

October 1990

SOCIAL SECURITY

District Managers' Views on Outreach for Supplemental Security Income Program



142591

.

Human Resources Division

B-241470

October 30, 1990

The Honorable Edward R. Roybal
Chairman, Select Committee on Aging
House of Representatives

The Honorable William J. Hughes
Chairman, Subcommittee on Retirement
Income and Employment
Select Committee on Aging
House of Representatives

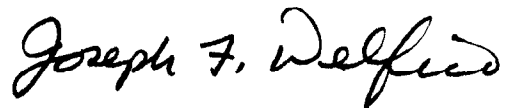
As you requested, we are providing details of our telephone survey on the outreach activities for the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program carried out by field offices of the Social Security Administration (SSA). (See app. I.) Outreach is carried out because many nonparticipants who may be eligible for SSI are not aware of the program or their eligibility for its benefits.

Highlights of the survey were disclosed earlier this year as part of our testimony before your Committees on April 5, 1990. Briefly, our survey disclosed:

- SSA field offices were implementing a wide range of outreach activities, but there was no clear consensus on which activity may be the most effective.
- Managers generally acknowledged the need to conduct outreach and believed that they were doing enough.
- About 40 percent of the managers believed outreach was needed for non-English-speaking people. Further, of these managers, 43 percent said they were not doing enough outreach for non-English-speaking people, mainly because of the lack of staff.
- Nearly half of the managers said that they spend 10 hours or less on outreach each month.

Our survey was based on 146 responses to a random sample of 150 of SSA's district office managers. SSA has about 640 district office managers nationwide, and the responses are statistically representative of their views.

As agreed with your offices, we did not obtain written comments from SSA. As also agreed, copies of this fact sheet are being sent to interested parties and made available to others on request. If you have any questions about this fact sheet, please call me on (202) 275-6193. Other major contributors are listed in appendix II.



Joseph F. Delfico
Director, Income Security Issues

Contents

Letter		1
Appendix I		6
Telephone Survey of	Background Information	6
Managers of SSA	Need for Outreach	7
District Offices	District Office Outreach Activities	15
	Effectiveness of Outreach	24
	Staff Resources Devoted to Outreach	27
Appendix II		30
Major Contributors to		
This Fact Sheet		

Abbreviations

SSA	Social Security Administration
SSI	Supplemental Security Income

Telephone Survey of Managers of SSA District Offices¹

Background Information

1. About how many years have you been manager of this office?

7.1 (mean)

2. If someone other than the manager is the respondent, what is your position title?

	Frequency
Assistant district manager	12
Branch manager	•
Operations supervisor	1
Public information officer	•
Field representative	1
Claims representative	•
Other (please specify)	•
Total	14

3. For respondents to question #2, about how many years have you worked in this district, including any branch offices or resident stations?

9.1 (mean)

4. How many branch offices are in your district?

Branch offices	Frequency	Percent
0	52	36
1	58	40
2	31	21
3	3	2
4	2	1

¹The survey results can be projected to the universe of managers at the 95-percent confidence level with a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 7.6 percentage points.

5. How many resident stations are in your district?

Resident stations	Frequency	Percent
0	127	87
1	17	12
2	2	1

6. Including branch office and resident station staff, if any, how many part-time permanent staff do you have in your entire district?

3.7 (mean)

7. How many full-time permanent staff do you have in your district?

38.9 (mean)

8. Including branch office and resident station staff, how many field representatives, if any, are in your entire district?

Field representatives	Frequency	Percent
0	66	45
1	57	39
2	17	12
3	5	3
4	1	1

Need for Outreach

Elderly

9. In your opinion, how much of a need is there for your district office to conduct outreach efforts to inform the elderly about the SSI program? Is there a great need, some need, or little or no need?

	Frequency	Percent
A great need	31	21
Some need	98	67
Little or no need	17	12

**Appendix I
Telephone Survey of Managers of SSA
District Offices**

10. If you believe there is a great or some need to do outreach, is your district office currently conducting more than enough, about enough, or less than enough outreach efforts to inform most potential SSI recipients who are elderly about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
More than enough	15	12
About enough	90	70
Less than enough	24	18
Not applicable	17	•

11. If you believe less than enough outreach is being done by your district office, what is the primary reason for this?

	Frequency	Percent
Not enough staff or staff time to conduct outreach	20	83
Don't have good method(s) for SSI outreach with the elderly	3	13
Activities to inform the elderly are not a high district office priority	1	4
Activities to inform the elderly are not a high regional office priority	•	•
Activities to inform the elderly are not a high SSA/central office priority	•	•
Not the district's responsibility to inform the elderly	•	•
Not enough money	•	•
Other reason	•	•
Not applicable	122	•

12. If you believe there is little or no need for your district office to inform the elderly about SSI, what is the primary reasons for this?

	Frequency	Percent
Not enough elderly in the district to require outreach	•	•
Elderly in the district are already well informed about SSI	7	41
Most elderly in the district are not qualified for SSI	2	12
Other organizations/agencies in the district already do enough to inform the elderly	6	35
General public information activities of the office are enough	2	12
Other reason	•	•
Not applicable	129	•

Blind/Disabled

13. In your opinion, is there a great need, some need, or little or no need for your district office to conduct outreach efforts to inform the blind or disabled about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
A great need	38	26
Some need	84	58
Little or no need	24	16

14. If you believe there is a great or some need to do outreach, is your district office currently conducting more than enough, about enough, or less than enough outreach efforts to inform most potential SSI recipients who are blind or disabled about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
More than enough outreach	20	16
About enough outreach	84	69
Less than enough outreach	18	15
Not applicable	24	•

**Appendix I
Telephone Survey of Managers of SSA
District Offices**

15. If you believe less than enough outreach is being done by your district office, what is the primary reason for this?

	Frequency	Percent
Not enough staff or staff time to conduct outreach	17	94
Don't have good method(s) for SSI outreach with the blind and disabled	•	•
Activities to inform the blind and disabled are not a high district office priority	•	•
Activities to inform the blind and disabled are not a high regional office priority	•	•
Activities to inform the blind and disabled are not a high SSA/central office priority	•	•
Not the district's responsibility to inform the blind and disabled	•	•
Not enough money	•	•
Other reason	1	6
Not applicable	128	•

16. If you believe there is little or no need for your district office to inform the blind and disabled about SSI, what is the primary reason for this?

	Frequency	Percent
Not enough blind and disabled persons in the district to require outreach	3	13
Blind and disabled persons in the district are already well informed about SSI	11	46
Most blind and disabled persons in the district are not qualified for SSI	8	33
Other organizations/agencies in the district already do enough to inform the blind and disabled		
General public information activities of the office are enough	1	4
Other reason	1	4
Not applicable	122	•

Homeless

17. In your opinion, is there a great, some, or little or no need for your district office to conduct outreach efforts to inform the homeless about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
A great need	30	20
Some need	54	37
Little or no need	62	43

18. If you believe there is a great or some need to do outreach, is your district office currently conducting more than enough, about enough, or less than enough outreach efforts to inform most potential SSI recipients who are homeless about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
More than enough outreach	10	12
About enough outreach	58	69
Less than enough outreach	16	19
Not applicable	62	•

19. If you believe less than enough outreach is being done by your district office, what is the primary reason for this?

	Frequency	Percent
Not enough staff or staff time to conduct outreach	9	56
Don't have good method(s) for SSI outreach with the homeless	4	25
Activities to inform the homeless are not a high district office priority	2	13
Activities to inform the homeless are not a high regional office priority	•	•
Activities to inform the homeless are not a high SSA/central office priority	•	•
Not the district's responsibility to inform the homeless	•	•
Not enough money		
Other reason	1	6
Not applicable	130	•

20. If you believe there is little or no need for your district office to inform the homeless about SSI, what is the primary reason for this?

	Frequency	Percent
No/not enough homeless persons in the district to require outreach efforts	47	76
Homeless persons in the district are already well informed about SSI	6	10
Most homeless persons in the district are not qualified for SSI	1	1
Other organizations/agencies in the district already do enough to inform the homeless	6	10
General public information activities of the office are enough	2	3
Other reason	•	•
Not applicable	84	•

Non-English Speaking

21. In your opinion, is there a great, some, or little or no need for your district office to conduct outreach efforts to inform non-English-speaking persons about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
A great need	26	18
Some need	32	22
Little or no need	88	60

22. If you believe there is a great or some need to do outreach, is your district office currently conducting more than enough, about enough, or less than enough outreach to inform most potential SSI recipients who are non-English speaking about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
More than enough outreach	7	12
About enough outreach	26	45
Less than enough outreach	25	43
Not applicable	88	•

**Appendix I
Telephone Survey of Managers of SSA
District Offices**

23. If you believe less than enough outreach is being done by your district office, what is the primary reason for this?

	Frequency	Percent
Not enough staff or staff time to conduct outreach	14	58
Don't have good method(s) for SSI outreach with non-English-speaking persons	5	21
Activities to inform non-English-speaking persons are not a high district office priority	1	4
Activities to inform non-English-speaking persons are not a high regional office priority	•	•
Activities to inform non-English-speaking persons are not a high SSA/central office priority	•	•
Not the district's responsibility to inform non-English-speaking persons	•	•
Not enough money	1	4
Other reason	3	13
Not sure	1	•
Not applicable	121	•

24. If you believe there is little or no need for your district office to inform non-English-speaking persons about SSI, what is the reason for this?

	Frequency	Percent
No/not enough non-English-speaking persons in the district to require outreach	82	93
Non-English-speaking persons in the district are already well informed about SSI	2	3
Most non-English-speaking persons in the district are not qualified for SSI	1	1
Other organizations/agencies in the district already do enough to inform non-English-speaking persons	3	3
General public information activities of the office are enough	•	•
Other reason	•	•
Not applicable	58	•

Rural Areas

25. Is there a great, some, or little or no need for your district office to conduct outreach efforts to inform people who live in rural areas about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
A great need	29	20
Some need	73	51
Little or no need	42	29
Not sure	2	•

26. If you believe there is a great or some need for outreach for persons in rural areas, currently, is your district office conducting more than enough, about enough, or less than enough outreach to inform those individuals about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
More than enough outreach	9	9
About enough outreach	72	70
Less than enough outreach	22	21
Not sure	1	•
Not applicable	42	•

27. If you believe less than enough outreach is being done by your district office, what is the primary reason for this?

	Frequency	Percent
Not enough staff or staff time to conduct outreach	17	77
Don't have good method(s) for SSI outreach with persons who live in rural areas	3	14
Activities to inform persons who live in rural areas are not a high district office priority	•	•
Activities to inform persons who live in rural areas are not a high regional office priority	•	•
Activities to inform persons who live in rural areas are not a high SSA/central office priority	•	•
Not the district's responsibility to inform persons who live in rural areas	•	•
Not enough money	•	•
Other reason	2	9
Not applicable	124	•

28. If you believe there is little or no need for your district office to inform individuals who live in rural areas about SSI, what is the primary reason for this?

	Frequency	Percent
No/not enough rural persons in the district to require outreach	29	69
Rural persons in the district are already well informed about SSI	5	12
Most rural persons in the district are not qualified for SSI	•	•
Other organizations or agencies in the district already do enough to inform persons in rural areas	3	7
General public information activities of the office are enough	1	2
Other reason	4	10
Not applicable	104	•

**District Office
Outreach Activities**

29. To enable other agencies, advocacy or coalition groups to conduct Social Security outreach on their own, during fiscal year 1989 did anyone from your district office, including yourself, provide information to any of these groups about eligibility requirements for any Social Security benefit program?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	144	99
No	2	1
Don't know	•	•

**Appendix I
Telephone Survey of Managers of SSA
District Offices**

30. To about how many agencies or groups did staff from your district office provide information during fiscal year 1989?

	Frequency	Percent
1-3 groups	7	5
4-6 groups	14	10
7-9 groups	19	13
10 or more groups	103	72
Don't know	1	•
Not applicable	2	•

31. Did staff from your district office provide information to any other agencies, advocacy or coalition groups about eligibility requirements for the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	128	90
No	15	10
Don't know	1	•
Not applicable	2	•

32. About how many groups?

	Frequency	Percent
1-3 groups	7	6
4-6 groups	19	15
7-9 groups	21	17
10 or more groups	79	62
Don't know	2	•
Not applicable	18	•

33. Of the agencies or groups to which staff from your district office provided ssi eligibility information, do any primarily work with:

	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
a. Elderly persons	119	93	9	7
b. Blind or disabled persons	123	96	5	4
c. Homeless persons	91	71	37	29
d. Non-English-speaking persons	44	35	83	65
e. People who live in rural areas	81	63	47	37

34. In addition to providing information to other agencies, advocacy or coalition groups about eligibility requirements to enable them to do Social Security outreach, during fiscal year 1989 did anyone from your district office, including yourself, speak before a group of potential recipients about any Social Security benefit program?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	146	100
No	•	•
Don't know	•	•

35. About how many speeches did staff from your district office give during fiscal year 1989?

	Frequency	Percent
5 speeches or less	5	3
6-10 speeches	13	9
11-15 speeches	19	13
More than 15 speeches	109	75
Don't know	•	•

36. Did any of these speeches focus at least in part on the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	145	99
No	1	1
Don't know	•	•

37. About how many?

	Frequency	Percent
5 speeches or less	14	10
6-10 speeches	32	22
11-15 speeches	29	20
More than 15 speeches	68	48
Don't know	2	•
Not applicable	1	•

38. Were any of these speeches devoted primarily to informing people about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	137	95
No	8	5
Don't know	•	•
Not applicable	1	•

39. About how many?

	Frequency	Percent
5 speeches or less	44	32
6-10 speeches	41	30
11-15 speeches	21	15
More than 15 speeches	30	22
Don't know	1	1
Not applicable	9	•

40. Of the speeches devoted primarily or in part to SSI, were any before public audiences mainly comprised of:

	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
a. Elderly persons	118	81	27	19
b. Blind or disabled persons	107	75	36	25
c. Homeless persons	19	13	126	87
d. Non-English-speaking persons	26	18	119	82
e. People who live in rural areas	96	66	49	34

41. During fiscal year 1989, did any staff from your district office, including yourself, visit any local sites, such as shelters, soup kitchens or other meal sites, churches, or senior citizen centers, to speak one-on-one with individuals about eligibility for any Social Security benefit program?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	118	81
No	28	19
Don't know	.	.

42. About how many visits did staff from your district office make during fiscal year 1989?

	Frequency	Percent
5 visits or less	28	24
6-10 visits	24	21
11-15 visits	20	17
16-20 visits	16	14
More than 20 visits	28	24
Don't know	2	.
Not applicable	28	.

**Appendix I
Telephone Survey of Managers of SSA
District Offices**

43. Were any of these visits intended at least in part to inform individuals about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	118	100
No	•	•
Don't know	•	•
Not applicable	28	•

44. About how many?

	Frequency	Percent
5 visits or less	35	30
6-10 visits	30	26
11-15 visits	20	17
16-20 visits	8	7
More than 20 visits	23	20
Don't know	2	•
Not applicable	28	•

45. Were any of these visits devoted primarily to informing individuals about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	102	86
No	16	14
Don't know	•	•
Not applicable	28	•

46. About how many?

	Frequency	Percent
5 visits or less	35	35
6-10 visits	31	31
11-15 visits	12	12
16-20 visits	7	7
More than 20 visits	15	15
Don't know	2	•
Not applicable	44	•

47. Of the visits devoted primarily or in part to SSI, were any intended to speak mainly with:

	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
a. Elderly persons	86	73	32	27
b. Blind or disabled persons	93	79	25	21
c. Homeless persons	50	42	68	58
d. Non-English-speaking persons	22	19	95	81
e. People who live in rural areas	73	62	45	38

48. During fiscal year 1989, did your district office use the media, such as TV, radio, or newspapers, to inform people about any Social Security benefit program?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	143	98
No	3	2
Don't know	•	•
Not applicable	•	•

**Appendix I
Telephone Survey of Managers of SSA
District Offices**

49. Did your district office provide any ads to or have any programs on TV?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	85	59
No	58	41
Don't know	3	•

50. Did your district office provide any ads to or have any programs on radio?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	126	89
No	16	11
Don't know	1	•
Not applicable	3	•

51. Did your district office provide any ads or articles to newspapers?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	140	98
No	3	2
Don't know	•	•
Not applicable	3	•

52. Of all the radio, TV, or newspaper spots your district office used during fiscal year 1989 to inform people about SSA benefit programs, about how many did SSA headquarters develop—all, most, about half, some, few, or none of the spots used?

	Frequency	Percent
All of the spots used	11	8
Most of the spots used	53	37
About half of the spots used	31	22
Some of the spots used	29	20
Few of the spots used	10	7
None of the spots used	8	6
Not sure/not applicable	4	•

53. Consider the radio, TV, or newspaper spots your district office used that were not provided by SSA headquarters. Were any intended at least in part to inform people about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	138	97
No	5	3
Don't know - N/A	3	•

54. Were any of the media spots used that were not provided by SSA headquarters devoted primarily to informing people about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	124	90
No	14	10
Don't know - N/A	8	•

55. Again consider the media spots used that were not provided by SSA headquarters. Were any of the spots that were devoted primarily or in part to SSI targeted mainly toward:

	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
a. Elderly persons	105	78	29	22
b. Blind or disabled persons	111	82	24	18
c. Homeless persons	59	44	76	56
d. Non-English-speaking persons	28	21	107	79
e. People who live in rural areas	64	47	71	53

Effectiveness of Outreach

56. In general, regardless of the target group, do you believe that any particular activity is more effective than others in informing people in your district about the SSI program?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	129	89
No	16	11
Don't know	1	•

57. Which activity is the most effective in informing people in your district about the ssi program?

	Frequency	Percent
Training staff from other agencies/advocacy groups to do SSI outreach	21	16
Presentations or speeches before the public, staff of other agencies/advocacy groups	19	15
TV ads or programs	5	4
Radio ads or programs	12	9
Newspaper articles or ads	15	12
Visits to shelters, soup kitchens, churches, or other local sites	17	13
Joint participation in special outreach projects with other agencies/advocacy groups	31	24
Other activity	9	7
Not applicable	17	•

58. Do you have any statistical records or other tangible evidence to document the effectiveness of this activity in your district?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	47	37
No	81	63
Not sure	1	•
Not applicable	17	•

59. In your opinion, about what percent of all ssi applicants during fiscal year 1989, if any, applied as a result of your district office's ssi outreach efforts?

25.7 (mean)

60. Approximately how many other agencies, advocacy, or coalition groups refer potential ssi recipients to your district office?

18.6 (mean)

61. Consider the outreach and public information activities related to SSI your district office currently conducts. In your opinion, do these activities reach all or almost all, most, about half, some, or few, if any, of the potential SSI recipients in your district?

	Frequency	Percent
All or almost all of the potential SSI recipients	42	29
Most of the potential SSI recipients	59	41
About half of the potential SSI recipients	18	13
Some of the potential SSI recipients	23	16
Few, if any, of the potential SSI recipients	1	1
Don't know	3	•

62. Would you say that your district office's SSI outreach efforts during fiscal year 1989 were very effective, somewhat effective, or not effective at all in informing potential SSI recipients about the program?

	Frequency	Percent
Very effective	55	38
Somewhat effective	89	61
Not effective at all	1	1
Not sure	1	•

63. In your opinion, would you say that during the past 2 fiscal years (fiscal years 1988 and 1989), the number of potential SSI recipients your district has been reaching through its SSI outreach efforts has increased, remained about the same, or decreased?

	Frequency	Percent
Increased	71	49
Remained about the same	69	47
Decreased	6	4

**Staff Resources
 Devoted to Outreach**

64. About how many staff members throughout your district conducted any outreach or public information activities related to SSI during fiscal year 1989?

7.4 (mean)

65. What is the job title of the person in your district office who conducts most of the SSI efforts?

	Frequency	Percent
District manager	37	25
Assistant district manager	20	14
Branch manager	2	1
Operations supervisor	19	13
Public information officer	1	1
Field representative	56	39
Claims representative	9	6
Other (please specify)	2	1

66. Including branch office and resident station staff, if any, during fiscal year 1989, about how many hours per month, on average, did staff spend conducting SSI outreach activities?

Hours	Frequency	Percent
10 or less	69	48
11-20	46	32
21-30	13	9
31-40	8	5
More than 40	9	6
Not sure	1	•

**Appendix I
Telephone Survey of Managers of SSA
District Offices**

67. During the past 2 fiscal years, would you say that your district office's outreach or public information efforts related to SSI have increased significantly, increased moderately, stayed about the same, decreased moderately, or decreased significantly?

	Frequency	Percent
Increased significantly	23	16
Increased moderately	61	42
Stayed about the same	43	30
Decreased moderately	14	9
Decreased significantly	4	3
Don't know	1	•

68. What do you believe is the primary reason why your district office's SSI outreach efforts increased during the past 2 fiscal years?

	Frequency	Percent
Addition of a public information officer/staff	1	1
Addition of other staff	2	2
Participation in a special pilot project	2	2
Increased emphasis by district office on SSI outreach	18	22
Increased emphasis from regional office on SSI outreach	17	20
Increased emphasis from SSA/central office on SSI outreach	20	24
More staff time due to initiation of the 1-800, toll-free telephone number	•	•
More staff time due to a decrease in the regular caseload	1	1
Potentially eligible persons were not well informed	•	•
Greater number of persons potentially eligible for SSI now	4	5
Other reason (please specify)	19	23
Not applicable	62	•

69. What do you believe is the primary reason why your district office's SSI outreach efforts decreased during the past 2 fiscal years?

	Frequency	Percent
Staff cuts	17	94
Other reason (please specify)	1	6
Not applicable	128	•

70. Do you believe that the SSI outreach efforts of Social Security offices in general are reaching all or almost all, most, about half, some or few, if any, of the people nationwide who are potentially eligible for SSI?

	Frequency	Percent
All or almost all of the potential SSI recipients	32	23
Most of the potential SSI recipients	61	43
About half of the potential SSI recipients	26	19
Some of the potential SSI recipients	19	14
Few, if any, of the potential SSI recipients	1	1
Don't know	7	•

Major Contributors to This Fact Sheet

**Human Resources
Division,
Washington, D.C.**

**Roland H. Miller III, Assistant Director
David Alexander, Team Member**

**Philadelphia Regional
Office**

**Ronald Leporati, Evaluator-in-Charge
Melissa S. Harless, Team Member**

Ordering Information

The first five copies of each GAO report are free. Additional copies are \$2 each. Orders should be sent to the following address, accompanied by a check or money order made out to the Superintendent of Documents, when necessary. Orders for 100 or more copies to be mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent.

**U.S. General Accounting Office
P.O. Box 6015
Gaithersburg, MD 20877**

Orders may also be placed by calling (202) 275-6241.

**United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548**

**Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300**

**First-Class Mail
Postage & Fees Paid
GAO
Permit No. G100**
