



# OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

## OUR MISSION

*Deliver quality Social Security services to the public.*

## SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS AMERICA

Few government agencies affect the lives of as many people as we do. In accordance with law and regulations, we administer three programs under the *Social Security Act*:

- **Old-Age and Survivors Insurance:** Established in 1935, the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) program provides retirement and survivors benefits to qualified workers and their family members. In fiscal year (FY) 2021, we paid OASI benefits to an average of over 55 million beneficiaries each month, and paid over \$986 billion to OASI beneficiaries through the fiscal year. Learn more about retirement benefits on our website ([www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/](http://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/)). Also, learn more about survivors benefits on our website ([www.ssa.gov/benefits/survivors/](http://www.ssa.gov/benefits/survivors/)).
- **Disability Insurance:** Established in 1956, the Disability Insurance (DI) program provides benefits for workers who become disabled and their families. In FY 2021, we paid DI benefits to an average of nearly 10 million beneficiaries each month, and paid about \$140 billion in DI benefits through the fiscal year. Learn more about DI benefits on our website ([www.ssa.gov/benefits/disability/](http://www.ssa.gov/benefits/disability/)). Also, read stories from DI beneficiaries on our website ([www.ssa.gov/disabilityfacts/stories.html](http://www.ssa.gov/disabilityfacts/stories.html)).
- **Supplemental Security Income:** Established in 1972, the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program provides financial support to aged, blind, and disabled adults and children who have limited income and resources. In FY 2021, we paid SSI benefits to a monthly average of nearly 8 million recipients (approximately 2.6 million of whom concurrently receive OASI or DI benefits), and paid about \$54 billion in SSI Federal benefits and State supplementary payments through the fiscal year. Learn more about SSI benefits on our website ([www.ssa.gov/benefits/ssi/](http://www.ssa.gov/benefits/ssi/)).

In addition, we support national programs administered by other Federal and State agencies, as required by law, such as Medicare, *Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974*, *Coal Industry Retiree Health Benefit Act*, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, *Help America Vote Act*, State Children's Health Insurance Program, E-Verify, Medicaid, and Federal Benefits for Veterans.



### Did You Know? We're with You from Birth through Retirement

Most parents apply for a child's Social Security Number at birth, usually through the hospital. When the time comes for that first job, the number is already in place. Creating your own *my Social Security* account lets you review your earnings history, get personalized estimates of future benefits, and manage your benefits once they begin. ([www.ssa.gov/myaccount](http://www.ssa.gov/myaccount)).



## HOW SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITED AMERICA IN FISCAL YEAR 2021

- We paid a combined total of over \$1 trillion in Social Security and SSI benefits.
- Approximately 87 percent of the American population age 65 and over received Social Security benefits.
- On average each month, about 1.1 million blind or disabled children under age 18 received SSI benefits.

## HOW WE SERVED AMERICA IN FISCAL YEAR 2021

- Processed nearly 12 million applications for new and replacement Social Security Number cards;
- Performed nearly 2.3 billion automated Social Security Number verifications for employers;
- Posted over 277 million earnings items to workers' records;
- Handled over 31 million calls on our National 800 Number;
- Mailed an estimated 350 million notices;
- Registered over 9.5 million users for *my Social Security*, our online portal for the public to conduct business with us;
- Processed nearly 290 million online transactions;
- Completed over 9.6 million claims for benefits;
- Completed over 451,000 hearing dispositions;
- Reviewed over 118,000 cases in the Appeals Council;
- Defended almost 28,000 disability cases in Federal court;
- Conducted nearly 511,000 full medical continuing disability reviews (CDR);
- Performed nearly 2.4 million non-medical redeterminations of SSI eligibility;
- Conducted 24 computer matching agreements for data exchanges with various Federal partners, resulting in \$7.9 billion in annual savings; and
- Provided access to the *Social Security Statement (Statement)*, mailing approximately 12 million paper *Statements* and allowing beneficiaries to access their *Statements* online nearly 64 million times.



### Did You Know? You Can Apply for Retirement Benefits Online

Social Security is part of the retirement plan for almost every American worker. It provides replacement income for qualified retirees and their families. When you are ready to retire, our online application makes it easy to apply for benefits.

[\(www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/\)](http://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/)



## OUR ORGANIZATION

Over 59,000 Federal employees and 15,000 State employees serve the public from a network of more than 1,500 offices across the country and around the world. Most of our employees directly serve the public or provide support to employees who do. A diverse, engaged, and well-trained workforce is critical to meeting our service delivery goals. The more effort we place on employee safety, agency-wide communication, employee engagement, training, and development, the better equipped our employees will be to carry out our mission and provide the quality of service the public expects and deserves.

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic continues to significantly affect our operations and how we serve the public. Our highest priority during this unprecedented time has been to provide mission-critical services while ensuring the health and safety of the public and our employees in a mostly virtual work environment. We continue to accelerate our planning and implementation of alternative digital and remote services, as well as expand the number of data exchanges to obtain evidence, while remaining available for limited critical, in-person appointments.

Our digital services are available 24 hours a day, providing a convenient, safe option for anyone interested in conducting business with us online. Digital services allow customers to view their *Statement*, find information about our programs and services, or file for benefits. In FY 2021, the public conducted 290 million transactions through our digital services.

Our National 800 Number callers can conduct business transactions by speaking directly with a customer service representative or through our 24-hour automated services. Our automated services include requesting benefit verification letters, ordering replacement Medicare cards, and obtaining claim status. During the COVID-19 pandemic we published local office telephone numbers, allowing our field office employees to handle significantly more phone calls while maintaining a low busy rate for our National 800 Number. Our processing centers handle the most complex benefit payment decisions, in addition to issuing benefit payments after appeals decisions, determining and collecting debt, correcting records, and performing program integrity work.

State agency disability determination services make disability determinations for initial claims, reconsiderations, and CDRs. We are increasing the processing capacity to address the existing backlog of initial disability claims and an anticipated spike in claims due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will take a sustained, multi-year effort to work down the backlog of initial disability claims.

Administrative law judges in our hearings offices and administrative appeals judges in our Appeals Council decide appealed cases. In response to the pandemic, we transitioned to temporarily holding voluntary telephone only hearings, allowing us to continue to hear cases remotely. At the end of FY 2020, we provided a video hearing option, using a videoconferencing platform, to conduct hearings remotely and allow applicants and their representatives to participate from any private location where they have access to a camera-enabled smart phone, tablet, or computer. We continue to make progress toward our goal of eliminating the disability hearings backlog. The hearings backlog is now at its lowest level in 20 years. For more information about our organization and its functions, visit our Organizational Structure webpage ([www.ssa.gov/org/](http://www.ssa.gov/org/)).



### Did You Know? We Provide Service Updates during the COVID-19 Pandemic

*Subscribe* to receive alerts from us when we add or change information on our COVID-19 Updates webpage ([www.ssa.gov/coronavirus/](http://www.ssa.gov/coronavirus/)). You also may follow us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/socialsecurity](https://www.facebook.com/socialsecurity)) and Twitter ([www.twitter.com/socialsecurity](https://www.twitter.com/socialsecurity)) and subscribe to our blog ([blog.ssa.gov](http://blog.ssa.gov)).