Appendix 5

Description of Key Initiatives---Table of Contents

Appeals Council (AC) Process Improvement

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

This Key Initiative (KI) will improve productivity and reduce the time required by the AC to process requests for review of hearing decisions. To date, results have been very encouraging. The elements are:

❖ Use differential case management to initially examine all cases and identify the appropriate case processing track.

❖ Have analysts seek guidance from decisionmakers before preparing recommendations in difficult cases.

❖ Obtain analytical assistance from OGC.

❖ Have GS-14 and above AC employees process cases without analyst assistance.

❖ Temporarily reduce the quality review sample to devote additional staff time to processing review requests.

❖ Merge job functions and positions for more flexibility and staff opportunities.

❖ Hire and train additional employees.

❖ Restructure physical layout to streamline case processing and incorporate modular systems furniture.

❖ Implement a universal database case control system to eliminate re-keying.

❖ Improve operational planning, analysis and management support.

❖ Maximize use of technology and management information.

Schedule:
2001-2002
• Obtain and install new information technology systems; train employees.
• Complete installation of modular systems furniture in accordance with the revised operational structure.
• Hire, train, and place employees within the newly revised operational structure.

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 Leave system which will provide automated sign-in/sign-out capability, automated leave slip submission/approval, and a management information tool for SSA's managers (who consider it essential for dealing with the shortage of administrative support). It will provide the functionality to acquire, edit, process and transmit time and attendance information.

Schedule:
2001
• Begin training and implementation of new system.

2002
• Implement nationwide.

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, more work is needed. The major areas of emphasis are:
1) Fraud prevention and detection;
2) Referrals and investigations;
3) Enforcement; and
4) Management information and control.

Schedule:
2001
- Evaluate the OGC Anti-Fraud Pilot.
- Continue development and enhancement of new debt collection tools.
- Continue modernization of the debt management systems.
- Expand the Residency Fraud Operations project to include nationwide issues.
- Expand the Cooperative Disability Determination Investigations Unit sites.
- Implement the Identity Theft and Deterrence Act (1998) with the FTC.
- Continue progress with identification and referral of fugitive felons.
- Continue efforts to enhance the Agency's ability to protect critical infrastructures.
- Implement the Comprehensive Integrity Review Program (CIRP), Release 3 (SSI reviews) and begin development of Release 4 (Title II).
- Complete transfer of Program Service Center (PSC) remittance workloads to the Mid-Atlantic PSC.

2002
- Expand the Cooperative Disability Investigations Unit sites.
- Continue development and enhancement of new debt collection tools.
- Report and make recommendations on the OGC Anti-Fraud Pilot.
- Implement the Allegation Management System to improve fraud referral and tracking process.

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 of the 21st century, SSA must clearly identify the skills needed by our future 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:
2001
- Develop and construct competency models by job type.
- Pilot and train employees in uses of competency tools.

2002
- Explore use for other HR applications.

Continuing Disability Review Process and Workflow Enhancements

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

Congress provided increased spending caps for FY 1996-2002 to fund Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs). This funding will 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. Our 7-year CDR plan has also resulted in the streamlining of the CDR process.

Schedule:
2001
- Evaluate recommendations for changes from the CDR mailer contract.
- Evaluate recommendations from the CDR data management contract.
- Revise assumptions and actual workload figures to update the 7-year CDR plan.
- Analyze the full medical review CDRs data base to determine feasibility of creating a new statistical model.
- Conduct pilot using HCFA data for CDR screening and profiling.
- Analyze medical review mailer cases to improve the profiling process.
- Enhance CDR control file (CDRCF); add Title II/Title XVI medical appeals.
- Award CDR process enhancement contract.

2002
- Refine the medium profile for Title II cases to identify cases expected to medically improve.
- Develop new profiles for Title XVI childhood cases.
- Determine changes needed to mailer as a result of the contract mailer findings and special study case reviews.
- Enhance CDRCF for better control and management of CDR workloads.
- Complete tasks for FY 2001 contract.
- Award CDR process enhancement contract.

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 and supports our values. Our shared practices and group values create our culture.

SSA has completed a baseline study, gap analysis, and benchmarking study, leading to the creation of a change strategy. SSA formed an Organizational Culture Workgroup that completed its recommendations for the design and implementation of this change strategy. As a result of our renewed culture, all employees will exhibit SSA's values when they provide direct service to our customers.

Schedule:
2001
- Finalize change strategy.

2002
- Implement change strategy.
- Develop evaluation approach.

Desktop Management

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Systems

Desktop Management, using the IWS/LAN platform, is the foundation for expert systems, on-line "help" features, interactive training, on-line human resource functions, and many other key initiatives. It will enable the redesign of our core business processes for greater efficiency. By the time the IWS/LAN rollout is virtually completed -- in FY 2001 -- over 96,000 workstations will be in place. The Agency is beginning the replacement of workstations in order to take advantage of significant changes in the technology marketplace.

To meet the needs of the 32 claims-taking Foreign Service Posts Worldwide, Desktop Management equipment and 14 Local Area Networks (LANS) will be installed providing SSA programmatic processing capability to Department of State employees.

Schedule:
2001
- Complete IWS/LAN rollout.
- Replace approximately 32,000 workstations.
- Install IWS/LAN at Foreign Service Posts in Dublin, Paris, Lisbon, Madrid, and a Latin American site.

2002
- Replace approximately 28,000 workstations.
- Expand Foreign Service Post Desktop Management to 18 remaining sites.

Diverse Workforce Transition Plan

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources

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 has collected baseline information on employee and Agency needs, both for now and the future. Gaps have been analyzed and actions planned. Strategies for hiring, training, and retaining employees have been developed and are being implemented.

SSA has already:
- ❖ Developed a strategy for hiring underrepresented groups.
- ❖ Issued a report on the needs of our employees with disabilities and formed a team to enhance services.
- ❖ Issued a Retirement Wave study report.
- ❖ Issued a management/union report that identifies barriers to our "One Agency Concept" and recommends solutions.
- ❖ Issued the initial SSA Future Workforce Transition Plan.

Schedule:
2001-2002
- Conduct and evaluate employee satisfaction surveys.
- Develop, deliver and evaluate training for employees with disabilities.
- Update the Transition Plan.
- Implement emerging technologies for training delivery improvements.

Earnings Process Improvements

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 the following major activities:

- ❖ 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,
- ❖ Improve coordination among the various SSA data files--over 60--that contain related information about employers, employees and the wages associated with each,
- ❖ Provide for the infrastructure to allow SSA's earnings systems to accommodate more electronic business, especially to use the Internet as a primary method of conducting earnings business with all our customers, and
- ❖ Develop a single algorithm/computer routine to provide program benefit estimates to customers using variable assumptions about earnings and other factors relevant to the computation.

Schedule:
2001
- Complete work on the changes for Annual Wage Reporting (AWR) Tax Year 2000 processing.

2002
- Complete work on the changes for AWR Tax Year 2001 processing.
- Complete Social Security printing contracts for FY 2003.

Educate the Public About Social Security

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

The Educate the Public Key Initiative centers on the strategies laid out in our 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 Public Understanding Measurement System (PUMS) surveys and other SSA reports.

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 and benefit estimates.

SSA will continue its Ambassador Program which trains SSA employees and managers to help educate the public. We will conduct our annual Public Affairs training for our public affairs specialists.

Schedule:
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 plus about 3 million Statements issued upon request.

2002
- Upon analysis of PUMS survey data, continue to update and revise planning.

Electronic Disability System (eDIB)

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Systems

The eDIB's objectives are to develop a fully electronic process that will:

❖ Enhance processing by sharing disability information through the Electronic Folder across components.
❖ Leverage the DDS systems by creating an interface with the electronic folder.
❖ Improve the disability interview by providing automated interview screens.
❖ Provide for exchanging medical data with the health care industry.

We will apply changes to the process incrementally and evaluate the impact of:

❖ **A** proof-of-concept that demonstrated how key information collected through the disability interview process can be stored in an electronic folder.
❖ eDIB as implemented in the Delaware DDS and field offices in May 2000.
❖ Electronic Folder standards which will be developed as eDIB evolves and additional pilots are conducted to evaluate the electronic process.
❖ Distributed systems with the Electronic Folder which will be accessible by every component involved in the disability process**.**

Schedule:
2001

• Implement scanning/imaging pilot for self help claims in Delaware.
• Implement eDib pilot in a State.

2002

• Improve eDib viewer using browser-based technology.
• Expand the universe of claims that can be taken in eDib.
• Implement eDib in additional DDS sites.

Electronic Payment Services

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

This Key Initiative has three purposes:

❖ To implement the Debt Collection Improvement Act, which requires that all Federal payments are delivered by electronic funds transfer (EFT): SSA works closely with Treasury to encourage the use of EFT by the remaining 13 million Social Security and SSI check recipients. We will send notices to them explaining the options.

❖ To improve public service and efficiency by expanding SSA's use of the Automated Clearing House (ACH) system to exchange program-related information: SSA has taken the lead in using ACH to improve communications with financial institutions. We are exploring using ACH to notify SSA when a direct deposit beneficiary changes residence address.

❖ To modernize the payment disbursement process to take advantage of an all-electronic payment environment: The entire Social Security payment file is sent to Treasury each month which allows maximum time to act on late reports affecting the next scheduled payment.

Schedule:
2001

• National direct deposit campaign.
• Continue phased mailing of Electronic Transfer Accounts (ETA) notice.

2002

• Continue phased mailing of ETA notice.
• EFT file certification in ACH format for 3rd of month file.
• International direct deposit for an additional 21 countries.

Electronic Records Management

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

The purpose of this Key Initiative is to ensure that SSA takes the steps necessary to implement an electronic record-keeping system.

Under General Records Schedule (GRS)-20, a guideline provided by the National Archives and Records Administration, Federal agencies are allowed to destroy electronic records once a hard copy has been produced. In 1996, an advocacy group challenged GRS-20. After a series of court decisions, GRS-20 remains the legal process. However, printing and storing hard copies does not make sense when compared to the speed of electronic records storage. We are currently working to obtain funding to test a number of software options.

Also, under the Government Paperwork Elimination Act, by October 2003 agencies must give persons/entities that are required to maintain/submit/disclose information to the Federal Government, the option of doing so electronically.   Likewise, the Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments require agencies to provide electronic access to government records. We must be able to store, track and retrieve records in order to comply with these Acts.

Schedule:
2001
- Conduct pilots to test available software packages.

2002
- Pilot study is completed and an evaluation report is prepared.
- Select software and finalize procurement package.
- Purchase software, distribute to Agency, install, and train.

Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities

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

This is a comprehensive program to ensure a substantial increase in the number of beneficiaries who return to work and achieve self-sufficiency, including:
- ❖ Implementation of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act which began in FY 2001. Return-to-work service providers will be paid only if the beneficiary leaves the disability rolls due to work or meets certain milestone criteria. A grants program will help beneficiaries gain employment.
- ❖ SSA and the Health Care Financing Administration are working to provide Medicaid/Medicare coverage to beneficiaries who return to work.
- ❖ SSA has created a new Employment Support Representative (ESR) position.

Schedule:
2001
- Implement Phase I of Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program.
- Evaluate ESR pilots and begin nationwide implementation.
- Increase electronic services for working beneficiaries.
- Monitor benefits planning and assistance grants.
- Collaborate with HCFA on health care initiatives.
- Expand and improve SSA's work incentives marketing program.

2002
- Release Tickets to eligible beneficiaries in second and final States.
- Report to the Commissioner and Congress on the status of the Ticket Program implementation.
- Develop strategies for improving beneficiary satisfaction with SSA's return-to-work services.

Enhanced Disability Program Training

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

This Enhanced Disability Program Training KI proposes comprehensive improvement to all facets of training for disability adjudicators. It is intended to effectively use modern teaching media and address the continual need for skilled personnel. SSA has already:

- ❖ Established a Disability Training Steering Committee to identify training needs and to provide training feedback.
- ❖ Formed and trained the National Disability Training Cadre to prepare and deliver Interactive Video Teletraining.
- ❖ Increased disability-related training for new and experienced claims representatives.

Schedule:
2001
- Award follow-up contract to implement Disability Examiner certification.
- Train and utilize second National Disability Training Cadre.
- Hold second National Disability Trainers' Workshop.
- Draft National Training Package for medical consultants.
- Develop procedures for certification of individual adjudicators.
- Develop curriculum to address national standards and core competencies needed by adjudicators.

2002
- Prepare job analyses for disability examiners.
- Solicit and train third disability training cadre.

Enhance Environmental Health and Physical Security in the Workplace

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

SSA has implemented many measures to enhance environmental health, safety and security in the workplace including:

- ❖ Air quality testing with a goal to evaluate 20 % of all offices each year.
- ❖ Water sampling of all field offices by FY 2001; 100 % of problems corrected.
- ❖ Environmental Health and Safety Comprehensive Assessments.
- ❖ CPR training and supplies provided for employee volunteers nationwide.
- ❖ Training to employees on ergonomic furniture principles and practices.
- ❖ A biennial employee survey to assess employee satisfaction with security.
- ❖ Field facility security evaluations.

Schedule:
2001
- Report results of FY 2000 Security Satisfaction Survey.
- Survey training centers, contact stations, other sites with no prior security survey.
- Prepare Hazard Communication Program IVT training.

2001-2002
- Continue air and water quality sampling plus asbestos surveys with timely remediation.
- Continue Environmental Health and Safety Comprehensive Assessments.
- Continue CPR training and supplies to employee volunteers.
- Establish ergonomic trainers and complete training for all employees.
- Survey offices that relocate; implement accepted security recommendations.
- Train employees to respond to workplace violence, emergencies

2002
- Provide Hazardous Communication training to field and hearings facilities.

Expand Electronic Wage Reporting

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

The Internet will be the most popular alternative for annual wage reporting (EWR). EWR will provide business easy-to-use, cost effective ways to file wage reports; it will also lower SSA's processing costs, capture data quicker, and transmit information to the IRS faster. SSA completed proof-of-concept testing of EWR and has demonstrated that it is secure and cost-effective. Responding to this challenge, we will provide better access and support services for electronic filers, including:

❖ 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/wage reporting software.

Schedule:
2001
- Implement full EWR customer registration process.
- Analyze electronic error notices.
- Pilot initial Internet reporting capability.
- Prepare a Customer Support Manual.
- Plan for W-2 online.
- Begin receipt of Internet wage reports on Employer Services Online.
- Implement PKI Internet for 500 participants.

2002
- Implement automated confirmation of resubmission notices.
- Implement full Internet reporting capability.
- Implement electronic access to EWR Customer Support Manual and Internet W-2 Online access.

Financial/Administrative Systems

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

SSA will modernize our financial and administrative processes and systems with three sub-initiatives:
❖ The Managerial Cost Accountability Process (MCAP) and System (MCAS) will modernize the way SSA collects, organizes, and provides management and financial information to managers, analysts and outside entities.
❖ The Electronic Payments (EP) sub-initiative will focus on the Third Party Payment System (TPPS), eBusiness, and travel.
❖ The replacement for the Financial Accounting System (FACTS) will provide a comprehensive financial accounting system for accounts payable, accounts receivable, core accounting systems, and reporting.

Schedule:
2001
- Conversion of existing Cost Analysis System functionality to MCAS platform.
- The Third Party Payment System Release 3 will be developed to issue draft payments to employees, vendors and beneficiaries, and to make those payments via electronic funds transfer.
- A COTS package to replace FACTS will be identified and design/development begun.

2002
- MCAP/MCAS planning, development and implementation will continue.
- Additional trading partners for Electronic Commerce are anticipated to be available for other administrative payment areas.
- FACTS replacement continues with conversion from the existing FACTS and On-line FACTS systems, training, functional testing and validation, and other implementation phases.

Hearings Process Improvements (HPI)

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

SSA is improving service to hearings customers by reducing individual case processing times, improving quality, promoting individualized case management, and increasing employee job satisfaction and productivity. With full implementation, HPI is expected to result in a 21 percent decrease in processing time and an increase in productivity per workyear. This Key Initiative incorporates:

❖ Process improvements including implementation of a national workflow model, processing time benchmarks and standardization of pre-hearing conferences.
❖ Group-based accountability including establishment of processing groups.
❖ Automation and data collection efficiencies including improved management information, case management software and automated calendars.

Schedule:
2001
- Phase 3 (final phase) of implementation ended in November 2000.
- Evaluate implementation and continue to monitor.

2002
- Continue to monitor.

Immediate Claims-Taking Services

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Operations

SSA's customers now have the choice of filing retirement and survivors claims immediately over the phone, if they have all the information needed at the time of the call and elect this service. The Immediate Claims Taking (ICT) service, which was rolled out in September 2000, is available to any customer who calls SSA's 800 number. This service supplements immediate claims services that were already in place for customers who visit any of our field offices.

The ICT service is a significant departure from the traditional 800 number policy of handling only those transactions that can be completed within a few minutes. The initiative has established a framework for providing teleclaims services without jeopardizing the world-class telephone access rates which are so highly valued by SSA's customers.

Schedule:
2001
- Monitor ICT service and impact on other workloads.
- ICT units will integrate call support for Internet Retirement Insurance Benefits (IRIB) customers and adjudication for IRIB applications that are mailed to them.
- Integrate additional sites into the ICT network.
- Develop plans for ICT services for limited English speaking customers.

2002
- Monitor ICT service and impact on other workloads.

Improve 800-Number Service

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Operations

SSA's national 800-number delivers outstanding public service. However, customer feedback tells us that our customers want to use the 800-number for more of their SSA business, including more complex transactions. Responding to these customer challenges, we want to:

❖ Increase the range of program and information services available to customers over the telephone,
❖ Increase the % of callers who rate SSA's services as good, very good or excellent,
❖ Maintain current courtesy ratings,
❖ Maintain current payment accuracy, and
❖ Improve service accuracy.

Schedule:
2001
- Obtain call forecasting and staff scheduling software.
- Replace automatic call distributors with upgraded technology.
- Implement procedural changes that allow representatives to take additional actions to completion.
- Offer Spanish services nationwide.
- Improve 800-number automated services.
- Analyze 6 month service reports and take corrective action.

2002
- Pilot "screen pop" technology.
- Provide callers access to programmatic information contained in SSA's databases.
- Activation of Intelligent Network Routing (INR).
- Continue to look for ways to improve the automated services available through the 800-number.
- Analyze 6 month 800-number service reports and take corrective action.

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 are identifying and testing various technologies, physical arrangements, furniture configurations and workflows to determine those that serve our customers best. As a result of benchmarking activities completed in 1998, a summary of best practices for managing reception areas is available on SSA's Intranet.

The Automated Interview Tracking System (AITS) is available for use in all SSA field offices. This system allows offices to keep track of interview information on every visitor. It does not, however, provide waiting room management functionality.

The Visitor Information Services Analysis (VISA) software was piloted in five field offices (FO). This software helps us manage visitors from the time they walk into the office until they leave. The results of this pilot are helping us decide how to implement VISA/AITS in FOs with high volumes of walk-in traffic.

Schedule:
2001
- Prepare service proposals and implementation plans.
- Begin implementation of VISA/AITS.

2002
- Continue rollout of VISA/AITS.

Improve Field Office Telephone Service

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Operations

There continues to be strong demand for telephone service in field offices (FO). The large number of local telephone companies that serve FOs, and their varying technology, make it difficult for us to get call volume and caller access data. Customer feedback, however, strongly suggests that FO telephone service is less than world-class. SSA wants to improve telephone access to FOs, and improve the quality of the telephone service provided.

Schedule:
2001
- Conduct service observation of FO telephone service to measure quality and courtesy.
- Conduct FO caller recontact surveys to assess customer satisfaction and identify needed service improvements.
- Conduct field office caller access pilot.
- Based on pilot results, refine the process and implement an ongoing program to measure FO caller access.
- Pilot FO telephone management information system.
- Develop a process to allow FO general inquiry callers to redirect their call to the 800-number if they choose. Plan pilot.

2002
- Conduct service observation of FO telephone service to measure quality and courtesy.
- Conduct FO caller recontact surveys to assess customer satisfaction and identify needed service improvements.
- Continue program to measure FO caller access.
- Conduct pilot that allows FO general inquiry callers to redirect their call to the 800-number if they choose. Evaluate pilot and make recommendations.

Improvements to the Disability Claims Process

Lead Officials: Associate Commissioner, Office of Disability; Director, Disability Process Redesign Team

SSA and the DDSs have undertaken pilot initiatives to help us deliver fair, consistent and timely disability decisions at all levels:
- ❖ Our process unification initiative fosters similar results for similar cases at all stages of the claims process.
- ❖ The Full Process Model shows that increasing examiner authority, using medical expertise better, and increasing interaction with claimants at the initial level results in improved quality/service.
- ❖ We continue to test the Disability Claim Manager (DCM) model in which the DCM acts as the single point of contact for the claimant.
- ❖ Our pilot to eliminate the reconsideration step allowed us to correctly pay about the same number of claimants at the initial level, as we currently pay at the initial plus reconsideration level.
- ❖ We continue to track cases for our retest of the Elimination of the Request for Appeals Council (AC) Review.

SSA selected 10 states in which to prototype the most successful redesign elements.

Schedule:
2001
- Evaluate early trend data for prototype changes. Assess evaluation results on the Disability Claim Manager pilot and decide on next steps.
- Publish an NPRM for implementation.

2002
- Assess results from re-testing the elimination of the Request for AC Review and make next step decisions.
- Continue to assess the process changes, and make decisions regarding national rollout.

Improvements to the Representative Payment Program

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

SSA will improve our representative payment program through five projects:

- ❖ Payee and Beneficiary Education and Support Project.
- ❖ Custody Verification Demonstration Project for parent payees.
- ❖ Onsite Review Demonstration Project for fee-for-service and volume payee organizations.
- ❖ Representative Payee System (RPS) improvements.
- ❖ Ongoing Integrity Review Program.

Schedule:
2001

- Develop educational materials and videos for recruitment campaign, organizational payee seminars, and ongoing education/support workshops.
- Reprint organizational payee handbook.
- Award contracts for custody verification demonstration /monitor performance.

2001-2002

- Conduct workshops and seminars to educate organizational payees.
- Conduct a recruitment campaign to locate qualified organizational payees.
- Develop additional payee and beneficiary education/support materials.
- Distribute individual payee handbooks.
- Revise, print and distribute organizational payee handbooks.
- Analyze contractor report for Custody Verification Demonstration.
- Conduct site visits and random reviews for fee-for-service and volume payees.
- Award contracts;monitor Onsite Review Demonstration.
- RPS improvements.
- Develop an Integrity Review Program.

Information Exchange (INEX)

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

SSA's data matching activities have proven highly effective in preventing/detecting benefit overpayments and fraud, and eliminating manual actions. We are taking advantage of improved technology and rapidly expanding online databases.

- ❖ For each major business process, SSA will continue to identify opportunities to use INEX to capture transaction inputs electronically, and implement new or expanded information exchanges with other government agencies and private entities.
- ❖ We are pursuing SSA Access to State Records Online (SASRO) on a State-by-State basis, and we now have limited access in 37 States, intending to add 10 States each year.
- ❖ SSA is also seeking access to databases that integrate information from multiple States.
- ❖ With State Online Query (SOLQ), SSA will provide State agencies immediate, online access to the information we now provide them overnight.

Schedule:
2001-2002

- Refine and implement INEX strategy.
- Add at least 10 new State agencies to SASRO each year.
- Formulate strategy for expansion of SOLQ; rollout to 7 States in 2001 and an additional 10 States in 2002.
- Complete National rollout of Office of Child Support Enforcement read-only access to SSA field offices completed in 2001.
- New Jersey electronic death registration pilot in 2002.

INS/ DOS Collection of Enumeration Data

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

This Key Initiative will improve governmental efficiency and savings by having the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Department of State (DOS) assist SSA in enumerating aliens; and reduce opportunities for individuals to provide fraudulent immigration documents to obtain SSN cards, thus improving enumeration integrity.

❖ DOS will collect enumeration data for immigrants along with visa information and forward it to INS, who will in turn forward the data to SSA.

❖ INS will forward to SSA the enumeration data collected from aliens changing from nonimmigrant alien status to permanent residents.

❖ INS will forward to SSA enumeration data collected from aliens applying for permission to work and issued employment authorization documents.

Schedule:
2001

• INS will forward to SSA the data elements in the electronic visa data package needed to assign SSNs when the alien enters the U.S.

• Continue to design and develop the needed software to support this initiative.

2002

• Work with INS to electronically collect from other groups of aliens the data needed to assign them SSNs.

• Develop instructions for DOS, INS and SSA employees.

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 resource (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 decisionmaking, 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:
2001

• Develop and implement future releases of IHRS.

2002

• Develop and implement future releases of IHRS.

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 2001, SSA's IVT system will provide IVT access to 67 percent of its offices. Our goal is to have IVT in 80% of our offices by the end of FY 2002. With 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:
2001
- Continue expansion initiative to install IVT in 67% of SSA offices.
- Determine availability and impact of technology for desktop expansion.

2002
- Continue expansion initiative to install IVT in 80% of SSA offices.

Internet Customer Services

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

SSA has a website that covers every aspect of Social Security and offers a growing number of electronic transactions.   With the growth of online direct services as a "best" business practice, customers expect us to offer an ever-increasing range of Internet services.

One of our challenges is the need for reliable ways to authenticate the identity of customers interacting with SSA via electronic media. Our effort includes establishing an application risk assessment methodology, establishing password policies, and conducting Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) pilots.

We are also developing better customer support for our Internet customers.

Schedule:
2001
- Continue to obtain stakeholder input.
- SSA's goal is to have 21% of its 73 customer initiated services available to customers either through the Internet or automated telephone service. Implement additional Internet services, including benefit account status and the first RSI post-entitlement transactions.
- Evaluate resources and other requirements for online inquiries and customer support involving interaction with SSA employees.

2002
- Continue to obtain stakeholder input.
- SSA's goal is to have 30% of its customer initiated services available through the Internet or automated telephone service. Implement additional Internet forms and services.
- Establish an electronic site that provides statistical data along with flexible query and report preparation tools.

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 expanding workloads. The Agency is committed to developing the managers for tomorrow and preparing them with the knowledge and skills to lead and shape SSA's programs in the 21st century. Our managers need to 1) successfully deliver service to a diverse customer base, 2) operate within a streamlined organizational framework with increasing spans of control, and 3) develop and nurture a rapidly changing workforce.

The leadership training/career development (LTCD) initiative will 1) identify essential competencies that managers will require, and 2) provide a continuous learning environment in which new managers will be acquire those competencies and established managers will sharpen their skills.

Schedule:
2001
- Completion of Advanced Leadership Program and continuation of Leadership Development Program.
- Reannounce and make selections for the next Advanced Leadership Program.

2002
- Re-announce and make selections for the Leadership Development Program.
- Continue annual Presidential Management Intern program participation.

2001-2002
- Continue ongoing one-day seminars for 1/3 of Agency managers.
- Continue ongoing management curriculum and rotational programs.

Market Measurement Program

Lead SSA Official: Senior Advisor, Customer Service Integration

The Market Measurement Program (MMP) involves a variety of systematic data collection mechanisms that, taken together, give SSA a full range of information about its market, i.e., its customers, workforce and stakeholders. The MMP includes data collection activities for three segments.

❖ To hear from customers, we gather information from all SSA's major customer groupings using five different data collection methods.
❖ To hear from our workforce, we use a survey process that will tell us how satisfied employees are with their work environment.
❖ To hear from stakeholders, we use data collection mechanisms specifically tailored to major stakeholder groups.

The Market Measurement Program (MMP) Clearinghouse has been developed as a central repository for all reports of findings resulting from the various Agency data collection activities under the MMP.

Schedule:
2001-2002
- Implement interaction tracking (surveys involving office visits, the 800-number, field office (FO) phone service, and the Internet).
- Obtain comment cards from hearings offices and field offices.
- Conduct stakeholder interviews.
- Conduct focus groups and surveys for three customer segments.
- Conduct employee satisfaction survey pilot in 2001. If successful, expand agency wide.
- Conduct surveys of employers.
- Conduct special studies.

Notice Improvements

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

SSA sends its customers approximately 390 million notices annually. Improving notices is essential to improving customer satisfaction.

❖ SSA will improve language for Title II overpayment notices, including more case-specific information.

❖ The mainframe Distributed Online Correspondence System (DOCS) will replace and improve on the current PC based Field Office Notices System, also enabling field employees to see these notices online.

❖ SSA will improve the clarity and format of millions of SSI financial eligibility notices. We will add a worksheet to explain the customer's benefit amount. We are gradually eliminating exclusions to automated processing of SSI notices.

Schedule:
2001

• Pilot and stage rollout of DOCS.
• Eliminate exclusion to automated SSI overpayment notice processing.
• Focus test SSI benefit computation worksheet for individuals with earned income or earned and unearned income; test language for SSI living arrangements.

2002

• Implement notice language for work-related Title II overpayment and other benefit adjustment letters.
• Implement SSI computation worksheet for individuals with no income or unearned income.
• Implement new language to notify SSI claimants/recipients of their right to review their claims folder.
• Focus test SSI computation worksheet for certain categories of unearned income.
• Nationwide rollout of DOCS; begin centralized DOCS printing.

Paperless Disability Claims

Lead SSA Official: Associate Commissioner for Disability; Regional Commissioner, NY

SSA will pilot the processing of paperless disability claims in the Brooklyn, NY Disability Determination Services (DDS) office. They will use an electronic disability folder at all stages of review. The Disability Quality Branch in the New York Region will do an electronic, paperless review, and the Brooklyn Hearings office will also use the electronic disability folder if a hearing is requested.

Before SSA commits to national electronic disability claims processing, we must demonstrate the feasibility, costs and benefits of using an electronic disability folder. This initiative will gather data and answer critical questions so that informed decisions can be made.

Schedule:
2001

• Contract with vendor to develop an electronic folder that will store electronic medical evidence and other decisional material. The vendor will use the Eastman Suite (SSA's imaging software standard).

• As the pilot begins, the DDS will process cases using an electronic folder, while at the same time maintaining a paper folder.

2002

• The electronic folder will be integrated into the DDS's case processing system.
• Consultative Examination reports will be sent over the Internet. The field offices will scan and electronically transmit applications and interview forms to the DDS so they can be added to the electronic folders.

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) beginning in 1999. This was followed by implementation in the other PSCs: Great Lakes, Western, Northeastern, Southeastern, and Mid-America. The PSC implementations were completed in 2000. National rollout of the system to the Office of Central Operations (OCO) continues in FY 2001 and FY 2002.

Since initial implementation, there have been several releases of software enhancements, as well as supporting commercial off-the-shelf software (COTS) upgrades.

Schedule:
2001
- Continue rollout of the paperless processing system to about ½ of OCO.

2002
- Complete rollout of the paperless processing system to OCO.
- Continue to release enhancements to the paperless software.

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 incorporates plain language in:
- ❖ All new documents that explain how to obtain benefits or how to comply with program requirements.
- ❖ All proposed and final rulemaking documents and regulations.
- ❖ Active old documents in the above categories.

This initiative included a comprehensive two-year training plan. SSA completed training for high volume writers; and began training low volume writers by Interactive Video Teletraining.

Schedule:
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 writing low volume, sensitive, external documents.
- Administer maintenance of plain language correspondence and activities.
- Administer on-going evaluation process.
- Ensure all new employees receive plain language training.

2002
- Administer maintenance of plain language correspondence and activities.
- Ensure all new employees receive plain language training.

PolicyNet/Policy Repository

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

PolicyNet and Policy Repository improve SSA's ability to make policy-related decisions better, faster, and cost-effectively. Together, they provide Intranet-based access to the latest policy-related information. PolicyNet is the communications system for our redesigned, proactive policymaking environment. SSA gets early input into the policy process from end-users and stakeholders (internal and external) through nationwide forums and use of the Internet. The Policy Repository modernizes our infrastructure to consolidate policy materials, link them electronically, and deliver a single, consistent presentation.

Schedule:
2001
- Redesign PolicyNet interface.
- Expand/integrate Policy Repository content.
- Develop electronic policy clarification functionality.
- Expand PolicyNet program evaluation and research.
- Add new reference materials. Implement online Program Operations Manual System.
- Implement paperless workflow, archiving, and document retrieval.
- Adapt to technology advances (e.g., migrate to XML.)
- Expand PolicyNet to the Internet.
- Develop electronic question and answer process.

2002
- Expand/integrate Policy Repository to single presentation of policy.
- Enable electronic policy clarifications.
- Implement paperless workflow, archiving, and document retrieval.

Reduce the Earnings Suspense File

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

This initiative outlines the improvements necessary for SSA to reduce the Earnings Suspense File's (ESF) size and rate of growth.

The source of the suspense items are varied, for example:
- Nine States account for 70 %.
- Three industries account for 46 %.
- Fifty-five % have no name, no name and social security number (SSN), or an unissued SSN.

To meet our goals, SSA is:
- Editing annual wage reports.
- Helping employers determine and record the proper name/SSN,
- Communicating with employers (submitters) about errors and helping them to avoid and correct them, and
- Working with the IRS to establish incentives for employers to improve the quality of wage reports.

Schedule:
2001
- Establish format for capturing customer "names" from source documents for input to SSA's computer master files.
- Complete all form and software changes for customer name format effort.

2002
- Implement format for customer name.

Service to the Limited English Proficient 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 have limited English proficiency (LEP). This initiative ensures that all our clients receive full access to SSA service. Better communication with LEP clients also results in increased program integrity. Claims taken by bilingual employees reduce fraud introduced by middlemen interpreters. In the last several years, we improved service to LEP clients by:

❖ Using automated management information (MI) about our LEP customers to make hiring and staffing decisions.
❖ Increasing bilingual staff and locating them in the right offices.
❖ Establishing an 800-number Spanish gate.
❖ Taking on primary responsibility for providing interpreter services.
❖ Giving employees cultural diversity training.
❖ Providing expanded language training to bilingual staff.
❖ Capturing customer language preferences in our major systems; making available online.

Schedule:
2001
• Provide technical training to bilingual employees.
• Develop training in Vietnamese, Chinese, French and Russian.
• Report FY 2000 customer language preference from automated MI. Capture language preference data for SSI claims.
• Issue cover letters in six languages.

2002
• Provide "Rights and Responsibilities" handout in 7 languages.

Social Security Unified Measurement System

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Operations

The purpose of the Social Security Unified Measurement System (SUMS) is to create a unified SSA work measurement system that counts and measures all work in a consistent manner, regardless of where the work is processed. It provides management information (MI) to monitor service, forecast workloads, and make decisions. Significant support of the SUMS goals will be delivered through the Work Measurement Data Warehouse (WMDW). A component of the SUMS strategy is the Customer Service Record (CSR) - a tool to provide employees with a comprehensive client picture and eliminate the need for multiple queries.

Schedule
2001
• First release of the CSR.
• Develop the following workloads in the Operational Data Store and migrate the data to the WMDW: MSSICS Field Office (FO) Appeals, MSSICS FO Appeal Management Reports and Processing Time, Title II WMI FO Management Reports, Title II Workload Counts and Processing Times, Ticket to Work Data, PC Workload and Work-Power Data, and Modernized FO Workload Control of Redeterminations.
• Implement Allegation Management System including fraud MI.

2002
• A new CSR release.
• The SSI Redetermination workload will be added to the WMDW.
• Identify postentitlement workloads that lack specific MI data.

Space Modernization and Improvements

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

SSA will provide all SSA employees with user-friendly, modern office facilities that meet their needs well into the 21st century. This initiative includes:

❖ Major renovation of SSA Headquarters buildings.
❖ Construction of a new Headquarters Child Care Center.
❖ Renovations to field offices (FOs) and hearings offices (HOs) nationwide.
❖ Upgrades of our larger facilities, e.g., Program Service Centers (PSCs) and Teleservice Centers (TSCs).

Schedule:
2001
• Complete IWS/LAN systems furniture design and site preparation specifications for FOs and HOs.
• Continue major upgrades/renovations to SSA facilities nationwide.
• Complete Annex Building renovations.
• Complete space renovations to the Metro West Building.

2002
• Occupy the Annex Building.
• Complete construction and occupy the new Headquarters Child Care Center.
• Complete Metro West Building exterior replacement.
• Operations Building construction.
• Continue upgrades of FOs and HOs and site preparation for IWS/LAN and new furniture.

Speech Recognition Software

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

SSA will reduce the time required to produce Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) hearing decisions and correspondence, by implementing the use of speech recognition software. This software will eliminate the time-consuming hand-offs and transfers required when dictation is used. Currently, about 25 percent of Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) decisions are produced by dictation. Replacing dictation with speech recognition software will eliminate the need for clerical staff to type drafts.

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.

A pilot using the speech recognition software and cost-benefit assessment will be conducted in FY 2001.

Schedule:
2001
• Begin pilot testing in four Hearing offices.
• Complete cost-benefit assessment.
• Evaluate pilot.

2002
• Begin implementation.

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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; and
- ❖ Improve public service.

The Modernized Supplemental Security Income Claims System (MSSICS) automated the SSI claims process. However, several SSI processes (e.g., appeals, netting, overpayments, and notices) were omitted. The following systems projects address these omissions and are the main focus of this KI:
- ❖ Automation of the SSI appeals process.
- ❖ Automation of windfall offset exclusions and attorney fees.
- ❖ System to help employees with SSI overpayment computations and notices.
- ❖ Improved workload control systems.
- ❖ A database to control SSI alerts.
- ❖ A MSSICS postentitlement (PE) path for Service Representatives, Teleservice Representatives and Title II Claims Representatives.
- ❖ Automation of the remaining non-MSSICS PE events and reduction of MSSICS exclusions and limitations.

Schedule:
2001-2002
- Automate windfall offset exclusions and attorney fees.
- Automate overpayment decision inputs.
- Add redeterminations and limited issues to the Title XVI Postentitlement Operations Data Store.

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,
- ❖ Evaluation of the pilot,
- ❖ Development of software enhancements based on pilot analysis,
- ❖ Refinement and execution of training for national roll-out, and
- ❖ Full national implementation.

Schedule:
2001
- Continue pilot.
- Evaluate pilot.
- Develop plan for national rollout.
- Procure services of contractor to assist with National rollout.
- Begin National implementation.
- Analyze and report TLC data.

2002
- Continue national implementation.
- Evaluate/enhance TLC system.

The Public Understanding Measurement System

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

We have responsibility to ensure that the American people understand the Social Security programs. SSA's objective is that, by the year 2005, nine out of ten Americans will be knowledgeable about Social Security programs in three important areas: basic program facts, financial value of programs to individuals, and financing issues. The Public Understanding Measurement System (PUMS) consists of a national survey and quarterly (local) "Move the Needle" surveys designed to assess the public's knowledge of Social Security programs in these three areas. The PUMS also helps us evaluate our National Communications Plan.

Schedule:
2001
- Set annual performance target of 75 percent (7 out of 10 adult Americans age 18 and over will be knowledgeable).
- Conduct national PUMS survey – 1st quarter.
- Receive PUMS survey results and analysis; Update National Communications Plan – 2nd quarter.
- Review FY 2002 performances target – set FY 2003 target – 3rd quarter.
- Complete local quarterly PUMS surveys in selected Regions – 1st-4th quarters.
- Receive PUMS quarterly test summary report and renew/update Plan and PUMS Survey based on this report – 4th quarter.

2002
- Set annual performance target of 75 percent (7.5 out of 10 adult Americans age 18 and over will be knowledgeable) and repeat 2001 cycle.

Title II System Redesign

Lead SSA Official: Deputy Commissioner for Systems

The Title II System Redesign initiative will provide a single system for processing all initial claims and client-initiated postentitlement (PE) actions in an online interactive mode. The original 28 separate PE programs and the Claims Automated Processing System (CAPS) have been or 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, online user access to comprehensive customer information, and an automated system that is easier and less costly to maintain and modify. These benefits translate into improved customer service and work year reduction.

Schedule:
2001
- Implement release 2.1 which focuses on improving workers compensation PE computations, adding field office (FO) reinstatement capability, and streamlining release of attorney letters.
- The Postentitlement Online System (POS) will be modified to allow FOs to process reinstatement events, e.g., questionable retirement and resurrection from death cases.
- Begin work on Redesign Release 3.

2002
- Implement Release 3 which is intended to retire additional PE programs (SALT, TASTE and Death Terminations) and increase the Title II PE processing to about 91.5 percent.
- Begin work on Release 4 to retire the remaining postentitlement programs (AJS1, AJS3, REACT), and increase the Title II postentitlement processing to 92.8 percent and the initial claim processing to 94 percent. This release is planned for late 2003.

Title XVI Payment Accuracy

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

This initiative promotes the prevention, detection, and resolution of SSI overpayments (with emphasis on prevention and detection) through efforts to:

- ❖ Improve payment quality by targeting the most error-prone policy areas.
- ❖ Reduce payment errors through POMS instructions compliance.
- ❖ Reduce payment errors through improved automation of SSI processes.
- ❖ Profile redeterminations to focus on cases with greatest potential for change.
- ❖ Enhance electronic data collection.

We have established a comprehensive plan to control and limit overall debt including:

- ❖ Computer matching with seven Federal agencies.
- ❖ Creation of diary alert database to monitor alerts from computer matching.
- ❖ A project to increase detection of prisoners ineligible for SSI.
- ❖ Online access to data bases at the OCSE/NDNH and individual States.
- ❖ Increased management focus on quality.
- ❖ Review of redetermination frequency to determine most effective cycle.
- ❖ Proposals to simplify the program.
- ❖ Improved automation to reduce payment errors/ improve debt resolution.

Schedule:
2001
- Online access expansion with State databases (SASRO).
- Online access with OCSE/NDNH databases in all FOs.
- Begin alert process for computer matching with INS.

2002
- Online access expansion with SASRO.
- Diary alert database in place.

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.

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 eliminate inconsistencies as it completes each body system. Updating different listings will entail different activities requiring expert input, research and public involvement. SSA expects to address corresponding adult and childhood listings at the same time.

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

2002
- Issue final regulations for selected body systems and impairments.
- Issue notices of proposed rulemaking for additional body systems and impairments.

Video Teleconferencing

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

The purpose of this Key Initiative is to use Video Teleconferencing (VTC) technology to improve service delivery to hearings and other customers, especially those who live in remote areas, and to increase the ability of hearing offices (HO) to balance workloads through case transfers.

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, and improve processing times.
- ❖ Increase Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) productivity due to reduced travel time/cost, and enhance capacity to coordinate with medical/vocational experts.
- ❖ Improve the ability of HOs to transfer workloads to other HOs without increased travel costs.
- ❖ Permit Senior Attorneys to conduct remote pre-hearing conferences.
- ❖ Expand VTC capability to other SSA components.

Our Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) has conducted VTC hearings on a pilot basis, and has established the viability of this process. Customer response to VTC service, as well as productivity and workload impact, were followed closely as OHA deployed additional units in 2000. Data from additional sites will be used to verify an estimated return on investment before future rollout sites are selected.

Schedule:
2001
- Rollout of VTC to additional sites as warranted.

2002
- Continue expansion as warranted