis of the effect of changes in Social Security retirement benefits on the DI program <p>Prepare analyses on the following topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Labor force transitions in the elderly population; 2. Implications for retirement income security of shifts from defined benefit to defined contribution plans through study of lump-sum payments from employer pensions; 3. Differences across subgroups in saving; 4. International retirement policy reforms <p>Prepare analyses on the distributional and fiscal effects of solvency proposals developed by the Administration, Congress, and other policy makers (we will analyze new proposals and/or modify analyses of previous proposals based on new data)</p>

Objective: To promote policy changes, based on research and evaluation analysis, that shape the SSI program in a manner that protects vulnerable populations, anticipates the evolving needs of SSI populations, and integrates SSI benefits with other social benefit programs to provide a safety net for aged, blind, and disabled individuals.

Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
Identification, development, and utilization of appropriate barometer measures for assessing the effectiveness of the SSI program	Prepare summary and analysis on the barometer measures
Preparation of a report and completion of data collection on the SSI Childhood Disability Survey in order to assess the impact of welfare reform, identify areas of potential policy change, and develop options as appropriate	Complete interviewing for the first wave on the SSI Childhood Disability Survey
Preparation of analyses on sources of support for the SSI population in order to identify areas for better coordination with other social benefits and develop options as appropriate	Prepare analysis and report on child support enforcement
Preparation of analyses on SSI simplification opportunities	Prepare analyses of complex SSI policies

Objective: To promote policy changes, based on research and evaluation analysis, that shape the disability program in a manner that increases self-sufficiency and takes account of changing needs based on the medical, technological, demographic, job market, and societal trends.

Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
Increase in number of DI adult worker beneficiaries who begin a trial work period	10%
Increase in number of SSI disabled beneficiaries, aged 18-64, participating in 1619(a)	10%
Preparation of a research design to develop techniques for validating medical listings	Prepare a preliminary report on the development of the validation methodology
Preparation of reports on results of the National Study of Health and Activity in order to identify potentially eligible disabled populations, interventions that enable continued work effort among the disabled, and guide changes to the disability decision process	Initiate main study data collection
Prepare analysis of alternative return-to-work strategies	Design and initiate implementation of demonstration projects

Objective: Provide information for decisionmakers and others on the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income programs through objective and responsive research, evaluation, and policy development

Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
Percent of customers assigning a high rating to the quality of SSA's research and analysis products in terms of accuracy, reliability, comprehensiveness, and responsiveness	Establish a baseline
Percent of major statistical products that are timely	Establish a baseline for percent of major statistical products that are produced on schedule

Strategic Goal: To deliver customer-responsive world-class service

Output Measures for Major Budgeted Workloads

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSI claims processed • SSI aged claims processed • Initial disability claims processed • Hearings processed • SSN requests processed • 800-number calls handled 	<p>3,083,000</p> <p>136,400</p> <p>2,057,000</p> <p>582,000</p> <p>16,300,000</p> <p>57,000,000</p>
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Objective: By 2002, to have 9 out of 10 customers rate SSA's service as "good," "very good" or "excellent," with most rating it "excellent"

Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
Percent of SSA's core business customers rating SSA's overall service as excellent, very good or good	89%
Percent of SSA's core business customers rating SSA's overall service as excellent	40%
Percent of employers rating SSA's overall service as excellent, very good or good	94%
Percent of employers rating SSA's overall service as excellent	16%
Percent of callers who successfully access the 800-number within 5 minutes of their first call	92%
Percent of callers who get through to the 800-number on their first attempt	86%
Percent of public with an appointment waiting 10 minutes or less	85%
Percent of public without an appointment waiting 30 minutes or less	70%
Percent of 800 number calls handled accurately	90% service 95% payment

Strategic Goal: To deliver customer-responsive world-class service	
Objective: By 2002, to increase the range of program information services available to customers over the phone and electronically	
Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
New or expanded service available over the phone	Take retirement or survivors claims immediately over the telephone, or in person, as long as the applicant has all the information needed – fully implemented
New or expanded service available electronically	Pilot/implement additional forms and transactional services, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retirement and Survivors claim forms; and • Additional on-line transactional services for beneficiaries; and • Establish an Electronic Death Certification pilot with the Bureau of Vital Statistics; verification of name/SSN match before sending data to SSA
Number of customers accessing Social Security Online	23 million (as measured by SSA servers)
Number of online Social Security Statement requests as compared to the number of 800 Number ARU Social Security Statement requests	50 percent initiated on Internet
Objective: To raise the number of customers who receive service and payments on time	
Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
Initial disability claims average processing time (days)	117 days
Hearings average processing time (days)	208 days
Percent increase in PPWY in hearings process	14%
Percent of OASI claims processed by the time the first regular payment is due or within 14 days from effective filing date, if later	83%
Percent of SSI aged claims processed by the time the first regular payment is due or within 14 days of the effective filing date, if later	TBD Once baseline established
Percent of original and replacement SSN cards issued within 5 days of receiving all necessary documentation	97%

Strategic Goal: To make SSA program management the best-in-business, with zero tolerance for fraud and abuse	
<i>Output Measures for Major Budgeted Workloads</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic review CDRs processed • SSI non-disability redeterminations • Annual earnings postings • Representative payee actions 	<p>1,729,000</p> <p>2,050,000</p> <p>259,400,000</p> <p>7,461,900</p>
<i>Objective: To make benefit payments in the right amount</i>	
Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
Dollar accuracy of OASI payment outlays: % w/o overpayments	99.8%
% w/o underpayments	99.8%
DDS net decisional accuracy rate	97%
DDS allowance performance accuracy rate	96.5%
DDS denial performance accuracy rate	93.5%
OHA decisional accuracy rate	87%
Dollar accuracy of SSI payment outlays: % w/o overpayments	95.5%
% w/o underpayments	98.8%
Percent of Social Security numbers issued accurately	99.8%
<i>Objective: To become current with DI and SSI CDR requirements by 2002</i>	
Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
Percent of multi-year (FY 1996-2002) CDR plan completed	83%
<i>Objective: To maintain through 2002, current levels of accuracy and timeliness in posting earnings data to individual's earnings records</i>	
Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent of wage items posted to individuals' records by September 30 	98%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent of earnings posted correctly 	99%
<i>Objective: To aggressively deter, identify and resolve fraud</i>	
Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
Number of investigations conducted (i.e., closed)	8,000
OASDI dollar amounts reported from investigative activities	\$55 million
SSI dollar amounts reported from investigative activities	\$90 million
Number of criminal convictions	2,500

Strategic Goal: To make SSA program management the best-in-business, with zero tolerance for fraud and abuse	
<i>Objective: To increase debt collections by 7 percent annually through 2002</i>	
Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
OASDI debt collected	\$1,364.1 million
SSI debt collected	\$732.7 million

Strategic Goal: To be an employer that values and invests in each employee	
<i>Objective: To provide the necessary tools and training to achieve a highly skilled and high-performing workforce</i>	
Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
Percent of offices with access to Interactive Video Training/Interactive Distance Learning (IVT/IDL)	100%
Formal management development programs implemented	All leadership programs continued. Decisions on future SES/CDP & ALP have yet to be made.
Percent of managerial staff participating in management/leadership development experiences	33 1/3%
<i>Objective: To provide a physical environment that promotes the health and well-being of employees</i>	
Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
Percent of employees reporting they are satisfied with the level of security in their facility	75%
Percent of environmental air quality surveys completed and percent of the corrective actions taken when called for	20% facilities surveyed, 75% corrective actions taken
Number of facilities having water quality testing and percent of corrective actions taken when called for	42 facilities tested, 100% corrective actions taken
Number of relocated offices having security surveys and percent of SSA accepted security recommendations implemented	150 offices surveyed, 87% accepted recommendations implemented
<i>Objective: To promote an Agency culture that successfully incorporates our values</i>	
Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
Create Agency change strategy	Implement strategy
<i>Objective: To create a workforce to serve SSA's diverse customers in the twenty-first century</i>	
Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
Complete Agency plan for transitioning to the workforce of the future	Implement and update transition plan Develop and implement action items from employee survey

Strategic Goal: To strengthen public understanding of the Social Security Programs	
<i>Objective: By 2005, 9 out of 10 Americans will be knowledgeable about the Social Security programs in five important areas</i>	
Performance Indicator	FY 2001 Goal
Percent of individuals issued Social Security Statements as required by law	100%
Percent of public who are knowledgeable about Social Security programs	70%

Appendix 2

Crosswalk of Performance Goals to Major Programs

Strategic Goal: Responsive Programs	OASI	DI	SSI
Identification, development, and utilization of appropriate barometer measures for assessing the effectiveness of OASDI programs	X	X	
Preparation of analyses and reports on the effect of OASDI programs on different populations in order to identify areas for policy change and develop options as appropriate	X	X	
Preparation of analyses and reports on demographic, economic, and international trends and their effects of OASDI programs in order to anticipate the need for policy change and develop options as appropriate	X	X	
Preparation of research and policy evaluation necessary to assist the Administration and Congress in developing proposals to strengthen and enhance the solvency of OASDI programs	X	X	
Identification, development, and utilization of appropriate barometer measures for assessing the effectiveness of SSI programs			X
Preparation of a report and completion of data collection on the SSI Childhood Disability Survey in order to assess the impact of welfare reform, identify areas of potential policy change, and develop options as appropriate			X
Preparation of analyses on sources of support for the SSI population in order to identify areas for better coordination with other social benefits and develop options as appropriate			X
Preparation of analyses of complex SSI policies			X
Number of DI adult worker beneficiaries who begin a trial work period		X	
Number of SSI disabled beneficiaries, aged 18-64, who are working			X
Preparation of a research design to develop techniques for validating medical listings		X	X
Preparation of reports on results of the National Study of Health and Activity in order to identify potentially eligible disabled populations, interventions that enable continued work effort among the disabled, and guide changes to the disability decision process		X	X
Prepare analysis of alternative return-to-work strategies		X	X
Percent of customers assigning a high rating to the quality of SSA's research and analysis products in terms of accuracy, reliability, comprehensiveness, and responsiveness	X	X	X
Percent of major statistical products that are timely	X	X	X

Strategic Goal: World-Class Service	OASI	DI	SSI
RSI claims processed	X		
SSI aged claims processed			X
Initial disability claims processed		X	X
Disability claims pending		X	X
Hearings processed	X	X	X
Hearings pending	X	X	X
SSN requests processed	X	X	X
800-number calls handled	X	X	X
Percent of SSA's core business customers rating SSA's overall service as "excellent," "very good" or "good"	X	X	X
Percent of SSA's core business customers rating SSA's overall service as "excellent"	X	X	X
Percent of employers rating SSA's overall service as "excellent," "very good" or "good"	X	X	
Percent of employers rating SSA's overall service as "excellent"	X	X	
Percent of callers who successfully access the 800-number within 5 minutes of their first call	X	X	X
Percent of callers who get through to the 800-number on their first attempt	X	X	X
Percent of public with an appointment waiting 10 minutes or less	X	X	X
Percent of public without an appointment waiting 30 minutes or less	X	X	X
Percent of 800 number calls handled accurately	X	X	X
New or expanded service available over the phone	X	X	X
New or expanded service available electronically	X	X	X
Number of customers accessing Social Security Online	X	X	X
Number of online Social Security Statement requests as compared to the number of paper 7004 Social Security Statement requests	X	X	X
Initial disability claims average processing time (days)		X	X
Hearings average processing time (days)	X	X	X
Percent increase in PPWY in hearings process	X	X	X
Percent of OASI claims processed by the time the first regular payment is due or within 14 days from effective filing date, if later	X		
Percent of SSI aged claims processed by the time the first regular payment is due or within 14 days of effective filing date, if later			X
Percent of original and replacement SSN cards issued within 5 days of receiving all necessary documentation	X	X	X

Strategic Goal: Program Management	OASI	DI	SSI
CDRs processed		X	X
SSI non-disability redeterminations			X
Annual earnings postings	X	X	
Representative payee actions	X	X	X
Dollar accuracy of OASI payment outlays: % w/o overpayments	X		
% w/o underpayments	X		
DDS net decisional accuracy rate		X	X
DDS allowance performance accuracy rate		X	X
DDS denial performance accuracy rate		X	X
OHA decisional accuracy rate		X	X
Dollar accuracy of SSI payment outlays: % w/o overpayments			X
% w/o underpayments			X
Percent of Social Security numbers issued accurately	X	X	X
Percent of multi-year (FY 1996-2002) CDR plan completed		X	X
Percent of wage items posted to individuals' records by September 30	X	X	
	X	X	
Number of investigations conducted (i.e., closed)	X	X	X
OASDI dollar amounts recovered from investigative activities	X	X	
SSI dollar amounts recovered from investigative activities			X
Number of criminal convictions	X	X	X
OASDI debt collected	X	X	
SSI debt collected			X
Strategic Goal: Valued Employees	OASI	DI	SSI
Percent of offices with access to Interactive Video Training/Interactive Distance Learning (IVT/IDL)	X	X	X
Formal management development programs implemented	X	X	X
Percent of managerial staff participating in management/leadership development experiences	X	X	X
Percent of employees reporting they are satisfied with the level of security in their facility	X	X	X
Percent of environmental air quality surveys completed and percent of the corrective actions taken when called for	X	X	X
Number of facilities having water quality testing and percent of corrective actions taken when called for	X	X	X
Number of relocated offices having security surveys and percent of SSA accepted security recommendations implemented	X	X	X
Create Agency change strategy	X	X	X
Complete Agency plan for transitioning to the workforce of the future	X	X	X
Strategic Goal: Public Understanding	OASI	DI	SSI
Percent of individuals issued SSA-Initiated Social Security Statements as required by law	X	X	
Percent of public knowledgeable about Social Security programs	X	X	X

Appendix 3

Description of Key Initiatives

Table of Contents

Automated Time and Attendance System	1
Combating Fraud	2
Competency-Based Human Resources Tools	5
Continuing Disability Review Process Enhancements	6
Create Strategy to Instill Values	7
Diverse Workforce/Transition Plan	8
Earnings Improvement Program	9
Electronic Disability System	11
Electronic Payment Services	13
Electronic Records Management	15
Electronic Service Delivery	16
Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities	18
Enhance the Environmental Health and Physical Security of the Workplace	22
Expand Electronic SSN Verification Services	24
Expand Electronic Wage Reporting	25
Financial/Administrative System	26
Hearings Process Improvement	28
Immediate Claims-Taking Services	29
Improve 800-Number Service	30
Improve Field Office Reception Process, Environment and Waiting Times	33
Improve Field Office Telephone Service	34
Improvements to the Disability Claims Process	35
Improvements to the Representative Payment Program	38
Information Exchange	41
Integrated Human Resources System	43
Interactive Video Teletraining	44
Intelligent Workstations/Local Area Networks	45
Leadership Training/Career Development	46
Market Measurement Program	47
Notice Improvements	49
Paperless Processing Centers	51
Plain Language	52
PolicyNet/Policy Repository	54
Preparing for the Year 2000	55
Service to the Non-English Speaking (NES) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) Public	56
Space Modernization and Improvements	57
Speech Recognition Software	58

Strengthening Public Understanding of the Social Security Programs	59
Strengthening Research, Evaluation and Policy Development	61
Supplemental Security Income PE Modernization	63
Talking and Listening to Customers	65
Title II System Redesign	66
Title XVI Debt	67
Update Medical Listings	69
Video Conferencing (VTC)	70

Automated Time and Attendance System

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources

The purpose of this Key Initiative is to provide an employee-oriented Time and Labor system which will provide automated sign-in/sign-out capability, automated leave slip submission and approval, and a management information tool which SSA managers consider an essential step in enabling them to deal with the shortage of administrative support. It will provide the services necessary to acquire, edit, process and transmit time and attendance information. It will provide a platform to support management information requirements for time and attendance data.

Implementation will be rolled out through the year 2002.

Schedule:

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2000 | Prepare cost-benefit analysis. |
| | Prepare detailed training and implementation plans. |
| | Acquire and modify software. |
| | Conduct limited training and implement pilot. |
| 2001 | Begin training and implementation of new system. |

Combating Fraud

*Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Finance, Assessment and Management
Inspector General*

While SSA has a strong program to combat fraud, waste and abuse, we have identified several areas where more work is needed. While not an exhaustive list of the efforts SSA is making to combat fraud and recover overpayments, the following are the major areas of emphasis:

Fraud Prevention and Detection:

- ❖ Implementing Border Office initiatives in an effort to verify U.S. residency for SSI recipients on both borders with addresses near borders.
- ❖ Revising the integrity review process by continuing the development of a Comprehensive Integrity Review Program (CIRP) to identify fraud prone situations and better focus security audits.
- ❖ Installing two-tiered personal identification number (PIN) control for certain automated transactions sensitive to fraud.
- ❖ Increasing efforts to publicize the Agency's initiatives to combat fraud and enhance public perception that SSA programs are well-managed.
- ❖ Updating internal procedures to reflect the current policy for addressing fraud related issues.
- ❖ Conducting international validation surveys.

Referrals and Investigations:

- ❖ Establishing Electronic Crimes Teams to increase investigative and forensic capabilities allowing the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to successfully engage criminal activity in an automated or electronic environment.
- ❖ Conducting cooperative pilots using Federal, State and local resources to investigate fraud.

Enforcement:

- ❖ Implementing legislation to impose administrative sanctions in the form of periods of ineligibility on individuals who furnish inaccurate information in connection with a claim for benefits.

- ❖ Expanding Civil Monetary Penalty (CMP) authorities regarding the misuse of Social Security numbers and exclusion of beneficiaries.
- ❖ Enhancing the monitoring of restitution activity related to cases referred to the Inspector General resulting in court ordered restitution, and restitution activity resulting from civil referrals.
- ❖ Expanding Treasury Offset Program (TOP) to all delinquent debt.
- ❖ Implementing new collection tools made available by Congress, that is, cross program recoveries, administrative wage garnishment, Federal salary offset, interest charging, and the use of private collection agencies. (SSA has already implemented credit bureau reporting and administrative offset.)
- ❖ Implementing streamlined remittance processing.
- ❖ Completing the title II and title XVI debt management modernization.
- ❖ Establishing Office of General Counsel (OGC) pilot to increase prosecution of fraud cases referred to the United States Attorney's Office by SSA's OIG.

Management Information and Control: Designing appropriate data bases to track and monitor fraud referrals and administrative actions.

Schedule:

- 2000 Continue development of CIRP, Release 3
- Implement projects critical to the modernization of the title XVI debt management system.
- Establish additional State Disability Determination Cooperative Disability Investigations Pilot Project sites.
- Refer delinquent administrative debts to the Department of Treasury for cross servicing.
- Implement cross-program recovery.
- Develop notices, procedures, and functional requirements for administrative wage garnishment.
- Implement Streamlined Remittance Process.
- Implement OGC Anti-Fraud Pilot.

2001

Evaluate and conclude OGC Anti-Fraud Pilot.

Continue modernization of the debt management systems.

Continue development and enhancement of new debt collection tools: cross-program recovery, administrative wage garnishment, cross servicing, Federal salary offset, credit bureau referrals, and the use of private collection agencies.

Evolve from residency verification in border areas to general SSA eligibility issues nationwide.

Continue expansion of the Cooperative Disability Determination Investigations Pilot sites.

Coordinate implementation of the Identity Theft and Deterrence Act of 1998 with the Federal Trade Commission.

Continue progress with the identification and referral of fugitive felons.

Reassess Agency vulnerability to employee fraud and develop additional countermeasures as needed.

Continue efforts to enhance the Agency's ability to protect critical infrastructures.

Implement CIRP, Release 3 (to encompass SSI reviews).

Competency-Based Human Resources Tools

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources

To meet the needs of SSA's diverse customers as well as the changing environment as we enter the 21st century, SSA must clearly identify the skills needed by the future SSA workforce. Competency-based human resources tools will enable SSA to analyze employee performance in the job, determine what competencies are needed for employees to perform well, and identify training needs and hiring criteria.

Schedule:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2000 | Assess extent of appropriate person-to-job match with new hires and develop a competency contractor statement of work. |
| 2001 | Develop and implement competency models and tools.
Evaluate their effectiveness for selection of new hires.

Expand use of competencies to select new SSA hires and for employee needs assessment and development purposes. |

Continuing Disability Review Process Enhancements

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Disability and Income Security Programs

Congress has provided authority for an increase in discretionary spending caps for FYs 1996-2002 to fund the cost of processing CDRs. In the fourth year of the revised 7-year plan SSA has made considerable progress in conducting CDRs of disability cases. The plan is designed to allow SSA to become current on title II CDRs by the end of FY 2000 and on title XVI CDRs by the end of FY 2002. The plan has allowed SSA to streamline the CDR process, and includes the following major areas of emphasis.

- ❖ Use of the profiling and mailing process enables SSA to conduct many reviews based on the beneficiaries' responses. If, however, the beneficiaries' responses to the mailer, when viewed in conjunction with other medical and historical data, indicate a possibility of medical improvement, a full medical review is initiated. SSA is implementing various innovations to improve the accuracy of the profiling to increase its ability to identify the factors that indicate medical improvement.
- ❖ Improvement of CDR case flow, management information and workload control systems to ensure operational components can adequately manage the heavy workloads. Other operational improvements include updating procedural instructions for SSA field offices and DDS'.

Schedule:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2000 | <p>Continue to monitor and evaluate the CDR mailer contract to determine its reliability as an instrument that accurately and consistently predicts the need for a full medical review.</p> <p>Continue to monitor and evaluate the CDR data management contract intended to improve the profiling process by analyzing the databases and data elements used for the CDR process.</p> <p>Review and revise prior assumptions and incorporate actual workload figures to revise the Agency's current 7-year CDR plan.</p> <p>Refine and enhance "medium profile" for title II cases.</p> <p>Determine the extent to which MINE cases can be processed via the mailer process.</p> |
| 2001 | <p>Finish statement of work for study/verification of the Medical Diary Process.</p> <p>Develop new profiles for Title XVI childhood cases.</p> |

Create Strategy to Instill Values

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources

The purpose of this Key Initiative is to promote an Agency culture that successfully incorporates its values. Our shared practices and group values create our culture. This initiative will build a culture that will support SSA's values, which are:

- ❖ To treat every individual with equal regard and respect.
- ❖ To act with integrity.
- ❖ To imbue quality in all we do and help others do the same.
- ❖ To remember that courtesy and compassion mean everything.
- ❖ To listen carefully and to act on what we hear.
- ❖ To respect stability and embrace change, keeping what works and changing what could work better.
- ❖ To value diversity.
- ❖ To discharge faithfully our role as guardians of the public trust.
- ❖ To act with this thought in mind: to millions of people, we are "the government."

SSA is performing a baseline study, gap analysis, and benchmarking study, leading to the creation of a change strategy. We will design and begin implementation of the change strategy in FY 2000. As a result of our renewed culture, all employees will exhibit SSA's values when they provide direct service to our customers.

Schedule:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2000 | Develop and implement change strategy. |
| 2001 | Continue change process. |

Diverse Workforce/Transition Plan

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources

This Key Initiative has four major purposes:

- ❖ To create a SSA workforce of diverse employees.
- ❖ To hire and retain employees who are well qualified and satisfied.
- ❖ To provide employees with proper tools, training, environment and leadership.
- ❖ To ensure that employees provide world-class service to SSA customers now and in the future.

The SSA Future Workforce Transition Plan will:

- ❖ Help us acquire the workforce we need for the future, through recruitment of new employees and training of current employees.
- ❖ Help employees achieve satisfaction with work, family and career goals.

SSA is collecting baseline information on employee and Agency needs, both now and into the future. Gaps will be analyzed and actions planned. Strategies for hiring, training, and retaining employees will be developed and implemented.

SSA has already:

- ❖ Developed a strategy for hiring underrepresented groups.
- ❖ Convened a management/union partnership workgroup to develop recommendations on family/friendly workplace issues, which are being implemented.
- ❖ Issued a report on the needs of our employees with disabilities. Convened an ongoing team to enhance services to these employees.
- ❖ Issued a Retirement Wave study report.
- ❖ Issued a management/union partnership report that identifies barriers to our “One Agency Concept” and proposes solutions.

Schedule:

2000 Continue to develop, implement and evaluate competency models.

2000-2001 Conduct and evaluate employee satisfaction surveys.

 Continue to develop, deliver and evaluate training for employees with disabilities.

 Annually update Transition Plan.

Earnings Improvement Program

Lead SSA Officials: Deputy Commissioner for Finance, Assessment and Management and Deputy Commissioner for Operations

SSA has developed a comprehensive 5-year plan for further improvement of the earnings process systems. The plan includes all the following major activities:

Reduce Earnings Suspense File (ESF): The purpose of this initiative is to reduce both the rate of growth of the ESF and the size of the existing file. Accretion prevention measures will focus on improved SSA and employer awareness and accountability, outreach to problem industries, States and employers, strengthened SSA validation capabilities, better use of verification services and improved policy and enforcement activities. To reduce the size of the existing file, SSA will analyze the composition of the ESF to identify problems and select strategic opportunity areas, and develop an implementation strategy and schedule focused on identified opportunities.

Earnings Process Improvements: SSA has formulated plans to improve the manner in which earnings are established, corrected and adjusted, provide a more convenient way for wage data to be accessed by both employers and employees, and improve coordination among the various SSA data files--over 60--that contain related information about employers, employees and the wages associated with each. Additionally, the plans provide the infrastructure support to prepare SSA's earnings systems to accommodate more electronic business, especially to use the SSA's Internet as a primary method of conducting earnings business with all our customers.

There are currently six different programs that provide earnings history and benefit estimates to SSA customers. These programs evolved at different times in the past, for different purposes, and they do not produce consistently uniform results. In addition, SSA is concerned that today's Social Security Statement process (formerly known as Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement (PEBES)) process limits customer options. Currently, the Social Security Statement provides age 62 and full retirement age benefit estimates. Individuals often want to have several estimates between age 62 and full retirement age when deciding to make a retirement decision. To address these problems, SSA will develop a single algorithm/computer routine to provide program benefit estimates and will provide options for customers to request benefit estimates using variable assumptions about earnings and other factors relevant to the computation.

Earnings Management Information: SSA will provide integrated, reliable management information (MI) to decision makers who are responsible for improving earnings accuracy and timeliness and for ensuring customer focused support and services. SSA's strategy is to develop a universal Earnings Data Warehouse. Detailed earnings transaction data will be housed in flexible relational database management systems. Customers will be given tools for easy access to the data from their workstations.

Schedule:

2000 Begin 100% SSA-initiated Social Security Statements.

2001 Complete development of the overnight verification system and incorporate user enhancements.

Complete work on the changes for AWR Tax Year 2000 processing.

Electronic Disability System (eDIB)

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Systems

From the knowledge gained in testing disability process redesign concepts, SSA has updated its strategy for achieving improvements in the administration of the disability program. In March 1999, the Agency set forth the next steps in disability process redesign, as well as new and expanded program initiatives.

One such initiative is to replace the Reengineered Disability System (RDS) project with the Electronic Disability System (eDIB). The eDIB project builds on lessons learned from the RDS and an independent consultant assessment of the RDS pilot. The objective of eDIB is to develop a fully electronic process that supports the planned improvements to the disability program. The electronic process accomplishes the following:

- ❖ Improve the availability of disability information across processing components by eliminating reliance on paper folders.
- ❖ Reduce the cost of mailing, handling, and storing paper folders. Reduce time spent rearranging and photocopying paper files.
- ❖ Leverage the investment in distributed DDS systems by creating interface with the electronic folder.
- ❖ Improve the disability interview process by providing automated interview screens as well as a method to electronically capture accurate application data provided by clients.
- ❖ Enhance processing of disability claims in the hearing office.
- ❖ Provide a method for exchanging medical records with the health care industry.
- ❖ Define electronic folder standards.

The eDIB is essential to removing the paper folder from the disability claims process. As the new system is being developed, we will study the effects of a paperless process upon adjudication methods. We will also study and apply changes to the process incrementally:

1. Conduct a proof-of-concept – This demonstrated how key information collected through the disability interview process will be stored in an electronic folder. An existing DDS system accessed the electronic folder and imported some information to begin the adjudication of the claim. The initial activity began in July 1999 in a laboratory environment. A second version was implemented in December 1999 which incorporated some of the results of the initial test. Plans are underway to move to the next step and make eDIB ready for processing live cases.
2. Migrate to electronic processing – Continuous improvement of eDIB will result in a product that can be used in live production sites. The first implementation is planned for the Delaware DDS and field offices during the third quarter of FY 2000. This step will help identify the standard requirements for the eDIB electronic folder.
3. Develop eDIB folder standards – As eDIB is built, SSA will conduct early pilots to test the new electronic process and identify those pieces of information that are necessary for processing a disability claim. Supporting information will be included

as images of the original documents. To process the information, SSA will establish hardware and software infrastructure for eDIB. This activity will result in electronic folder standards that will be used by DDS software vendors to interface eDIB with individual State systems. The standards will be ready in early FY 2001 and it is possible that some DDS pilots of eDIB could begin later in the year.

4. Interface distributed systems with eDIB – As the DDS systems are interfaced with eDIB, other SSA components will need to interface with eDIB. As the requirements are identified, the necessary links will be built. Ultimately, every component involved in the disability program will share information with eDIB. Since the hardware necessary to support eDIB will be identified and tested during FY 2001, the rollout of eDIB may need to be planned as part of a future IWS/LAN replacement.

Electronic processing is essential to SSA's overall approach to meeting the challenges of improving the Agency's disability system capability. The following shows the high level timeframes for achieving the eDIB objectives:

Schedule:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2000 | Establish eDIB in the Delaware DDS and field offices.

Conduct early electronic folder pilots in New York, Wisconsin, and California |
| 2001 | Establish eDIB standards for hardware and software interface with other DDS systems. |

Electronic Payment Services

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Finance, Assessment and Management

This Key Initiative has three major purposes:

- ❖ To implement the provisions of the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996, which require all Federal payments to be delivered by means of electronic funds transfer;
- ❖ To improve public service and administrative efficiency by expanding SSA's use of the Automated Clearing House system to facilitate the exchange of program-related information; and
- ❖ To modernize the payment disbursement process to take maximum advantage of an all-electronic payment environment.

Electronic Funds Transfer 99 (EFT99): The EFT99 provision of the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 requires all Federal payments, with the exception of tax refunds, to be made electronically by January 2, 1999. Implementation of EFT99 is complete and provides Federal payment recipients a range of payment choices including traditional direct deposit accounts, low-cost electronic transfer accounts, electronic benefits transfer, and self-determined waivers for recipients for whom compliance with EFT99 would be a hardship. SSA will continue to work closely with the Treasury Department to encourage the use of EFT among the remaining 13 million check recipients who are receiving Social Security and SSI checks. In addition, SSA is working to make Treasury's electronic transfer account web site available in SSA field offices to better serve recipients who inquire about their payment options.

Use of the National Automated Clearinghouse (ACH): As the number of beneficiaries being paid electronically increases, SSA and the financial community become more dependent upon each other for the exchange of both payments and payment-related information. The natural pathway for this exchange is the ACH system, which is maintained mostly by the Federal Reserve.

SSA has taken the lead within the Federal community in using the ACH to improve communications with the Nation's financial institutions and, thereby, achieve improved service and efficiency. Examples of achievement include notifying banks immediately via the ACH when a recipient with direct deposit dies (to eliminate overpayments) and electronic notice to SSA from the bank when a beneficiary enrolls for direct deposit. SSA has improved EFT services for representative payees by providing additional identifying information with the payment record. SSA is investigating the feasibility of using the ACH to replace the current manual processes we use to verify bank balances for SSI applicants and to enable banks to notify SSA when a direct deposit customer changes his/her residence address.

Modernize the Disbursement Process

This initiative will change the way the 3rd of the month Social Security payment file is delivered to Treasury. Currently, changes to the 3rd of the month master file are sent to Treasury throughout the month. With this initiative, the entire payment file is sent each month for processing. This will permit SSA to hold the payment files as long as possible, allowing the maximum amount of time to act on late reports of death or other post-entitlement events affecting the next scheduled payment.

Schedule:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2000 | EFT99—Implement final phase. Assumes Treasury’s Electronic Transfer Accounts are available by 01/00. |
| TBD | ACH Initiative—Determine feasibility of using ACH to verify data. |
| TBD | Modernize the Disbursement Process—EFT file certification in ACH format for 3 rd of the month file. |

Electronic Records Management

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Finance, Assessment and Management

The purpose of this Key Initiative is to make certain that SSA takes the steps necessary to implement an electronic record-keeping system to appropriately manage all of its administrative electronic records. These records include word processing documents, electronic spreadsheets and E-mail. In the past, there was a lot of flexibility with the management of electronic records. Under General Records Schedule (GRS)-20, a guideline provided by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Federal agencies were allowed to destroy electronic records once a hard copy had been produced. In 1996, an advocacy group challenged NARA's authority to allow destruction of electronic records under GRS-20 and the issue was taken to Court (Citizens versus Carlin). Initially, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia ruled GRS-20 to be "null and void" and NARA was directed to provide agencies with guidelines on managing electronic records. In a subsequent appeal, however, this ruling was reversed by the United States Court of Appeals (August 06, 1999). What this recent reversal means to mandatory electronic records management is unclear at this time. However, regardless of the outcome of the above Court battle, the current business trend is towards the prudent management of all electronic records. NARA is now advising agencies to direct their resources towards planning for the implementation of an electronic record keeping system. Also, the Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA), which takes effect in FY 2004, continues to provide a strong impetus for all Federal agencies to develop and maintain the capability to manage records electronically for their full legal retention period. Under GPEA (Public Law 105-277), by October 2003, agencies must give persons and entities that are required to maintain, submit or disclose information to the Federal Government, the option of doing so electronically when practicable as a substitute for paper. Accordingly, SSA must continue with this important Key Initiative, in the most cost-effective manner possible, as detailed below.

Schedule:

- 2000 Finalize Project Scope Agreement with the Office of Systems.

- 2001 Conduct pilots to test available software packages.
 - Evaluate pilots.
 - Select software package.
 - Finalize procurement package.

Electronic Service Delivery

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Disability and Income Security Programs

The purpose of the Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) initiative is to further expand customer options for convenient, cost-effective, secure, and user-friendly electronic services. Major activities fall into two key areas: Internet Customer Services and Field Office Customer Assistance.

Internet Customer Services: SSA has a World Wide Web Home Page on the Internet that has been the recipient of numerous awards for its clarity, rich content, and usefulness to the public. We project that SSA will serve 15.8 million Internet customers in 2000. Our FY 2001 goal is to serve 23 million customers. With the growth of online direct services as a “best” business practice, customers expect SSA--like other world-class service providers--to offer an ever-increasing range of services via the Net.

One of the barriers to expanded Internet services is the need for reliable ways to authenticate electronic customers. We are examining a broad range of possible authentication solutions including digital certificates and Pin/Password technology. SSA will employ appropriate levels of authentication for all electronic services and applications introduced on the Internet.

Two other important concerns are being addressed. At times, in order to complete their electronic transactions, customers must be able to get assistance (i.e., online Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), a video clip showing what to do, an automatic link to SSA’s 800 number, etc.). SSA has established a “lab” for assessing customer support technologies. In addition, SSA will be soliciting input from customers and stakeholders concerning implementation of Internet suites of services and customer support.

Schedule:

2000 Obtain stakeholder input.

Provide frequently used forms online that customers can print and complete in paper while electronic versions are being developed, per the Government Paperwork Elimination Act and the White House memorandum of December 17, 1999.

Begin developing the policies and technical architecture for authentication, including:

1. Establishing a methodology for assessing application risk.
2. Establishing PIN/Password policies for online claimants and beneficiaries.
3. Conducting pilots with employers and the medical community to demonstrate the use of digital certificates.

4. Continuing to play a key role in developing national policy for customer authentication by participating in the Federal Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) Steering Committee and other government/private sector partnership efforts.

Pilot and evaluate two services from the Retirement suite—the Retirement Planning capability and electronic collection of Retirement Claim information.

Implement an ongoing program to make the public aware of new electronic options for conducting business and how to be authenticated to use them.

Reevaluate strategy based on customer activity and input, as new Agency direction is articulated, adjust milestones accordingly.

2001 Pilot/implement additional forms and transactional services including:

- New retirement and survivors claim forms;
- New on-line transactional services for beneficiaries; and
- Establish an Electronic Death Certification pilot with the Bureau of Vital Statistics verification of name/SSN match before sending data to SSA.

Evaluate resources and other requirements for online inquiries and customer support involving interaction with SSA employees.

Reevaluate strategy periodically and, as new Agency direction is articulated, adjust milestones accordingly.

Field Office Customer Assistance: SSA has implemented a small proof-of-concept to test user-friendly kiosks in selected SSA field offices for evaluation of customer acceptance as well as costs and benefits. SSA customers who visit field offices may complete certain forms necessary for the service to be finalized on a face-to-face basis. Integration of customer-completed electronic forms into field office work flows and customer satisfaction will also be evaluated as part of this study.

Schedule:

2000 Evaluate results of prototype and decide how to proceed.

2001 TBD

Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Disability and Income Security Programs

This Key Initiative is a comprehensive program to ensure a substantial increase in the number of beneficiaries who return to work and achieve self-sufficiency. It includes all the following activities:

The Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program: In FY 2001, SSA will begin to implement the Ticket provisions mandated by Public Law (P.L.) 106-170, the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999. Under this new law, a disabled beneficiary would be issued a Ticket that he or she may assign to an approved provider of services --called an Employment Network (EN)—and receive vocational rehabilitation and employment services. If the beneficiary returns to work and stops receiving disability benefits due to earnings, the EN will be paid under a performance based system, either an outcome-payment or an outcome milestone payment.

We will begin to implement the Ticket Program in some states in January 2001. The program will be phased in nationally over a three year period. The Program Manager will be operating and Employment Networks will be under contract to SSA in these states. Tickets will be issued to some beneficiaries. New work incentive provisions will be available nationwide including extended Medicare coverage for persons who work, expedited reinstatement to benefits for persons who must stop working because of their medical condition and suspension of continuing disability reviews for persons using a ticket.

Under other provisions of this legislation, SSA will establish a national grants program that will provide beneficiaries with benefits planning assistance and protection and advocacy services to support their efforts to gain employment.

Expanded Health Insurance for People with Disabilities Who Are Working: SSA is collaborating with the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) to encourage States to extend Medicaid coverage to working disabled beneficiaries in accordance with provisions of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. Several States have plans in place, and our objective is to educate consumers and State officials about the importance of assuring the availability of health insurance to beneficiaries who are working or want to work.

SSA is also working with HCFA on the implementation of the health insurance provisions of P.L.106-170, to provide extended Medicare coverage for SSDI beneficiaries who have gone to work, and expanded State options to provide Medicaid for workers with disabilities.

SSA, HCFA, and other Federal agencies are holding public education forums across the country on methods to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities. These events are also publicizing innovative health care options. SSA has also conducted joint

outreach activities with HCFA to increase public awareness of the Qualified Disabled and Working Individual (QDWI) buy-in program for Part A Medicare.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program Enhancements: SSA is currently using contractor and interagency agreement resources to assist with improving the rehabilitation and employment opportunities available to beneficiaries with disabilities. The objective is to make VR services more readily available to both SSA-referred and self-referred individuals while improving the administration and cost-effectiveness of the VR program.

During FY 2000, SSA will begin the transition from the current VR Reimbursement Program to the Ticket to Work program. State VR agencies will retain the option under P.L.106-170 of continuing to receive payments for the cost of VR services under the current reimbursement program or to receive the same performance-based payments as non-State Employment Networks will be eligible to receive. SSA will begin phasing out the use of alternate participants and move toward the use of employment networks to provide services to beneficiaries who assign their tickets to such networks.

Employment Strategy Research: SSA has begun testing new ways to increase opportunities for beneficiaries with disabilities to receive the information and services they need to work. SSA has begun and will continue to fund projects that will broaden understanding of SSA's work incentives as well as projects that deliver direct services to beneficiaries and applicants.

❖ State Partnership Initiative (SPI)

The SPI initiative is designed to help States develop innovative and integrated, state-wide programs of services and supports for their residents with disabilities in order to increase job opportunities and decrease dependence on public benefits, including Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income.

In 1998, SSA awarded cooperative agreements to 12 States under the State Partnership Initiative (SPI) to develop innovative projects to assist adults with disabilities to reenter the work force. The States are: California, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

The cooperative agreements include funding from the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor. We expect to fund this program for five years. In 1998, SSA has awarded a contract to Virginia Commonwealth University to provide technical assistance to the States and to monitor and collect data on the State projects.

❖ New Demonstrations

In FY 2000 and 2001, SSA will develop new demonstrations as called for in Public Law 106-170. Areas of interest include early return-to-work intervention and employer incentives.

Policy Development and Education: On July 1, 1999, SSA increased the monthly earnings guidelines that are used in determining whether the work activities of a person with impairments other than blindness demonstrate that he or she is able to perform substantial gainful activity (SGA). Under the new rule, the \$500 amount rises to \$700 per month. The new rule also applies to self-employed workers in certain circumstances.

SSA is considering additional changes to our rules regarding work, including increases to the SGA amount, changes to the student earned income exclusion limits, and increases to the trial work period services amount. We expect that these changes will provide real incentives for beneficiaries to attempt to work and greater financial value for working beneficiaries to keep working or increase their work effort.

SSA is developing new public information materials to improve awareness and understanding of our work incentives. We are also reviewing existing publications, including the popular "Red Book" and "Graduating to Independence" and will revise them in FY 2000 and 2001.

Service Delivery: SSA is designing a new service delivery model to address the needs of beneficiaries who want to work. This initiative seeks to improve customer service in this area by dedicating specially trained field personnel to focus on working beneficiaries; by training SSA staff and our partners in the disability community on Social Security's employment and support provisions; by increasing electronic services and by providing employees and the public with better information about Social Security programs that encourage work.

SSA has created a new Employment Support Representative (ESR) position to provide front-line service to beneficiaries and others in the disability community. The ESR position will be tested in 32 locations across the country in FY 2000 and evaluated in FY 2001.

Youth Transition and Continuing Disability Reviews: This initiative explores a unique continuing disability review (CDR) process for youth aged 16-25 that will assist SSA in evaluating the work potential of this age group. Assessments will be made of the young persons' capabilities, e.g., language skills, physical capabilities and emotional strengths, to determine the type of education, training, special equipment, or other accommodations the young people with disabilities will need to prepare them for the transition from school to work. Provision for necessary equipment/services will actually be arranged for a sub-sample of this group.

Schedule:

- 2000 Distribute revised "Graduating To Independence" and "Red Book"
- Inaugurate new SSA website focused on "Return to Work"
- Monitor and evaluate performance of the RSVP contractor
- Implement effective provisions of Public Law 106-170
- Test Employment Support Representative (ESR) position.
- Conduct communication campaign designed to heighten employee understanding of the agency's return-to-work mission and their role
- Solicit public input for research and demonstration projects.
- 2001 Implement Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program (Public Law 106-170)
- Evaluate ESR pilots and plan for nationwide implementation
- Increase electronic services for working beneficiaries
- Report preliminary results of SPI projects
- Monitor benefits planning and assistance grants
- Conduct research and demonstration projects

Enhance Environmental Health and Physical Security in the Workplace

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Finance, Assessment and Management

In recent years, SSA has implemented many measures to enhance the environmental health and physical security of the workplace. The following are some of the most significant:

- ❖ A Union/Management Health and Safety Partnership Committee to provide oversight was established.
- ❖ SSA has completed a security evaluation of all field facilities.
- ❖ SSA has hosted Security Conferences each year from 1996 to 1999 for staff from all Headquarters and field components to heighten awareness and to provide a forum for employee input.
- ❖ A program of air quality testing has been implemented. The goal is to evaluate twenty percent of all SSA offices each year, with 75 percent of all required corrective actions identified in the comprehensive surveys being completed. In FY 1999, we exceeded our evaluation goal and completed surveys in 37 percent of SSA's field offices.
- ❖ A program of water sampling has been implemented. By the end of FY 2001, all SSA field offices will be evaluated and 100 percent of identified problems will be corrected. Over 660 field offices received water sampling in FY 1999.
- ❖ Environmental Health and Safety Comprehensive Assessments have been implemented. Assessments will be conducted in 10 percent of SSA facilities nationwide by the end of FY 2000.
- ❖ CPR training and supplies were provided for employee volunteers at SSA facilities nationwide.
- ❖ An employee survey is conducted biennially to assess employee satisfaction with the security of their offices. The results of the 1998 survey were available in FY 1999 and showed that 74 percent of the employees expressed satisfaction with the physical security of their offices, measured against our goal of 70 percent.

SSA is committed to continue these programs and correct problems as they are identified. The following are the most important activities planned for 2000-2001.

Schedule:

2000 Implement the hazard communication program in all field facilities.

Continue air and water quality sampling and timely remediation. Starting in FY 2000, schedule air and water quality surveys in coordination with asbestos surveys.

Continue Environmental Health and Safety Comprehensive Assessments.

Continue CPR training and provision of supplies to employee volunteers.

Continue enhancements to physical security.

2001 Continue air, water quality and asbestos surveys and timely remediation.

Continue Environmental Health and Safety Comprehensive Assessments.

Continue CPR training and provision of supplies to employee volunteers.

Continue enhancements to physical security.

Expand Electronic SSN Verification Services

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Finance, Assessment and Management

This is an initiative to provide employers with expanded name/SSN verification services. The most significant goal is to provide employers an electronic service for verification of SSNs. Employer validation services will be provided on-line, 10 at a time with an immediate response, as well as in batches (overnight response) for larger files. This initiative also includes planned SSA efforts to promote a general increase in the use of electronic SSN verification services.

It includes communications and marketing, particularly to employers who have significant numbers of wage items going into the Earnings Suspense File--that is, wage items which cannot be matched to any valid SSN. The implementation of this system will result in fewer wage items with invalid name/SSN combinations, thus reducing the Agency's Earnings Suspense File's rate of growth.

Schedule:

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|------|--|
| 2000 | Implement initial Internet Electronic Enumeration Verification Service. |
| 2001 | Expand employer participation and implement employer requested enhancements. |

Expand Electronic Wage Reporting

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Finance, Assessment and Management

A market analysis conducted by Lockheed Martin Corporation for SSA in 1996 indicates that, if SSA establishes and publicizes an infrastructure to accept electronic wage reports, it can expect electronic wage reports to be more than 22.7 percent of all submissions by the year 2005. This study is currently being updated. In the near term, a bulletin board facility is expected to be the single most popular electronic alternative. In the future (3 to 5 years), the Internet is expected to be the most popular alternative for annual wage reporting submissions. Electronic wage reporting capability will not only provide the business community additional easy-to-use and cost-effective ways to file wage reports but also lower SSA's processing costs, capture data more quickly and transmit information to the Internal Revenue Service within shorter time frames.

SSA has already completed proof-of-concept testing of wage reporting and has demonstrated that such reporting can be implemented securely and cost-effectively. SSA will not, however, be able to support this level of demand in a cost-effective manner with our current systems. Responding to this challenge, SSA plans to:

Expand Voluntary Electronic Reporting: SSA will provide more and better access methods and support services for electronic filers. These will include:

- ❖ Capability for employers to report via the Internet and dedicated lines
- ❖ Capability for employers to file reports via value-added networks
- ❖ A variety of responsive and convenient help desk services
- ❖ Facility for employers to download shareware and other wage reporting software

Schedule:

2000 Expansion of Magnetic Media Reporting and Electronic Filing (MMREF-revised reporting format) processing capability based on prior tax year experience.

Initial User Registration System.

Test Internet acceptance .

Redesign of diskette processes.

Initial Customer Support (Help desk via toll-free number).

2001 Reengineered magnetic tape process.

Full user registration system .

Analysis of initial electronic error notices.

Develop initial internet reporting capability.

Financial/Administrative Systems

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Finance, Assessment and Management

The purpose of this Key Initiative is to modernize SSA's financial/administrative processes and systems. It includes three sub-initiatives: Managerial Cost Accountability, Electronic Payments, and replacing the Agency's Accounting System.

The Managerial Cost Accountability Process (MCAP) and System (MCAS) will modernize the way SSA collects, organizes and provides management and financial information for SSA's programs and operations to SSA managers, analysts and outside entities which oversee SSA. MCAS fulfills a commitment to Congress to develop and implement this process and system, and is essential to meeting the government-wide requirements of the Federal Financial Accounting Standard (SFFAS) #4, Managerial Cost Accounting Standards. MCAP/MCAS will provide essential data to track our Strategic Goals and Objectives and determine the resources which each consumes. They will provide detailed managerial cost accountability for all SSA workloads and programs at all organizational levels, will facilitate the identification of best practices, and will help improve productivity.

The Electronic Payments (EP) sub-initiative will allow SSA to convert the significant number of Treasury checks and third party drafts issued for administrative payments to electronic funds transfer (EFT) and create a paperless business process for administrative payments and related customer service. This conversion is necessary to implement the stringent vendor payment requirements of the electronic payment provisions in the Debt Collection and Improvement Act of 1996. In addition, EP will result in significant Agency savings from the reduction in payments and better overall management of SSA funds by integrating the administrative payment processes with SSA's central accounting system.

SSA will be replacing the Financial Accounting System (FACTS) within the next 3 years. This sub-initiative will provide a comprehensive financial accounting system replacing accounts payable, accounts receivable, and core accounting systems currently included in the FACTS. Replacing FACTS is mandatory since many new regulatory and federal financial accounting standards, including SFFAS #4 (above) and OMB Circular A-127; Financial Management Systems must be implemented. Incorporation of these requirements is necessary for SSA to continue to receive an unqualified opinion on our annual financial statements. Overall, this sub-initiative will provide for better control of Agency funds and provide data consistency across the Agency.

Schedule:

- 2000 MCAP/MCAS – Project staff will be assigned to pursue detailed user outreach, project planning, requirements development and project management. The project will be segmented and approached through incremental releases. We will explore the availability of suitable commercial off-the-shelf software, and then determine the most cost-effective means for acquiring or developing MCAS.
- EP – A pilot to interface the existing Travel Manager system with FACTS to allow employee travel payments to be issued via EFT will be initiated. The Third Party Payment System will be implemented to enhance existing capability to issue draft payments to employees, vendors and beneficiaries, and to set the platform for making those same payments via EFT. Existing Electronic Commerce (EC) pilots, using electronic data interchange to effect telephone, credit card and courier bill payments, will be expanded. Plans will be developed to expand EC to other administrative vendor payment areas.
- Replace FACTS – A study will be performed to determine, from off-the-shelf applications available through the federal financial system GSA schedule, the best fit application to replace FACTS. A software vendor and integration contractor will be selected and the software purchased by the year end.
- 2001 MCAP/MCAS – Requirements will be finalized and systems development and implementation will proceed toward conversion of SSA's existing Cost Analysis System functionality to an MCAS platform. This effort is expected to form the first major MCAS release and the prototype for future releases. Planning, outreach and requirements efforts will also proceed on other aspects of MCAS functionality as resources permit.
- EP – Additional trading partners for Electronic Commerce are anticipated to be available for other administrative payment areas.
- Replace FACTS – The replacement of FACTS effort will be continued, as requirements are identified and documented, and the system design will be completed.

Hearings Process Improvements (HPI)

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Disability and Income Security Programs

This Key Initiative will improve service to hearings customers by reducing individual case processing times, improving quality and productivity, promoting individualized case management and increasing employee job satisfaction. With full implementation, HPI is expected to result in a 21 percent decrease in processing time and a 16 percent increase in Productivity Per Workyear (PPWY) over the current process. The KI directly supports SSA's World Class Service goal, and specifically, the Hearings Processing Time Program for Objective Achievement (POA). The HPI Key Initiative will incorporate a number of new and existing initiatives and concepts:

- ❖ Process Improvements
 - Implementation of national workflow model
 - Processing time benchmarks
 - Standardize pre-hearing conferences

- ❖ Group-based accountability
 - Establishment of processing groups

- ❖ Automation and Data collection efficiencies
 - Improved management information
 - Case management software
 - Automated calendars

Schedule:

2000	Phase 1 implementation (37 hearing offices)
	Preliminary Implementation Monitoring Report
2001	Phase 2 implementation (52 hearing offices)
	Final Phase 1 Implementation Monitoring Report
	Phase 3 (and final) implementation (52 hearing offices)

Immediate Claims-Taking Services

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Operations

In support of our world-class service goal, SSA has made a commitment that, by the year 2000, we will take retirement and survivors claims immediately over the phone, if the claimant has all the information we need available at the time of the call. Since SSA already has processes in place to take claims from customers who visit a field office, this initiative focuses on providing the same immediate service for customers who telephone SSA and have all the information needed to file a retirement or survivor claim.

This is a significant departure from SSA's current telephone service practice -- which is, to schedule an appointment with a field office (rather than take the claim) when the customer first contacts us and expresses interest in filing for benefits. In addition, it is a significant departure from the traditional 800-number policy of handling only those transactions that can be completed within a few minutes. The major thrust of this key initiative is to develop and test potential strategies for immediate teleclaims services that could be implemented without jeopardizing the world-class telephone access rates which are so highly valued by SSA's customers.

Schedule:

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|------|--|
| 2000 | Fully implement. Monitor service and customer reaction as well as impacts on other work. |
| 2001 | Continue to monitor service and impact on other workloads. Adjust as necessary. |

Improve 800-Number Service

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Operations

SSA's national 800-number delivers outstanding service to the public and has fully achieved the purpose for which it was established--to provide all members of the public an inexpensive, convenient point of entry for conducting their business with Social Security. In fact, most Americans initiate their business with SSA by calling the 800-number. In FY 1998, 91.1 percent of callers got through to SSA on the first attempt, and 95.3 percent got through within 5 minutes of the first attempt. For FY 1999, 92.9 percent of callers got through on their first attempt and 95.8 percent got through within 5 minutes of the first attempt. For FY 2000 (through November), 92.6 percent of callers got through on their first attempt and 95.3 percent got through within 5 minutes of their first attempt.

Customers' expectations are changing, however. Analysis of customer feedback indicates that SSA's customers would like to use the 800-number for more and more of their business, and it implies that they would use it for more complex transactions--such as claims--if they were able to do so.

To respond to the challenges facing the national 800-number, we have implemented the following actions:

- ❖ In November 1999, the Commissioner approved a number of short-term initiatives that were developed to improve customer service by increasing national 800-number network call answering capacity and to provide employees in the program service centers more time to work on pending workloads to help reduce expected growth.
- ❖ In July 1999, the Office of Telephone Services convened Leadership Teams to assess the national 800-number network. The Teams developed recommendations and action plans for improving 800-number service and operations in the following areas:
 - TSR Resource Utilization
 - Single Point of Contact
 - Teleservice Center Leave
 - Expansion/Improvement of Automated Services

Another management challenge is to enhance the accuracy of services provided via the 800-number. SSA's quality assurance data show for the 12-month period ending December 1999 that, while the accuracy of calls affecting payment actions processed over the 800-number is high--that is 95.4 percent--the accuracy of other services provided was only 81.8 percent.

SSA also recognizes the importance of courtesy to good customer service and is committed to, at a minimum, maintaining current courtesy ratings for the 800-number service.

Responding to these customer challenges, this key initiative will help us accomplish the following:

- ❖ Expand services available and percent processed to completion while maintaining world-class access rates.
- ❖ Work toward improving service accuracy to at least 90 percent, and
- ❖ Successfully transition to new technology (for example, implement the new FTS 2001 contract and procure new call distribution technology) without disruption to customer service.

Schedule:

- 2000 Obtain call forecasting and staff scheduling software.
- Begin replacement of automatic call distributors with upgraded technology.
- Implement the new FTS 2001 contract.
- Monitor increased workloads due to anticipated year 2000 increases in Social Security Statement (formerly Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement) mail-out volumes.
- Monitor increased workloads due to national implementation of immediate claims-taking services.
- Analyze impact of telephone workload to provide a more balanced use of Operations' resources.
- Continue implementation of procedural changes that allow representatives to take additional complete actions.
- Continue implementation of additional services on a pilot basis and evaluate impacts.
- Transition the national 800-number network to offer Spanish services to 100 percent of the nation.
- 2001 Continue replacement of automatic call distributors.

Analyze impact of telephone workload to provide a more balanced use of Operations' resources.

Continue implementation of procedural changes that allow representatives to take additional complete actions.

Continue implementation of additional services on a pilot basis and evaluate impacts.

Improve Field Office Reception Process, Reception Area Environment and Waiting Times

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Operations

The purpose of this Key Initiative is to improve the SSA field office (FO) reception environment and processes, resulting in improved customer satisfaction.

We will identify and test various technologies, physical arrangements, furniture configurations and workflows, and determine those that serve our customers best. We will provide resources to SSA's FOs for improving reception processes, and the appearance and comfort of the waiting areas.

We have completed benchmarking to find best practices for reception area processes. We looked at best-in-business organizations and SSA offices. We focused on options to:

- ❖ Support SSA customer service standards.
- ❖ Improve metropolitan offices.
- ❖ Support our non-English speaking customer service initiatives.
- ❖ Improve interviewing and appointment processes.
- ❖ Improve reception traffic flow.
- ❖ Reduce waiting times.
- ❖ Increase the number of transactions that can be completed at the first point of contact.
- ❖ Improve the physical appearance and comfort of reception areas, e.g., design layouts, furniture configurations.
- ❖ Create reception areas that are user-friendly.
- ❖ Provide flexibility to meet local needs.
- ❖ Protect customer privacy.
- ❖ Increase reception efficiency, courtesy and professionalism.

Assuming successful piloting of the Visitor Information Services Analysis (VISA) software in five FOs, we plan to move forward to install VISA (or other queuing software) in FOs with high volumes of walk-in traffic.

Schedule:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 2000 | Complete evaluation of VISA pilots and prepare report. |
| | Prepare cost benefit analysis and implementation plan. |
| | With approval of the project, begin implementation. |
| 2000-2001 | Continue implementation of VISA software. |

Improve Field Office Telephone Service

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Operations

Demand for telephone service in the field office has always been great, although to what extent is not actually known. The large number of local telephone companies providing service to SSA's field offices and their varying levels of technology have made it difficult for the Agency to obtain data on call volumes and caller access to local offices. Customer feedback, however, strongly suggests that field office telephone service is less than world-class.

This key initiative to improve field office telephone service includes the following elements:

- ❖ Use of technology to improve customer service and access.
- ❖ Initiating an ongoing program of service observation to assess the accuracy and quality of service provided to field office callers.
- ❖ Initiating an ongoing program of field office caller recontact surveys to assess customer satisfaction and to identify service improvement needs.
- ❖ Developing a process to measure access for field office callers.

Schedule:

2000 Complete installation of modern telephone systems with automated attendant and voice mail capabilities in field offices.

Conduct an ongoing program of service observation of field office telephone service to measure quality and courtesy.

Conduct an ongoing program of field office caller recontact surveys to assess customer satisfaction and identify service improvement initiatives.

Conduct pilot and evaluate results of field office caller access pilot. Based on pilot results, expand and refine process with the objective of implementing an ongoing program to measure field office caller access.

2001 Conduct an ongoing program of service observation of field office telephone service to measure quality and courtesy.

Conduct an ongoing program of field office caller recontact surveys to assess customer satisfaction and identify service improvement initiatives.

Conduct an ongoing program to measure field office caller access.

Improvements to the Disability Claims Process

Lead SSA Official: Director, Disability Process Redesign Team

SSA strives to deliver the highest levels of service by making fair, consistent and timely decisions at all adjudicative levels. However, applicants sometimes find the process complex, fragmented, confusing, impersonal and time consuming. Some also perceive the process as one in which different decisions are reached on similar cases at different levels of the administrative review process, thus requiring applicants to maneuver through multiple appeals steps.

Over the past few years, SSA and the State DDSs have been engaged in an ambitious series of initiatives to improve service delivery for millions of customers filing for, or appealing, disability claims. Two major areas of focus have been process unification and modifications to the disability claims process.

Process Unification: The Agency has been pursuing ongoing process unification initiatives. Our goal is to foster similar results on similar cases at all stages of the process through consistent application of laws, regulations and rulings. A number of initiatives have been implemented, including uniform training for SSA's 14,000 disability adjudicators, publication of nine Social Security rulings to clarify complex policy areas, and actions to increase consistency in SSA's quality assurance process. The initiatives have shown promise. Over the last several years, there has been a decline in the allowance rates at the hearing level and an increase in the initial allowance rates at the DDS level. This trend is consistent with our objective to make the correct decision as early in the process as possible.

Modifications to the Disability Claims Process: SSA has been testing various process improvements to determine what changes would help us provide better customer service. Several different modifications have been piloted both singularly and in combination. Data from the most significant testing model, the Full Process Model, show that increasing examiner authority and responsibility, using medical expertise better, and increasing interaction with claimants at the initial level result in better quality and customer service.

- ❖ Quality at the initial level was **higher** and we were able to correctly pay about the same number of people in one step (*initial level*), as we currently pay in two steps (*initial level plus reconsideration level*).
- ❖ Streamlining the process by eliminating the reconsideration step helps to both improve customer service and pay for the cost of enhanced up-front development.
- ❖ Providing claimants with the opportunity to talk with the disability decision-maker at the initial level helps ensure that cases are fully documented and provides a safety net for some who are currently denied at the initial level and do not pursue an appeal.

We are now moving forward to combine the most successful elements with improvements to the hearings process, and to evaluate their effectiveness on a large scale. In 10 prototype states, SSA has implemented a series of changes that will improve the process by:

- ❖ Providing greater decisional authority to the disability examiner and more effective use of the expertise of the medical consultant in the disability determination process;
- ❖ Ensuring appropriate development and explanations in initial cases;
- ❖ Increasing opportunities for claimant interaction with the decision-maker through a claimant conference opportunity at the initial level; and
- ❖ Simplifying the appeals process by eliminating the reconsideration step.

The ten states selected to participate in the prototype are: Alabama, Alaska, Colorado, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, California (Los Angeles West and North DDS branches only), and New York (Albany and Brooklyn DDS branches only). The hearing offices that will be included in the prototype evaluation are those in the service areas of the respective DDSs participating in the prototype.

The process changes SSA has developed for the prototypes will work in tandem with process unification initiatives and a series of improvements being implemented in hearing offices nationwide.

Focusing on 10 states will enable SSA to further refine the process and learn more about potential operational impacts before moving to national implementation. Putting this complete process together will ensure that the changes meet our goal of improved service to disability applicants.

Schedule:

2000	Start up of new process in designated prototype locations – October 1, 1999.
	Target date for readiness of HO locations servicing prototype DDS locations.
2000-2001	Evaluation of early trend data. Assuming positive trend and evaluation data, decisions to move forward with plans for making regulatory changes.
	Pilots for prototyping solutions for electronic medical evidence using emerging technologies.
2001-2002	Final decisions on national implementation.

Other Process Testing. SSA is continuing to test the potential for a new position called the Disability Claim Manager (DCM). The DCM acts as the single point of contact for the claimant throughout the disability claims process at the initial level, responsible for both medical and non-medical aspects of the case. Formal evaluation of the DCM process began November 1, 1999 and runs through 2000.

Improvements to the Representative Payment Program

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Disability and Income Security Programs

This Key Initiative will improve the representative payment program through better informed customers, a more reliable payee investigation and selection process, and a more meaningful payee monitoring program. It consists of the following five projects which, in part, are a result of careful analysis of the *Final Report of the Representative Payment Advisory Committee* (1996) and the *Roll-Up Report of the Office of Inspector General: Monitoring Representative Payees* (1997).

Implement Payee and Beneficiary Education and Support Project:

- ❖ Produce enhanced and multi-lingual informational and educational materials to inform payees of SSA's expectations and their rights and responsibilities.
- ❖ Conduct a national payee recruitment campaign to locate qualified candidates in areas where the need is greatest.
- ❖ Develop a process on ongoing education and support for representative payees.
- ❖ Produce informational and educational materials for beneficiaries who have a representative payee.
- ❖ Provide information and educational support to beneficiaries who are having difficulty managing their funds but do not yet need a representative payee.

Implement Custody Verification Demonstration Project:

- ❖ Provide information regarding the feasibility of suggesting an alternative approach to monitoring of parent payees with verified custody of minor children.

Implement Onsite Review Demonstration Project:

- ❖ Pilot onsite reviews of fee-for-service and volume payee organizations.
- ❖ Based on pilot results, develop policy for review of organizational payees under an ongoing payee monitoring program.

Complete Critical Work Needed on the Representative Payee System:

- ❖ Fix problems that cause rep payee applications not to clear to active status on the RPS after being selected and processed against the MBR or SSR; known as Stuck 98s.
- ❖ Fix problems that result in the failure of termination data to transfer to the RPS for cases, including most of SSI terminated records.
- ❖ Fix conditions that lead to the inadequate or incomplete propagation of data from the MBR/SSR to the RPS. This has resulted in erroneous payments to deceased payees, failure to record benefit termination status, and inconsistent address data on the SSR and RPS.
- ❖ Correct the conditions that lead to the generation of erroneous alerts. Currently, the field must manually investigate and clear these alerts.
- ❖ Identify beneficiaries missing from the RPS, systematically load as many as possible, and list out the balance.

Develop an Ongoing Integrity Review Program:

- ❖ Establish an ongoing process to monitor the quality of SSA representative payee decisions and policies.

Schedule:

Payee and Beneficiary Education and Support Program

- 2000 Production of materials for seminars and workshops.
- Reprint of organizational payee handbook.
- Directed marketing sample of individual payee handbooks.
- Video production (development to distribution) for use in both the recruitment campaign and the ongoing education and support workshops.

- 2001 Conduct workshops and seminars for payees and beneficiaries.
- Conduct a recruitment campaign for qualified organizational and individual payees.
- Continue to develop materials for payee and beneficiary education and support.
- Print and distribute 2,000,000 individual payee handbooks.
- Revise, print and distribute 50,000 organizational payee handbooks.

Custody Verification Demonstration

- 2000 Award contracts and monitor contractor performance.
- 2001 Provide contractor report and evaluate/analyze results.

Onsite Review Demonstration

- 2000 Continue research/analysis, development of requirements, and solicitation of stakeholder input.
- 2001 Award contracts and monitor contractor performance.

Completion of Critical Work Needed on the RPS

- 2001 Identify and correct Stuck 98 and causes of erroneous alerts.

Clean-up Stuck 98s and SSI Termination records.

Review and correct fallout from Stuck 98s.

Develop process to propagate termination data from SSR to RPS.

Establish full data exchange linkage of RPS & SSR/MBR.

Develop process to electronically load RPS.

Integrity Review Program

2000-2001 Develop requirements.

Conduct research/analysis.

Develop and review process and conduct field tests.

Implementation of Integrity Review Program .

Information Exchange

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Disability and Income Security Programs

SSA's data matching activities have proven highly effective in preventing and detecting benefit overpayments. The Information Exchange Key Initiative seeks to build on this success by taking advantage of improved technology and rapidly expanding online data bases to improve our programs and processes still further. This key initiative currently has five major emphases:

Information Exchange Strategy: For each major business process, SSA will identify opportunities for use of information exchange to accomplish all the following objectives: capture transaction inputs electronically, prevent/deter/detect overpayments and fraud, and eliminate SSA manual actions. Opportunities will be prioritized and an action plan defined.

Improved Information Exchange Policies: SSA has defined policies for evaluating requests for online or system-to-system access to SSA data. We are now in the process of preparing and issuing implementing instructions for the SSA components responsible for interagency agreements and the agencies seeking this kind of access to SSA records.

Capitalize on Immediate Opportunities for Overpayment/Fraud Prevention and Detection: SSA will continue to implement new or expanded information exchanges with other agencies (Federal, State, and local) and with private entities in order to prevent and detect overpayments. The following items are illustrative of such immediate opportunities for partnering with other entities:

SSA Access to State Records Online (SASRO): SSA has a programmatic need to obtain information (e.g., vital statistics, welfare, unemployment, wages, workers compensation) from various State sources that we have traditionally obtained manually. For the past few years, however, with the rapid growth of online State databases, SSA has been actively pursuing online query access on a state-by-state basis. We currently have at least limited access in 31 States. Since this approach has a relatively small cost and produces a relatively quick benefit for SSA in terms of customer service, we intend to add 10 additional States each year.

Concurrently, SSA is exploring alternative ways to gain online access to State records more efficiently. For example, as an efficient alternative to interagency agreements with (potentially) a score of State agencies, SSA is seeking access to databases that integrate information from multiple States—for example, the Office of Child Support Enforcement/National Directory of New Hires (OCSE/NDNH) databases. SSA is also designing a pilot of “negative verification”—that is, online or system-to-system checking of State information before paying SSA benefits. SSA believes that negative verification would be a strong tool for prevention of overpayments—versus after-the-fact detection

via computer matching—and would be highly successful in addressing the General Accounting Office’s (GAO) “high risk” concerns.

State Online Query (SOLQ): SSA has long provided programmatic data to States in batch mode. With SOLQ, SSA will provide State agencies immediate, online access to the information now provided overnight. It also will benefit SSA because it avoids phone calls and in-person visits to SSA field offices when information is needed urgently for a State service. SOLQ is currently in the pilot phase, which will entail five States. The pilot will culminate in an evaluation to determine costs, benefits, and appropriate next steps.

Exchange with Federal Agencies:

Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC): PBGC locates individuals who are entitled to benefits from failed pension plans. SSA will perform a batch match that provides PBGC access to 3 wage type queries to assist them in locating and calculating benefits due pensioners. In addition, we will be providing them with direct terminal access that will enable them to adjudicate their claims more quickly.

Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA): Each year SSA sends approximately 60,000 requests to verify periods of military service for claimants to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). The average response time is 60 days. VBA will provide SSA with online access that will enable SSA employees to verify military service. In turn, SSA will provide VBA with online access to SVES, which will improve their claims processing time and payment accuracy and will also eliminate the many inquiries made to SSA. The greatest savings will be derived from debt prevention. The amount of debt prevented nationally is estimated to be \$50,000,000 per year.

Schedule:

- 2000 Continue implementation of the Information Exchange strategy.

 Add at least 10 new States to SASRO.

 PBGC Match in January, direct terminal access scheduled for November.

 VBA/SSA online access scheduled for April.
- 2001 Continue implementation of the Information Exchange strategy.

 Add at least 10 new States to SASRO.

Integrated Human Resources System (IHRS)

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources

The purpose of this project is to provide integrated, automated support for all human resources (HR) workloads as well as accurate, timely, easy-to-use HR information. It will also provide a platform for maintaining, updating and using competency-based HR tools. Once implemented, the system will reduce HR paperwork burdens, enable sufficient and timely decision-making, and provide for employee self-service.

Among the HR business processes to be supported by IHRS are: Selection and Recruitment, Employee Training and Development, Equal Employment Opportunity, Labor Management Relations, Employee Benefits, Employee Services, Performance Management and Incentives, Position Management, Suggestions, Health and Safety, and Salary Administration.

Schedule:

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2000 | Complete National Release 1 rollout. |
| | Develop and test Release 2 for rollout. |
| | Rollout Release 2 nationally. |
| 2001 | Develop and implement future releases. |

Interactive Video Teletraining

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources

For the past 4 years, SSA has been delivering interactive video teletraining (IVT), using one-way video (of the instructor to the students) and two-way audio communication. IVT is an effective, economical way to provide fully interactive training to students who are not co-located with the instructor. By the end of FY 1999, SSA's IVT system provided IVT access to 75 percent of its offices. With the near completion of an expansion initiative begun in 1997, and third party documentation showing the benefits of IVT to the Agency, SSA is now looking at the possibility of rolling out IVT to all remaining SSA offices.

Schedule:

- 2000 Complete installation of currently approved phase of IVT expansion.
- Continue delivering entry-level training from three regional studios.
- To the extent demonstrable benefits to the Agency are shown, initiate planning and, if approved, procurement to expand IVT to all remaining SSA offices.
- Determine if technology is available for desktop expansion.
- 2001 If approved, continue expansion initiative to install IVT in all remaining offices.
- Determine availability and impact of technology for desktop expansion.

Intelligent Workstations/Local Area Networks (IWS/LAN)

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Systems

The IWS/LAN platform is the foundation for expert systems, on-line “help” features, interactive training, on-line human resources management functions, and many other key initiatives. It is also the enabler for redesign of core business processes for increased efficiency. For example, the Electronic Disability System (eDIB) will run under the new client-server architecture.

SSA began installing IWS/LAN in late 1996. By the time the rollout is virtually completed -- in FY 2000 -- over 96,000 new workstations will be in place. SSA’s FY 2001 budget assumes that this technology will save about 1900 Federal and State Disability Determination Service workyears beginning in the year 2001 when compared to the FY 1998 base.

Schedule:

2000 Continue and virtually complete IWS/LAN rollout.

Leadership Training/Career Development

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources

SSA recognizes the need for strong leadership as the Agency moves forward in an environment of shrinking resources and expanding workloads. The Agency is also committed to developing and preparing managers of tomorrow with knowledge and skills to lead and shape SSA's programs in the 21st century. This initiative is designed to provide managers with the leadership skills necessary to:

- ❖ Successfully deliver service to a diverse customer base;
- ❖ To operate within a streamlined organizational framework with increasing spans of control; and
- ❖ To develop and nurture a rapidly changing workforce.

The leadership training/career development (LTCD) initiative will identify new, essential competencies that managers will require and will provide a continuous learning environment in which new managers will be trained on those competencies and established managers will be able to sharpen their skills.

Schedule:

2000	Senior Executive Service Program completion.
	Continuation of Advanced Leadership Program.
	Ongoing one-day seminars for 33 percent of Agency managers.
	Ongoing management curriculum and rotational programs.
	Implementation of Leadership Development Program.
2001	Completion of Advanced Leadership Program and continuation of Leadership Development Program.
	On-going one-day seminars for 33 percent of Agency managers.
	On-going management curriculum and rotational programs.
	Decisions on future formal developmental programs.

Market Measurement Program

Lead SSA Official: Senior Advisor, Customer Service Integration

The integrated Market Measurement Program (MMP) will provide complete, compatible and current data gathered from all Agency market segments to ensure that SSA continually has the right information from the right people to inform Agency planning and decision making. The MMP includes a variety of data collection mechanisms that, taken together, give SSA a full range of information about its market. The MMP divides SSA's market into three segments: Customers, Workforce and Stakeholders. Each segment has its own strategy of data collection mechanisms designed to gather the best information possible using efficient and practical methods.

- ❖ The Customer Measurement Strategy will provide information from all SSA's major customer groupings and consists of six data collection methods: customer segment analysis, interaction tracking, comment cards, special studies, best practices inventory, and customer complaint/compliment system (i.e., Talking and Listening to Customers).
- ❖ The Workforce Measurement Strategy uses surveys to collect information about employees' satisfaction with the workplace. Research indicates a strong and direct link between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. This information will help the Agency learn how to enhance the work environment so world-class service is possible.
- ❖ The Stakeholder Measurement Strategy entails various data collection mechanisms specifically tailored to three major stakeholder groups:
 - 1) Oversight, business partners, advocacy and business groups, unions and management and employee associations;
 - 2) Employers; and
 - 3) The general public.

The Market Measurement Program (MMP) Clearinghouse has been developed as a central repository of all reports of findings resulting from the various Agency data collection activities under the MMP. It is part of the Agency's Executive Management Information System (EMIS). Employees have one place to look for information from customers, employees and stakeholders about needs, expectations and satisfaction.

Schedule:

- 2000 Interaction tracking (office visits, 800-number, FO phone, Internet).
Begin use of Comment card—hearings offices.
Stakeholder interviews.
Focus groups/surveys for four customer segments.
Employee satisfaction survey.
Surveys of employers.
Special Studies.
- 2001 Interaction tracking.
Stakeholder interviews.
Focus groups/surveys for four customer segments.
Employee satisfaction survey.
Surveys of employers.
Special Studies.

Notice Improvements

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Disability and Income Security Programs

SSA sends its customers 240 million notices annually. The Pacific Consulting Group concluded--and SSA agrees--that improving notices provides the greatest opportunity for improving customer satisfaction. As part of this key initiative, SSA will improve the following five specific types of notices found to be most problematic:

Title II Overpayment Notices: SSA releases 3.5 million of these notices annually, and they are a frequent cause of customer confusion and/or dissatisfaction. SSA will improve notice language and include more case-specific information in order to provide letters that are clearer and more complete. We anticipate this will be a long-term improvement effort as it is reliant on a rewrite of the Master Beneficiary Record to create additional data fields.

Field Office Notice System (FONS): FONS is a notice production system that enables SSA field offices to compose notices using stock letters and case-specific inserts. An estimated 12 million FONS notices are released annually. FONS, however, is an outdated utility, not amenable to modification or expansion. SSA is developing a replacement for FONS called the Distributed Online Correspondence System (DOCS). This new system will allow service and teleservice representatives to see field office notices online rather than relying on the customer to supply a copy of their notice.

Manual Notices: There are approximately 150 manual notices--most of which are preprinted form letters about the disability programs. These notices do not meet SSA's quality standards, contain superseded policy information, and must be replaced.

SSI Overpayment Notices: Currently, many types of SSI overpayment notices are excluded from automated processing because of certain case characteristics that the system cannot interpret correctly. Over the next 2 years, SSA plans to eliminate two of the major barriers to automation, eliminating about a half million manual notices annually.

SSI Award Notices: Approximately half a million SSI award and 12 million other SSI notices are sent each year. Over the next several years, SSA will improve the clarity and format of these notices based on customer feedback. We will also begin to add computational worksheets to help explain how we arrived at the customer's benefit amount.

Schedule:

2000 Analyze and review requirements to fully implement improved AJS-3 notices.

Test and release DOCS prototype.

Continue to consolidate object programs into a single data base.

Update related Program Operations Manual System (POMS) to show improved manual notices.

Focus test SSI computational worksheet and notice improvements.

Prepare language and format of SSI computational worksheet.

2001 Release first version of DOCS to selected pilot offices nationwide.

Stage rollout of DOCS nationwide.

Eliminate second exclusion to automated SSI overpayment notice processing.

Develop improved notice language for Title II overpayment notices.

Paperless Processing Centers

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Systems

The initial implementation of the Paperless Program Service Center (PSC) system took place in the Mid-Atlantic PSC (MATPSC) in one module in May 1999. The implementation was successful, and was followed with implementations in the Great Lakes PSC (GLPSC) and the Western PSC (WNPSC). As of December 1999, seven modules are implemented in MATPSC, 7 in GLPSC and 4 in WNPSC. The Y2K implementation moratorium, as well as operational reasons, halted further expansion until late January. Funding has been approved for completion of these three sites. Expansion of the system to the remaining three PSCs, as well as the Office of Central Operations, is scheduled to begin in CY 2000 (pending funding approval).

Since initial implementation, there has been two releases of software as well as supporting commercial off-the-shelf software (COTS) upgrades to guarantee the system was Y2K compatible. The Project Scope Agreement for the next major release (1.2) is under development for a FY 2000 release. The major functionality in this release is an archival process.

The GLPSC paperless pilot project has been shutdown. Conversion of these work actions is currently underway.

Schedule:

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|------|---|
| 2000 | Continue national rollout of the paperless processing system. |
| 2001 | Continue national rollout of the paperless processing system. |

Plain Language

Lead SSA Official: Senior Advisor, Customer Service Integration

The main purpose of this Key Initiative is to make SSA documents clear for their intended audiences, thus reducing the time employees spend with customers clarifying and explaining our written correspondence.

SSA is complying with the President's Plain Language Government Writing Initiative directing departments and agencies to incorporate plain language into their documents, as follows:

1. All new documents that explain how to obtain benefits or how to comply with program requirements,
2. All proposed and final rulemaking documents and regulations, and
3. Active old documents in the above categories.

A Plain Language Steering Committee leads the design and implementation of the initiative.

Successful implementation of plain language may require acquisition and installment of off-the-shelf plain language support software. The Steering Committee is looking at the acquisition of such software.

This initiative includes a comprehensive two-year training plan.

- ❖ In July 1999, SSA made a desk-to-desk distribution of a Commissioner's Bulletin entitled "Renewed Emphasis on Writing in Plain Language."
- ❖ In October 1999, SSA Plain Language Standards were issued to all SSA employees.
- ❖ SSA produced a videotape to introduce Plain Language to all employees.
- ❖ All core writers and editors in headquarters who generate high volume public correspondence received 16 hours of interactive plain language training in FY 1999.
- ❖ 120 employees who prepare low volume, sensitive, external correspondence received ½ day training via IVT or classroom as part of a pilot to determine an appropriate outcome method for additional training. The pilot ended in December 1999.
- ❖ A decision has not yet been made as to how to train employees responsible for preparing high volume internal correspondence.

Schedule:

- 2000: Ensure that all employees view videotape.
- Begin training of writers/editors who generate high volume public correspondence.
- Begin training of employees responsible for low volume, sensitive, external documents.
- Administer certification/maintenance of plain language correspondence and activities.
- Administer on-going evaluation process.
- Ensure all new employees receive plain language training.
- 2001: Purchase and distribute plain language support software and provide training.
- Conduct focus groups on integration of plain language into external documents.
- Complete training of employees responsible for low volume, sensitive, external documents.
- Administer certification/maintenance of plain language correspondence and activities.
- Administer on-going evaluation process.
- Ensure all new employees receive plain language training.

PolicyNet/Policy Repository

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Disability and Income Security Programs

PolicyNet/Policy Repository is a project that improves SSA's ability to make policy-related decisions better, faster, and more cost-effectively in all stages of the policymaking process. The PolicyNet and Policy Repository projects are complementary and mutually supportive. Together, they will provide cost-effective, Intranet-based access to the latest policy-related information to users (both internal and external) nationwide.

PolicyNet is the entire communications system envisioned for our redesigned policymaking environment. It relies on both groupware technologies and new work processes to support proactive policy making through the systematic sharing, sorting, organizing, and accessing of information related to policy development, evaluation and dissemination. As part of this effort, SSA intends to get early input into the policy process from end-users and stakeholders (both internal and external) through nationwide forums and use of the Internet. We anticipate that the early input will enable SSA to make its policy deliberations with a better knowledge of the positions of those with interests that affect our policies.

The Policy Repository will replace the antiquated system we now have to house and publish policy-related instructions, regulations, rulings, and other policy-related documents. The current system stores documents in a number of different formats and locations, and there is no way to coordinate the materials consistently or to issue updates quickly and in an automated environment. The Policy Repository will allow us to modernize the infrastructure in order to consolidate policy materials, link them together electronically, and deliver a single, consistent presentation of policy to the users.

Schedule:

- 2000 Complete Policy Net national implementation.
 - Develop additional functionality to enable electronic policy clarifications.
 - Expand content of Policy Net Repository to goal of single presentation of policy.
 - Expand program evaluation and research aspects of Policy Net.
 - Develop Internet and Extranet stakeholder input capabilities.

- 2001 Expand content of Policy Repository to goal of single presentation of policy.
 - Develop additional functionality to enable electronic policy clarifications.
 - Develop mobile computing capabilities.
 - Implement paperless workflow, archiving, and retrieval of policy documents.

Preparing for the Year 2000

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Systems

Preparing for the change of century date—from 1999 to 2000—has been the biggest challenge ever to face the technology industry. At SSA our national data center maintains and operates hundreds of mission-critical systems supported by over 35 million lines of in-house computer code, as well as hundreds of commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) vendor products that could have been affected by the Year 2000 (Y2k) changeover.

As a result of our planning and proactive approach to the change in century date, all of SSA's mission-critical systems have been made Year-2000 compliant, tested, and implemented. The automated systems for 50 State Disability Determination Services (DDSs) have also been made Year-2000 compliant. In addition, all of our data exchanges with all of our trading partners are Year-2000 compliant.

SSA's Y2k Business Continuity and Contingency Plan further ensured continuity of operations. All of our local contingency plans assured that January 2000 payments would be issued on time, that our systems would function smoothly, and that we would deliver all our services to the American public.

Schedule:

All identified requirements of this KI have been successfully concluded.

Service to the Non-English Speaking (NES) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) Public

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner of Disability, Insurance, and Security Programs

We recognize that our customers come from diverse cultural backgrounds, and that many do not speak or have limited proficiency in English. They generally need help in communicating with us. This Key Initiative ensures that our clients, regardless of ability to communicate in English, receive full access to SSA World-Class service. Better communication with NES and LEP clients results in the increased integrity of our programs. Claims taken by bilingual employees reduce the potential for fraud introduced by middlemen interpreters.

We use automated management information (MI) regarding our NES and LEP customers to make hiring and staffing decisions. We can place bilingual staff in locations where they can serve the greatest number of customers in their preferred language.

In the last several years, we improved service to NES and LEP clients.

- ❖ We increased the number of bilingual staff and made them available in the right places.
- ❖ We established a Spanish gate to our 800 Number.
- ❖ We placed the burden of providing interpreter services on SSA.
- ❖ We gave our employees cultural diversity training and provided expanded language skills training to bilingual staff.
- ❖ We are capturing customer language preferences in our major systems and making this information available online to our employees. We annotate language preference in all initial claims and representative payee cases. We display language preference information on title II and title XVI queries.

Schedule:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 2000 | Capture language preference data for 800 Number referrals and title II PE actions. |
| Ongoing | Continue to provide appropriate translation services. |

Space Modernization and Improvements

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Finance, Assessment and Management

The purpose of this Key Initiative (KI) is to provide all SSA employees with user-friendly, modern office facilities that will meet their needs well into the 21st century.

This KI includes:

- ❖ Major renovation of SSA Headquarters buildings as scheduled under the Woodlawn Master Plan.
- ❖ Construction of a new Child-Care-Center at Headquarters.
- ❖ Renovations to field offices (FOs) and hearing offices (HOs) nationwide.
- ❖ Upgrades of our larger facilities, e.g., Program Service Centers (PSCs) and Teleservice Centers (TSCs).
- ❖ Site preparation and installation of ergonomic furniture for IWS/LAN.

In addition, Child Care Centers have been constructed at the Western, Northeastern, and Great Lakes PSCs. Other projects are planned to improve the environment in the PSCs, including lighting enhancements, energy conservation programs, mechanical system upgrades, elevator upgrades, and replacements of the building exterior facades. Child Care and Fitness Centers have been expanded at the Wilkes-Barre Data Operations Center.

In FY 1999, renovations to the (Headquarters) East Building were completed, and the building was occupied.

Schedule:

- 2000 Continue IWS/LAN systems furniture design and site preparation specifications for FOs and HOs.
- Continue major upgrades and renovations to improve SSA facilities nationwide.
- 2001 Complete (Headquarters) Annex Building renovations.
- Construct and occupy a new Headquarters Child Care Center.
- Complete renovations to the Metro West Building, including building exterior replacement.
- Complete IWS/LAN systems furniture design and site preparation for remaining FOs and HOs.

Speech Recognition Software

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Disability Income Security Programs

The main purpose of this Key Initiative is to reduce the time required to produce OHA hearing decisions and correspondence, by implementing the use of speech recognition software.

Speech recognition software will eliminate the time-consuming hand-offs and transfers required when dictation is used. These hand-offs and transfers significantly increase the time it takes to issue a claimant's decision.

Currently, about 25 percent of Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) decisions are produced by dictation. The dictation process requires hand-offs and is extremely labor-intensive. The tapes, containing the dictated decisions, are often moved between hearing offices (HOs), due to workload and the location of staff resources. Replacing dictation with speech recognition software will eliminate the need for clerical staff to type drafts.

Prototype testing of speech recognition software in the OHA environment was completed in March 1999. A contractor is compiling the results. The current generation of software has the ability to approximate the following requirements defined by OHA:

- ❖ 95 percent accuracy rate after sufficient training, and
- ❖ Ability to process 90 words per minute.

Because the testing results indicate the software has the potential for meeting these requirements, a pilot using the speech recognition software and a cost-benefit assessment will be conducted in FY 2000.

Schedule:

2000 Begin pilot.

 Complete cost-benefit assessment.

2001 Evaluate pilot.

 If successful, begin implementation.

Strengthening Public Understanding of the Social Security Programs

*Lead SSA Officials: Deputy Commissioner for Communications
Deputy Commissioner for Operations*

There are two initiatives to ensure that by the year 2005, 9 of 10 Americans are knowledgeable about the Social Security programs: Educate the Public About Social Security and the Public Understanding Measurement System (PUMS).

Educate the Public About Social Security

This key initiative includes the public information products and external liaison activities needed to increase public understanding of Social Security programs. It also includes The SSA Ambassadors program, formerly a separate initiative.

The Educate the Public key initiative centers on the strategies laid out in the annual National Communications Plan, which identifies products and delivery systems, designed to strengthen public understanding. This plan is based on the data and analysis of the annual PUMS surveys and other SSA management reports.

The Social Security Statement (formerly the Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement (PEBES)): The PUMS data indicates that receiving a Social Security Statement significantly increases an individual's knowledge of Social Security programs. As required by law, every eligible adult worker age 25 and older for whom an address can be obtained will automatically receive annual statements of his/her earnings under Social Security and benefit estimates based upon those earnings.

Ambassadors Program: In FY 2001, SSA will continue its Ambassador program, stressing the value of the Social Security Statement and the PUMS survey results. Additionally, we will continue to train new field office managers and public affairs specialists in communications skills needed to educate the public during ongoing local public education activities and events. We will also conduct our Annual National Public Affairs training for all of SSA public affairs specialists.

Schedule:

2000 Begin to issue the Social Security Statement to approximately 123 million workers age 25 and older in addition to the approximately 3 million Statements issued upon request.

Continue the Ambassadors program.

2001 Update the National Communications Plan with public information products targeted to the subject areas and population groups identified in PUMS as most in need of better understanding of Social Security.

Issue the Social Security Statement to approximately 123 million workers age 25 and older in addition to the approximately 3 million Statements issued upon request.

Continue the Ambassadors program.

The Public Understanding Measurement System (PUMS)

The PUMS will continue to provide data on the public's knowledge of Social Security programs and track changes in the public's level of knowledge through the year 2005. The PUMS will also evaluate the effectiveness of our National Communications Plan in achieving our strategic goal.

Schedule:

2000 Set annual performance target of 65 percent (6.5 of 10 adult Americans age 18 and over will be knowledgeable).

Conduct national PUMS survey –1st quarter.

Receive PUMS survey results and analysis-2nd quarter.

Hold PUMS national workshop- 3rd quarter.

Review FY 2001 performance target-set FY 2002 target- 3rd quarter.

Complete local quarterly PUMS surveys in 4 SSA Regions-1-4th quarters.

Receive PUMS quarterly test summary report- 4th quarter.

2001 Set annual performance target of 70 percent (7 out of 10 adult Americans age 18 and over will be knowledgeable).

Repeat FY 2000 cycle.

Strengthening Research, Evaluation and Policy Development

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Policy

As an independent agency, SSA has assumed a leadership role in addressing critical long and short-term Social Security issues by framing policy discussions, refining policy to meet the needs of society, conducting in-house research, and promoting research by others. To accomplish this, SSA will:

- ❖ Complete plans for revitalization of external and internal resources in the critical areas of retirement income policy, disability and SSI program research, modeling capability, extramural research infrastructure, and data availability,
- ❖ Build policy evaluation capacity,
- ❖ Strengthen data for policy researchers, both within and outside SSA, and
- ❖ Develop mechanisms for broader input on research efforts.

In addition, SSA will develop a customer satisfaction survey and data collection mechanism in order to obtain feedback on the responsiveness of our research, evaluation and policy analysis products, as well as the extent to which we help identify and explain new and emerging issues for decision makers.

Schedule:

- 2000 Prepare analyses providing information about the effect of specific solvency proposals on various populations.
- Prepare analyses providing information on the effects of demographic and economic trends on social security programs.
- Award contract to establish the Disability Research Institute.
- Develop Customer Satisfaction survey and data collection mechanism.
- Present papers and analyses conducted by the Retirement Research Consortium.
- Initiate pilot study for the National Study of Health and Activity (NSHA).
- Complete evaluation of alternative approaches for long-term modeling.
- Publish results of studies and surveys.

Prepare final report on the effect of welfare reform legislation on SSI children with disabilities.

2001

Prepare initial analyses of long-term effects of specific solvency proposals.

Analyze results of the NSHA pilot study and refine study design.

Initiate main study data collection for NSHA.

Complete interviewing for first wave of national survey of children with disabilities.

Develop baseline for customer satisfaction survey.

Begin conducting policy simulations with the SSI model.

Complete evaluation of the first year of data on the State Partnership Initiative.

Complete an assessment of data collection for the evaluation of the 10-state disability redesign prototype.

Produce initial barometer measures for the OASDI and SSI programs.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Posteligibility (PE) Modernization

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Operations

This Key Initiative has six major purposes:

- ❖ Increase SSI payment accuracy and process efficiency.
- ❖ Reduce SSI processing times.
- ❖ Deter SSI fraud.
- ❖ Reduce SSI debt.
- ❖ Support the SSI high-risk initiative.
- ❖ Improve public service.

The Modernized Supplemental Security Income Claims System (MSSICS) automated the SSI claims process, including a great deal of user requested functionality. However, several SSI processes (e.g., appeals, netting, overpayments, and notices) were omitted. The deliverables in this KI are enhancements to SSI systems and processes. These changes will allow the SSI system to comply with policy, increase user compliance with current procedures, reduce debt, and result in operational work-year savings. The following systems projects are the main focus of this KI:

MSSICS Appeals Program for Controlling Reconsiderations and Hearings:

Automation of the SSI appeals process will allow more appeals to be processed within MSSICS, increasing data propagation, accuracy and efficiencies. MSSICS will intake and control the SSI appeal until final disposition. The project will provide MSSICS functionality to process awards and denials, create better workload controls and credits, and automate notices. MSSICS claims will remain active for the interviewer to update and compare previous statements made by the applicant, thereby improving quality and reducing the potential for fraud.

Automate Windfall Offset Exclusions and Attorney Fees: This project will automate extensive manual computations required to calculate the retroactive benefits for each month of windfall offset. Windfall offset is currently partially automated. However, several temporary and permanent offset exclusions exist and will be addressed in this project. A mandatory windfall offset must be completed in approved concurrent cases warranting retroactive payments and involving an attorney. The complex and manual nature of this procedure makes it error prone and time consuming, adversely affecting our service to the public.

Database to Control SSI Alerts: This project will develop a central database to control, generate, and/or replace alerts. This database will improve SSA's ability to manage its SSI workloads and supports such initiatives as Title XVI debt reduction, improved SSI payment accuracy, and information exchange. It will also provide management information reports for external interfaces for the following alerts:

1. Savings bond match replacement alerts.
2. The HCFA computer match of SSI recipients not reporting admissions to Title XIX facilities.
3. Federal Workers Compensation match.
4. Department of Defense match.
5. Veterans Administration interface of spouse portion of augmented benefits.
6. OCSE match (wage and unemployment alerts).

System to Help Users with SSI Overpayment Computations and Notices:

Enhancements to the SSI overpayment process will provide users with the systems support needed for several types of SSI diaries that are currently manual processes. This project supports fraud/debt reduction and notice improvement.

MSSICS PE Path for Service Representatives, Teleservice Representatives and Title II Claims Representatives:

The development of a specific MSSICS path for non-Title XVI employee specialists (i.e., Service Representatives, Teleservice Center Representatives and Title II Claims Representatives) will support effective processing of PE events such as change of address or telephone number, direct deposit, and death reports. We expect both payment accuracy and efficiency to improve with this specialized automated MSSICS path for these employees. This path will allow easy access to specific screens for input of PE actions.

Automation of Remaining SSI Actions and Reduction of MSSICS Exclusions and Limitations: Automating the remaining non-MSSICS PE events and reducing the current limitations and exclusions will allow SSA to retire outdated CICS screens and reduce the need to search paper listings for detailed case related information. Direct entry of PE actions via MSSICS will reduce the time involved in writing down the information and then transcribing it into the system.

Schedule:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2000 | Automate appeals
Automate the returned check process
Automate conversion cases (allow seeding) |
| 2001 | Develop alerts database
Automate windfall offset exclusions and attorney fees |

Talking and Listening to Customers

Lead SSA Official: Senior Advisor, Customer Service Integration

In establishing a single, Agency-wide customer feedback system, called Talking and Listening to Customers (TLC), SSA will advance its goal to provide customer responsive, world class service. Through TLC, SSA will capture and address customers' spontaneous compliments, complaints and suggestions on various aspects of SSA's programs, policies, laws and service.

TLC will serve the dual purpose of addressing individual customer concerns, and identifying and supporting analysis and action on larger, systemic issues. Data collected in TLC will support SSA's business planning, policy development, communication strategies and operational and service enhancements.

Current and planned activities include:

- ❖ Continued execution of communication strategy for employees and customers.
- ❖ Development of software.
- ❖ Development and execution of training for pilot.
- ❖ Development, execution and evaluation of pilot.
- ❖ Full national implementation.

Schedule

2000	Develop pilot approach.
	Develop training strategy.
	Determine, build/install, and test software solution.
	Conduct comprehensive training for pilot.
	Begin pilot.
2001	Continue pilot.
	Evaluate pilot.
	Implement nationally.

Title II System Redesign

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Systems

The goal of the Title II System Redesign initiative is to provide a single system for processing virtually all initial claims and client-initiated postentitlement actions in an online interactive mode. The backbone of the redesigned system will be the use of common code to perform processing of common business functions. When a business function is common to two or more processes, a single business module will be developed and shared by all of the processes that require it. The 28 separate postentitlement programs and the Claims Automated Processing System (CAPS) are being retired as Title II Redesign software is released. The net effect will be a greater capability to process work at the customer's first point of contact with the Agency, online user access to more comprehensive customer information, and an automated system that is easier and less costly to maintain and modify quickly. These benefits, in turn, translate into improved customer service and avoidance of hundreds of work years of effort annually.

Schedule:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2000 | Begin Redesign Release 2, which will move some workloads from the Processing Centers to the field offices. |
| 2001 | Begin Redesign Release 3, which will retire 3 additional postentitlement programs and include 90% of initial claim processing. |

Title XVI Debt

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Disability and Income Security Programs

The purpose of this key initiative is to promote prevention, detection, and resolution of overpayments. There is a greater emphasis on prevention and detection because there are much lower administrative costs and much greater program savings in preventing and limiting the size of overpayments than there is in “resolution,” which involves appeals and waiver of recovery requests as well as recovery actions. The initiative includes efforts to:

- ❖ Improve payment quality by targeting the most error-prone policy areas;
- ❖ Reduce payment errors through improved POMS instructions compliance;
- ❖ Reduce payment errors through improved automation of SSI processes;
- ❖ Improve redetermination profiling to focus on cases with the greatest potential for change;
- ❖ Enhance electronic data collection; and
- ❖ Pursue legislative simplification of the SSI program.

These are generally enhancements to the prevention, detection, and resolution tools already in place. The Agency is establishing a comprehensive, long-term plan to control and limit overall debt in order to maintain public and congressional confidence in the administration of the SSI program. Following are the activities included in the plan:

- ❖ Computer matching with:
 - HCFA to detect nursing home admissions monthly.
 - The Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) records to detect wages reported by employers and records of unemployment compensation and improved selection to focus on cases with the greatest potential for error.
 - The Treasury Department’s Bureau of Public Debt to detect ownership of savings bonds.
 - The military pension records of the Department of Defense.
 - The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) records of requests by aliens to leave the United States and return, and INS records of deportation.
 - The Department of Labor’s records of Federal employees receiving workers’ compensation.
 - The Railroad Retirement Board increased in frequency to every month.
- ❖ Creation of a diary alert database to monitor alerts from external computer matching.
- ❖ Piloting of a computer match with the Department of Treasury’s Financial Crimes Enforcement Network to identify persons having cash transactions of \$10,000 or more to see if it is cost-effective to conduct such matching on an ongoing basis.
- ❖ Project to increase detection of persons ineligible for SSI because they are prisoners.

- ❖ Online access to databases at the OCSE/NDNH and individual States (SASRO).
- ❖ Increased management focus on quality and adherence to POMS.
- ❖ Review of frequency of redeterminations to determine if a 3-year cycle would be more effective than the current cycle.
- ❖ Legislative proposals to simplify the program.
- ❖ Improved automation of SSI processes to reduce payment errors and better implement debt resolution.

Schedule:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2000 | Diary alert database in place. |
| | Online access pilots with SASRO databases. |
| 2001 | Online access pilots with SASRO databases. |

Update Medical Listings

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Disability and Income Security Programs

The Listing of Impairments, or listings, contain examples of medical conditions and medical findings, arranged by body system. The criteria in the listings are so severe that disability can be presumed for anyone who is not performing substantial gainful activity and who has an impairment that "meets" the criteria of a listing. Since the listings cannot include every possible impairment or combination of impairments a person could have, SSA's rules also provide that a person's impairment(s) can "equal" the severity of a listing. The listings are included in an appendix in SSA's regulations.

A number of the listings have not been updated in several years, and may no longer reflect the state-of-the-art in medicine and disability evaluation. Therefore, updating the listings is a priority activity for SSA. SSA is reviewing listings by body system, although in some cases the Agency expects to address only particular listings and impairments when that makes more sense. SSA's strategy is to undertake the short-term fixes first and to eliminate inconsistencies among listings as it completes the review of each body system.

Updating different listings will entail different activities requiring expert input, research and public involvement. In most cases, SSA expects to address corresponding adult and childhood listings at the same time unless it is not appropriate to do so.

Schedule:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2000 | Issue final regulations for selected body systems and impairments. Issue notices of proposed rulemaking for additional body systems and impairments. |
| 2001 | Issue final regulations for selected body systems and impairments. Issue notices of proposed rulemaking for additional body systems and impairments. |

Video Teleconferencing (VTC)

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Disability Insurance Security Programs

The purpose of this Key Initiative is to use VTC technology to improve service delivery to customers, especially those who live in remote areas and to increase the ability of hearing offices to balance workloads through case transfers. This is a multifaceted initiative with several parts:

- ❖ Conduct hearings in remote sites via a VTC connection to a hearing office (HOs).
- ❖ Conduct hearings via VTC on cases transferred in from another HO for workload reasons.
- ❖ Connect medical experts (ME) and vocational experts (VE) to a hearing (in real time) via VTC or desktop video.
- ❖ Support our hearing process improvement (HPI) initiative by permitting Senior Attorneys to conduct formal pre-hearing conferences via VTC.
- ❖ Support VTC pilots in other SSA components.
- ❖ Improve our ability to quickly hear prison cases and Medicare cases where appellants or representatives are located in other areas of the country.

This technology will allow us to:

- ❖ Provide timely hearings to claimants living in remote areas, claimants who are incarcerated or appellants in some Medicare claims.
- ❖ Improve processing time for these cases.
- ❖ Increase Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) productivity due to reduced travel time and cost, and enhanced capacity to coordinate with experts.
- ❖ Increase the availability of experts to testify at hearings.
- ❖ Improve the ability of hearing offices to transfer workloads without the attendant travel costs for ALJs.
- ❖ Conduct formal pre-hearing conferences.
- ❖ Offer VTC access to other components of SSA for processing workloads.

Our Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) has conducted VTC hearings on a study basis in a few sites, and has established the viability of conducting hearings electronically. Expert witnesses can participate in the hearing from a privately owned videoconferencing site or a government facility, located close to their offices. Eventually, expert witnesses will be able to participate from their own offices via a desktop video camera. Desktop video has great potential for expanded uses as the equipment and bandwidth improves.

Customers' responses to VTC service as well as productivity and workload impact will be followed closely as OHA moves ahead to deploy additional units in mid- FY 2000. Data from additional sites will be used to verify estimated return on investment before future rollout sites are selected. We are also continuing to investigate the effectiveness of VTC for other purposes, such as continuing disability reviews and claimant conferences.

Schedule:

2000 Continue to test and evaluate VTC. Rollout to additional sites as warranted.

Enhance HOTS to measure effects of initiative.

2001 Rollout of VTC to additional sites as warranted.

Appendix 4



SSA's Evaluation Plan

Following is a schedule of program evaluations, analyses and studies that will be undertaken or completed during FY 2001 and which directly relate to performance goals and indicators in the APP.

GOAL	PROGRAM EVALUATION	SCOPE and METHODOLOGY	ESTIMATED COMPLETION
Responsive Programs	Evaluation of Changing Benefit Structures	Evaluates distributional impact of changing Social Security benefits for Title II Retirement and Survivor's Insurance	2000
	The Effects of Increasing the Social Security Retirement Age	Evaluates the effect of legislative changes on labor supply, such as capacity to continue working, application for SS disability benefits, and/or demand for older workers.	2001
	Welfare Reform and Children with Disabilities	Evaluates the effect of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 on SSA's childhood disability workloads and program costs (cost, program analysis)	2001
	Outside Review and Consultation of the Disability Process Redesign Prototype	Assessment of SSA's evaluation of the 10-State Disability Redesign Prototype. (cost, program analysis, statistical 2001)	2001
	State Partnership Evaluation	Evaluates the effects of demonstration project to assist States in developing integrated employment service delivery systems for SSI/SSDI beneficiaries.	2001
World-class Service	Annual Interaction Tracking Survey	Assesses customer satisfaction with cross-section of SSA service (statistical)	2001
	Annual Employer Satisfaction Survey	Assesses employer satisfaction with cross-section of SSA service (statistical)	2001

Best-in-Business Program Management	Suspension of Benefits to Fugitives	Assesses adequacy of SSA procedures to identify fugitives receiving SSI benefits (audit)	2000-2001
	SSA Procedures for Verifying Evidentiary Documents Presented with Original SSN Applications	Assesses adequacy of SSA procedures to ensure proper issuance of original SSNs (audit)	2000-2001
	Assessing SSA's Field Offices' Fraud Activities	Assesses adequacy of SSA Field Offices' activities regarding fraud identification, reporting, and investigation (audit)	2000-2001
Valued Employees	Employee Physical Security Survey	Surveys employees' perception of physical and protective security (statistical)	2001
	Comprehensive Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Surveys	Assesses air quality in selected office and identifies required corrective actions	2001
Public Understanding	Public Understanding Measurement System (PUMS)	Annual public survey of adults age 18 and over to assess their knowledge Social Security programs (statistical)	2001

Appendix 5



Management Challenges

In order to meet the performance goals established for FY 2001, SSA must address and strive to resolve the management challenges identified both externally and internally. The management challenges listed below are those identified by the General Accounting Office and SSA's Inspector General as the most serious management challenges facing our Agency. In all cases, SSA has formulated specific action plans to address these challenges and plans to make significant progress toward meeting them. In addition, we have adopted specific and measurable performance targets that demonstrate our commitment to resolving these problems. For some problems, numeric outcome or output goals, will be used. For others, measurable milestones of initiatives that are tracked at executive level to ensure success are appropriate and will be used. .

1. Strengthening SSI Program Management

In October 1998, SSA issued a comprehensive plan for improving management of the SSI program, "Management of the Supplemental Security Income Program: Today and in the Future". The plan addresses four areas in which the SSI program can be better managed: improving overall payment accuracy, increasing continuing disability reviews (CDRs), expanding our efforts to combat program fraud, and improving debt collections. In each area, we set aggressive but achievable goals, assuming receipt of adequate resources, to improve our management of the program.

We have always been committed to administering the SSI program as efficiently and accurately as possible. However, we believe we can improve our administration of the SSI program in ways that will further increase accuracy and reduce erroneous payments. Our goal is to increase the accuracy rate to 96 percent by 2002 through the following management improvements and legislative provisions:

- Electronic Information Exchange – We have expanded electronic information exchanges significantly over the years. These matches have proven very successful. By 2002, we estimate that they will prevent about \$230 million in overpayments each year.
- Processing CDRs – SSA is committed to ensuring that only those individuals who meet program eligibility requirements come on to the rolls and that only those who continue to be disabled remain on the rolls. Our plan calls for processing CDRs to ensure program integrity, to rebuild public confidence in our programs, and to carry out congressional mandates. We expect to complete 1.8 million periodic review CDRs in FY 2000, and 1.7 million in FY 2001 as called for by our 7-year plan. Over the course of our 7-year plan, on average, we expect to realize lifetime program savings of about \$6 for every \$1 in administrative cost.

- Processing Additional Non-Disability Redeterminations – Redeterminations are periodic reviews of SSI beneficiaries’ non-medical eligibility that focus on income and resource factors affecting eligibility and payment amounts. These reviews are the most effective tool available to SSA for improving the accuracy of SSI payments. Our FY 2001 budget request includes resources to enable SSA to continue to conduct a significant number of redeterminations, over 2 million per year in FY 2000 and FY 2001. These redeterminations could result in an estimated annual reduction in overpayments of \$260 million (as measured by the SSI quality assurance review system) by FY 2002.
- Legislation – On December 14, 1999, the President signed into law the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, Public Law 106-169. The law includes provisions which give SSA valuable tools to further our efforts. Three of the provisions will improve SSA’s ability to gather information that is material to an individual’s eligibility or correct amount of assistance. The improvements will enable us to identify unreported changes earlier to prevent or reduce overpayments.

Another provision allows SSA to improve efforts to collect SSI overpayments by extending to the SSI program all the debt collection authorities currently available under the OASDI programs.

Two other provisions strengthen program provisions that prior to enactment, allowed individuals to qualify for benefits by disposing of resources for less than fair market value, and by transferring assets to a trust.

Another provision authorizes SSA to impose sanctions on individuals who furnish information material to eligibility or payment amount that the individual knew was inaccurate, providing a deterrent to those who mislead SSA in their attempt to claim benefits.

The FY 2001 APP contains measures for each of the five strategic objectives addressed in the SSI management plan, and describes the specific means and strategies that are being employed. We also include a separate section in the plan that displays in one place all the performance goals related to SSI program management (pp. 96-97).

2. Long-term Challenges of the Social Security Program

We participate in thousands of activities across the country aimed at informing the public about the Social Security program and the need for the public to understand the Social Security program of today to help shape the Social Security program of tomorrow.

In addition, we have briefed Members of Congress about the long-term challenges and have been providing technical assistance to congressional staff in connection with development of legislative proposals to enhance the program.

Since its establishment in 1998, our new Office of Policy has been preparing analyses of long term proposals to support our efforts to keep Social Security on a firm financial footing for decades to come.

The APP acknowledges our key role in participating in the development of proposals to strengthen and enhance the solvency of OASDI programs and commits SSA, in FY 2001, to continue to prepare analyses on the distributional and fiscal effects of solvency proposals developed by the Administration, Congress, and other policymakers (pp. 27-31).

3. Systems Security and Controls

Last year the public accounting firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) reported that SSA had made “noteworthy” progress in strengthening controls to protect information and in improving and fully testing our plan for continuity of operations. They also reported that SSA had improved significantly in the area of software development and change control procedures to the extent that this area was no longer a reportable condition. SSA intends to continue treating systems security as a high priority.

While SSA has a strong program to combat fraud, waste and abuse, there is potential for deliberate acts of deception in any benefits program. The FY 2001 APP contains a specific performance objective to aggressively deter, identify and resolve fraud, with numeric performance goals for FY 2001. Among the supporting means and strategies discussed is a comprehensive anti-fraud plan jointly developed and overseen by SSA and the OIG. The anti-fraud plan includes activities to prevent and detect fraud, such as revising the integrity review process to better identify fraud prone situations and better focus security audits, and increasing systems controls for certain automated transactions sensitive to fraud (pp. 74-77, Appendix 3, pp. 2-4).

4. Fraud Risk

Because the public rightfully expects us to be vigilant stewards of its tax dollars, SSA has a policy of zero tolerance toward fraud and abuse in our programs. In a broad sense, virtually all Agency efforts encompassed by SSA’s program management goal constitute elements of SSA’s strategy to combat fraud. The efforts associated with this goal encompass approximately \$1.7 billion of SSA’s FY 2001 administrative budget. They include the Inspector General’s budget, continuing disability reviews, SSI non-disability redeterminations, representative payee costs, annual earnings postings and records maintenance, and debt collection efforts. A strong OIG, working together with SSA employees, is the most effective means we have to control fraud and abuse in the programs we administer.

To strengthen the OIG’s capacity to accomplish its mission, SSA has continued to increase the resources available to the OIG, more than doubling its investigative staff.

Our FY 2001 budget supports increased attention by both the OIG and Social Security offices across the country for deterring fraudulent activities and identifying and bringing to justice those who commit fraud, whether members of the public or employees. SSA's targeted anti-fraud activities include:

- Enhancing on-line access to State records;
- Continuing residency verifications for SSI applicants and recipients in our border offices;
- Establishing additional State Disability Determination Service (DDS) fraud investigation units to detect and prevent fraud at the initial disability decision;
- Improving systems security measures;
- Improving operations to identify and terminate payment to incarcerated SSI recipients; and
- Implementing new automated data matches with external parties.

SSA has also made an extensive effort to combat identity fraud, including establishing an Enumeration Verification System which provides a mechanism for employers to match employee names and Social Security Numbers (SSNs) with SSA's records; establishing a Disallowed Application File to track applications for SSN cards submitted with "suspect" or "fraudulent" documentation, and working closely, as permitted by law, with the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the State Department to assure the identity and lawful alien status of individuals.

OIG has dedicated additional resources to combat identity theft; staff are currently participating in identity theft task forces and OIG pilots are under way in two cities to assess the impact of identity fraud and to develop an appropriate response.

We specifically discuss our actions to address SSI fraud/high risk under item 1 above.

5. Addressing Urgent Year 2000 Computing Challenge

SSA has been at the forefront of government-wide efforts to ensure that our systems are Year-2000 compliant. Our benefit payment system is 100 percent Year-2000 compliant. SSA worked closely with the Treasury Department, Federal Reserve, and the Postal Service to ensure that the Social Security and SSI benefit payments due in January 2000 were paid on time. Since October 1998, our payments have been made with Year-2000 compliant systems at both SSA and Treasury.

In the event that some banks were not able to credit direct deposit payments, SSA has worked with FMS and the Federal Reserve to develop a Benefit Payment Contingency Plan, which provided alternate ways of getting payments to Social Security beneficiaries. In dire need situations, SSA field offices were able to issue third-party payments immediately.

All of SSA's mission-critical systems are Year-2000 compliant. The automated systems for 50 State Disability Determination Services (DDSs) also are Year-2000 compliant. In addition, all of our data exchanges with our trading partners are Year-2000 compliant.

All of our local contingency plans assured that January 2000 payments would be issued on time, that our systems would function smoothly, and that we would deliver all our services to the American public.

As a final risk mitigation strategy, SSA published its Y2K Day One Strategy. This strategy comprised the comprehensive set of actions that were to be executed during the last days of 1999 and the first days of 2000. It included the activities leading up to the critical century rollover date, such as identification of key personnel involved, preparation of facilities checklists, procedures for manual processing of certain key workloads in the event the automated systems would be unavailable, training, etc. Implementation of the strategy ensured, to the extent possible, that SSA's facilities and systems were fully operational on the first business day of the new century. That is, service to the public and our trading partners continued without interruption due to the change of century date.

6. Program Complexity

SSA has grappled with the complexity of the SSI program since it was first implemented and has made numerous efforts to simplify it. Legislative, regulatory and judicial actions designed to improve the program's ability to provide benefits in an equitable and cost-effective manner have increased program complexity. Congress, the General Accounting Office, the Social Security Advisory Board and others, as well as the Agency, acknowledge program complexity as an important challenge to administering the program effectively. The Office of Policy serves as a focal point for research, evaluation and policy development that will help enable policy makers to make informed choices in this area.

Our FY 2001 APP contains goals to maintain or improve payment accuracy in both the SSI and OASDI programs and to analyze complex SSI policies to determine opportunities for improvement. The Agency is also working to strengthen SSA employees' understanding of SSI program rules (pp. 69-70, Appendix 3, pp. 59-60, 65-66).

7. GPRA Commitments

SSA is committed both to the concepts of GPRA and to improving our ability to manage for results in improved customer service, as well as strengthening the integrity of our programs. Our FY 2001 APP is a useful management tool for SSA and is a primary means of communicating overall direction and specific agency performance targets to our employees. Our current FY 2001 commitments reflect what we believe can be accomplished at the resource levels appropriated in FY 2000 and contained in our budget request for FY 2001.

The FY 2001 APP contains a specific performance objective to position the Agency's resources and processes to meet emerging workloads. This section highlights SSA's current activity to create a service-delivery vision that looks past our current 5-year planning horizon. This vision will be used to determine the actions we need to pursue to adequately prepare for the future. Our next GPRA strategic plan will outline the objectives, measures, and initiatives that we will manage to through FY 2005 to manage effectively in this critical area. The APP also commits us to updating our SSA workforce transition plan in FY 2001, which will support our ability to serve our customers into the future (pp. 79, 89-90).

In addition to including a detailed definition of each of the plan's performance measures and the data source used to measure performance, the plan includes a separate section detailing how performance measurement is being verified, validated, and reported. (pp. 94-95).

8. Employee Performance and Productivity

SSA recognizes that a highly skilled and high-performing workforce is the key to achieving our strategic goals and objectives and that ultimately, the measure of our employees' performance is expressed in the performance of the Agency. Our FY 2001 APP goals related to employees and our enabling means and strategies, therefore, focus on providing our employees with the tools and training, physical environment, and culture that support their contribution to achieving SSA's mission, and on developing and implementing plans to position our resources to meet emerging workloads (pp. 82-90).

9. Process Redesign

The FY 2001 APP reflects our current strategy to improve the disability adjudication process by creating a decision making process that reduces fragmentation and duplication, produces greater consistency and coordination at all adjudicative levels and takes better advantage of new technology. By taking these steps, SSA is striving to ensure that the correct disability decision is made and that benefits are awarded as early in the process as possible. Specific initiatives such as modifications to the disability claims process, process unification, and hearings process improvements are described, and a schedule for specific milestones through the next two years is provided.

We commit to specific levels of disability and hearings payment accuracy and processing time through FY 2001. We introduce a productivity measure for the hearings process and two new DDS accuracy measures. We discuss our intention to improve other performance through FY 2005, including DDS denial accuracy, and productivity which will enable DDSs to handle increased receipts (pp.55-60, Appendix 3, pp. 32-34).

10. Annual Wage Reporting

SSA has made many improvements in the earnings process over the years that have contributed to improvements in accurate and timely posting of wages to individuals' records. A remaining problem is the volume of wages posted to the Earnings Suspense File because SSA is unable to match the report to a valid name/social security number. The FY 2001 APP describes SSA's ongoing initiative to reduce the size of SSA's suspense file, which is key to our efforts to maintain and improve earnings accuracy and, as a result, OASI payment accuracy. The APP also commits the Agency to achieving specific, numeric goals for earnings accuracy and OASI payment accuracy in FY 2001 (pp. 64-65, 72-73, Appendix 3, pp. 9-10).

11. Service to the Public

In spite of the current and future challenges, SSA is committed to delivering world-class, customer-responsive service, not only in terms of timeliness and quality of the outputs we produce, but also as measured by the satisfaction of our customers. Throughout the FY 2001 APP, we commit ourselves to specific levels of accuracy and timeliness in processing our workloads, and to specific enhancements in the range of services provided.

Our FY 2001 APP includes initiatives to improve efficiencies through efforts such as electronic payment services, automating SSA's claims processes, improved telephone service, and expanded electronic service delivery. We are also committed to creating a supportive work environment for employees by providing the necessary tools and training, providing a physical environment that promotes the health and well-being of our employees, and creating, updating, and implementing a plan for transitioning from the workforce of today to the workforce of the future.

We also commit to continuing to solicit input from our customers about their preferences and about where improvement in service is needed. As is evident in the plan, we are using this information to develop and implement specific initiatives to improve our customer service and are putting processes in place which will enhance our ability to continue to be customer-responsive (pp. 50-51, Appendix 3, pp. 43-44, 63).

We are committed to supporting the efforts of Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities to return to work or work for the first time. For several years, SSA has embarked on a comprehensive employment strategy that seeks to provide beneficiaries with the economic supports to enter the workforce, greater access to rehabilitation and other employment services and the flexibility to choose service providers, and improved customer service. In FY 2000, SSA will begin implementation of Public Law 106-170, "The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999." This legislation addresses some of the most significant barriers to employment of people with disabilities and is expected to increase the number of beneficiaries who successfully transition to work. (pp.31-33, Appendix 3, pp.17-19)