

OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Our Mission

Deliver Social Security services that meet the changing needs of the public

Social Security Benefits America

Few government agencies touch the lives of as many people as we do. The programs we administer provide a financial safety net for millions of Americans, and many people consider them the most successful large-scale Federal programs in our Nation's history.

Social Security initially covered retired workers. Later program expansions added dependent and survivor benefits, as well as Disability Insurance (DI). We also administer the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, a Federal needs-based program financed through general revenue funds.

OLD-AGE, SURVIVORS, AND DISABILITY INSURANCE PROGRAM

RETIREMENT INSURANCE PROGRAM

The basic benefit structure of retirement benefits has remained essentially unchanged since 1939. When people work and pay Social Security taxes, they earn credits toward Social Security benefits. Most people need 40 credits, or 10 years of covered work, to qualify. Social Security taxes fund the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Trust Funds that we use to pay Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance benefits.

SURVIVORS INSURANCE PROGRAM

Survivors benefits provide income to family members of workers who die. Survivors eligible for benefits include widows or widowers, minor or disabled children, and surviving divorced spouses. In 1939, we began paying survivors benefits. Disabled widows and widowers benefits began in 1968.

DISABILITY INSURANCE PROGRAM

In 1956, Social Security expanded to include a benefit program for disabled workers ages 50-65. The program expansion included benefits for disabled adult children of retired or deceased insured workers. In 1960, disabled workers of all ages could apply for DI benefits. We pay benefits to people who cannot work because they have a medical condition expected to last at least one year or result in death.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME PROGRAM

SSI is a means-tested program designed to provide a monthly payment to aged, blind, or disabled people with limited income and resources. Adults, as well as children, can receive payments based on disability or blindness.

For more information on all of our programs and benefits, please visit our [Understanding The Benefits webpage \(www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10024.html\)](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10024.html).

HOW SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS AMERICA FOR FISCAL YEAR 2012

- Over 61 million Social Security beneficiaries and SSI recipients received a combined total of about \$810 billion;
- 90 percent of the American population age 65 and over receive Social Security benefits;
- Among elderly Social Security beneficiaries, 53 percent of married couples and 74 percent of unmarried individuals rely on Social Security for 50 percent or more of their income;
- About 96 percent of persons aged 20-49 who worked in covered employment had survivors protection for their young children or a surviving spouse caring for the children; and
- Over 1.3 million blind and disabled children under age 18 received SSI payments.

HOW WE SERVED AMERICA IN FISCAL YEAR 2012

- Issued 16 million new and replacement Social Security cards;
- Performed 1.5 billion automated Social Security number verifications;
- Posted 220 million earnings items to workers' records;
- Completed more than 56 million transactions on our National 800 Number;
- Assisted 45 million visitors;
- Registered 2.2 million users for *MySocialSecurity* our online Social Security Statement;
- Received nearly 5 million retirement, survivor, and Medicare applications;
- Received about 3.2 million initial disability claims;
- Reconsidered 808,521 denied disability applications;
- Completed approximately 2.6 million SSI non-disability redeterminations;
- Completed 443,233 full medical continuing disability reviews;
- Completed nearly 3.2 million overpayment actions;
- Completed 166,020 Appeals Council reviews;
- Conducted 672,352 hearings;
- Completed about 12,300 new Federal court cases;
- Oversaw approximately 5.9 million representative payees; and
- Distributed over \$1.3 billion in fees to appointed representatives.

Our Organization

We have about 65,000 employees and deliver services through a nationwide network of about 1,500 offices. We also have a presence in several United States embassies around the globe.

Our field offices and card centers are the primary points of contact for in-person interaction with the public. Our teleservice centers primarily handle telephone calls to our National 800 Number. Employees in our processing centers primarily handle Social Security retirement, survivors, and disability payments, but also perform a wide range of other functions, which include answering telephone calls to our National 800 Number. We depend on State employees in 54 State and territorial Disability Determination Services to make disability determinations. The administrative law judges in our hearing offices and the administrative appeals judges in our Appeals Council make decisions on appeals of denied Social Security and SSI claims. For more information about our components and their functions, visit our current [organizational structure webpage \(www.socialsecurity.gov/org\)](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/org).

