

**Social Security Advisory Board
Minutes
Board Meeting
May 8-9, 2012**

Location: Atlanta, Georgia

Time: 8:00 a.m. – 5:15 p.m. (May 8)
7:45 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. (May 9)

SSAB Members: Marsha Katz, Acting Chair
Jagadeesh Gokhale
Dorcas Hardy
Barbara Kennelly
Mark Warshawsky

Participants

SSA: **Ollie L. (Dockie) Garmon, III**, Atlanta Regional Chief
Administrative Law Judge (ALJ)
R. Dirk Selland, Atlanta Assistant Regional Chief ALJ
Amy Roberts, Atlanta Assistant Regional Commissioner for
Management and Operations Support
Rose Mary Buehler, Assistant Regional Commissioner for
Southeastern Processing Center Operations
Robert L. Raines, Atlanta Director for Quality Performance
Nathan Holmes, Atlanta Director for the Center for Disability
Barbara Hites, Disability Program Administrator for Georgia
Gloria Brown, Atlanta Regional Writing Unit Supervisor
Ken Temple, Atlanta Regional Field Liaison Branch Supervisor
**Staffs of the Covington, Atlanta North, and Atlanta
Downtown Hearing Offices
Staffs of the Marietta and Gwinnett Field Offices**

Alabama DDS: **Norman Ippolito**, Administrator

Advocates: **Sally Atwell**, Project Director, Benefits Navigator, The
Shepherd Center, Atlanta
Crystal Beelner, Program Director, Georgia Advocacy Office, Inc.,
Decatur
Christy Dunaway, Affiliate Liaison and Executive Director,
LIFE (Living Independence for Everyone) of Mississippi,
Southeast ADA Center, Biloxi
Peggy Withrow, Senior Vice President for Business Services,
Nobis Works, Inc., Atlanta

Academicians:

Robert S. Kistenberg, MPH, CP, LP, FAAOP, Co-Director and Prosthetics Coordinator, Adjunct Associate Faculty, Georgia Institute of Technology Rehabilitation Medicine, Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta

Quinton L. Nichols, MSW, HS-BCP, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Social Work/Clinical Facility Supervisor, Wellstar College of Health and Human Services, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw

Ani B. Satz, J.D., Ph.D., Associate Professor, Emory University School of Law, Rollins School of Public Health, Center for Ethics, Atlanta

SSAB Staff:

Debi Sullivan, Staff Director

Jackie Chapin

Jeremy Elder

Joel Feinleib

Beverly Rollins

David Warner

In May, the Board visited Atlanta for a series of meetings held over a two day period. During the morning of May 8, the members met with three panels of experts to discuss issues related to the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability programs. The first panel, made up of SSA executives Ollie L. Garmon, III, Rose Mary Buehler, Robert L. Raines, Nathan Holmes, and Norman Ippolito, discussed problems such as SSA's increasing workloads and its budget constraints. They described a number of initiatives that the agency has underway, including a predictive model developed by the Office of Quality Performance that identifies cases at the hearing level that may result in awards to beneficiaries. The second panel, made up of advocates Sally Atwell, Crystal Beelner, Christy Dunaway, and Peggy Withrow, discussed issues that prohibit individuals with disabilities from entering and staying in the workforce. The panel offered a number of recommendations on how to help these individuals obtain and keep jobs, including raising the substantial gainful activity level and simplifying the return to work process. The third panel, consisting of academicians Robert S. Kistenberg, Quinton L. Nichols, and Ani B. Satz, told the Board about the difficulties the public has with getting information about the Social Security programs and how disabled individuals remain isolated and unemployed. They also discussed the services that disabled individuals need to enter the workforce and to remain employed.

During lunch on May 8, the Board met with Amy Roberts, Nathan Holmes, and Barbara Hites to discuss the status of the Georgia Disability Determination Services' operations and also SSA's Disability Case Processing System (DCPS). The Board was told that tremendous progress has been made with the DDS' workloads – they are much more manageable, productivity has increased, and processing times are shorter. The Board also heard about the potential enhancements incorporated in the new DCPS, including the ability to move work around the country, thus allowing offices to assist each other in working down case backlogs.

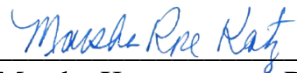
During the afternoon of May 8, the Board met with Office of Disability Adjudication and Review representatives including Ollie L. Garmon, III, R. Dirk Selland, Gloria Brown, Ken Temple, and staffs from the Covington, Atlanta North, and Atlanta Downtown hearing offices to discuss challenges and successes of managing ODAR backlogs and improving performance. Staff from the Atlanta Downtown office explained how, during the course of four years, they were able to bring the office up from last place to number 44 (out of 161 hearing offices). The Atlanta North hearing office staff told the Board of how, in two years, they have been able to work down the number of aged cases in the office from over 1,400 to 118. Staff from the

Covington hearing office described how they were able to successfully open a new office a few years ago and always meet their case processing time goals.

Later in the afternoon of May 8, the Board members met briefly in executive session to discuss current and future projects, upcoming meeting agendas, and a possible disability forum in November. They also approved a draft of the Board's official statement that is to be published in SSA's *2012 Annual Report of the SSI Program*.

During the morning of May 9, the Board members split up and met with staffs at the Marietta and Gwinnett field offices, both in the Atlanta metropolitan area. At the offices the staffs discussed a number of their concerns, such as incomplete disability applications filed over the Internet, the public's problems with selecting the most advantageous month for retirement benefits to begin when filing an Internet claim, and overpayments caused when disabled beneficiaries return to work. They also provided a number of recommendations on how SSA's operations could work more efficiently and on how to better serve the public.

I certify that the minutes written for the May 8-9, 2012 meeting of the Social Security Advisory Board are correct.



Marsha Katz

Date: June 19, 2012

Acting Chair
Social Security Advisory Board