

DOCUMENTATION FOR THE GENERIC CLEARANCE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS

TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION: Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 Disability Initial Claims Report Card (DICRC) Survey

SSA SUB-NUMBER: D-01

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY (*give purpose of activity, provide specific information; i.e., date(s) of survey, number of focus groups, locations, etc.*):

Background

As part of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) ongoing evaluation of its initial disability application process, the agency assesses applicants' opinions about their experiences when filing for benefits. To assess applicant perceptions, SSA plans to survey three groups: 1) mid-process applicants, who just filed an application but have not yet received a decision; 2) post-adjudicative awarded applicants, who just received a favorable decision; and 3) post-adjudicative denied applicants, whose applications we just denied. SSA will survey overall satisfaction with and assessment of various aspects of service for each group at their specific stage in the application process. FY 2010 is the fourth year in which SSA will conduct this survey.

SURVEY

Description of Survey

The survey will utilize two questionnaires developed by SSA, one for mid-process and one for post-adjudicative applicants (awarded and denied). Both questionnaires were successfully used in FY 2007, when we first conducted the DICRC survey, and with one exception, the FY 2010 questionnaires are the same as those used in FY 2008 and FY 2009. In FY 2009, the issues of whether the person had assistance filing and who helped them, formerly covered in one question, was broken into two separate questions to improve clarity.

We will conduct the survey in three phases during FY 2010. We will conduct each of the surveys at the same point in time as last year to ensure comparability of results. Based on our experience conducting previous surveys with this population, we have identified some key service elements that have an impact on satisfaction with the disability application process. Those key elements included in the questionnaire are:

- How the person filed the application;
- Whether the person had assistance filing and who helped them;
- Satisfaction with the ease of filing: i.e., finding information, quality of information obtained, and ease of working with SSA to start the process (mid-process only);

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- Satisfaction with the ease of providing medical information: i.e., describing medical, job and school history, obtaining medical records and undergoing a medical examination;
- Satisfaction with the explanations SSA provided about the application process (mid-process only);
- Satisfaction with the ease of checking the status of the application (post-adjudicative only);
- Satisfaction with SSA employees, including their helpfulness, courtesy, job knowledge, the clarity of their explanations, and the amount of time they spent with the person;
- Satisfaction with claims processing time (post-adjudicative only);
- Satisfaction with the clarity of the notice of decision (post-adjudicative only);
- Satisfaction with the overall ease of filing and overall opinion of SSA's service.

Statistical Information

Sample Selection

We will conduct this survey in three phases; each phase will assess the satisfaction of a different group of disability claimants selected in the timeframes shown:

Stratum	Sample	Date Selected
Mid-process - shortly after filing but before a decision is made	10,000	September 2009
Post-adjudicative Awards - just after they receive the decision	10,000	December 2009
Post-adjudicative Denials - just after they receive the decision	10,000	February 2010

In FY 2007 and FY 2008 we sampled 26,000 claims per phase to stratify the sample at the state level. However, in FY 2009 we reduced the sample size to 10,000 per phase, stratified at the regional level, because in the first two years, the survey did not yield data at the state level that was sufficiently useful to justify the cost of the survey or the significant workload incurred by SSA survey staff.

We plan to select 1,000 cases per region in each stratum (10,000 total per phase) for an overall sample size of 30,000. Anticipated yearly volumes for each of SSA's ten regions are displayed in the table below. We will weight survey data to reflect the actual regional universes identified during each sampling phase.

Initial Disability Applications Processed – Title II and Title XVI Combined			
	Cases Processed Annually	Percent Cases Awarded	Percent Cases Denied
National	2,595,000	36.0	64.0
Boston includes CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT	111,000	41.9	58.1
New York includes NJ, NY, PR	222,000	44.4	55.6
Philadelphia includes DE, DC, MD, PA, VA, WV	257,000	36.8	63.2
Atlanta includes AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN	611,000	29.6	70.4
Chicago includes IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI	462,000	32.7	67.3
Dallas includes AR, LA, NM, OK, TX	352,000	40.2	59.8
Kansas City includes IA, KS, MO, NE	114,000	34.2	65.8
Denver includes CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY	57,000	38.5	61.5
San Francisco includes AZ, CA, HI, NV	322,000	39.2	60.8
Seattle includes AK, ID, OR, WA	87,000	39.1	60.9

Methodology

An SSA-approved contractor will mail all sampled individuals a pre-notification postcard encouraging their participation. Three to four days later a brief (one page front and back) scannable questionnaire, accompanied by a letter explaining the purpose of the survey will be mailed to all sampled individuals. We will include the Paperwork Reduction Act and the Privacy Act statements in the cover letter. Two weeks we mail the initial package, we will send a follow-up postcard to those sampled individuals who did not respond to the initial solicitation. Four weeks after we mail the initial survey package, we will send a follow-up letter and another copy of the survey form to those sampled individuals who did not respond to the initial solicitation.

Response Rate

We take the following steps described to maximize the response rate for this survey:

- The questionnaire is short and easy to read and complete. The scannable survey is designed for ease of use by a disabled population, e.g., font sizes are large, difficult fill-in bubbles are not used;

- We send a pre-notification postcard to every sampled individual to inform them that 1) they have been selected for the survey and 2) they should be on the lookout for the envelope containing the questionnaire. Using a postcard format allows the recipient to quickly see that the survey is sanctioned by SSA. Also, the postcard identifies the contractor who is conducting the survey for SSA, which should increase the likelihood that participants will open the envelope when they receive the questionnaire;
- Three to four days later, we mail the first survey package, including a cover letter signed by an agency official that encourages the individual to respond by emphasizing the importance of the survey and the confidentiality of the responses;
- Two weeks after we mail the initial survey package, we send a follow-up postcard to those sampled individuals who did not respond to the initial solicitation;
- Four weeks after we mail the initial survey package, we send a follow-up letter and another copy of the survey form to those sampled individuals who have not responded to the initial solicitation;
- We will send Spanish surveys to sampled individuals where SSA records indicate that is their preferred language; and,
- We will provide SSA's toll-free National 800 number for people to call if they have any questions.

In the first two years of the DICRC Survey, we achieved an overall response rate at the national level of close to 50 percent for the mid-process phase, 55 percent for the award phase, and about 30 percent for the denial phase using only two mailings and an initial and follow-up survey. In FY 2009, we added a pre-notification postcard and a follow-up postcard to the mailings in an attempt to increase the response rate. The additional mailings yielded a combined FY 2009 response rate of 47 percent. Specifically, the increase was due to improvements in the response rate for mid-process and awards of 4 and 7 percentage points, respectively. We saw no comparable increase in the response rate from denials, however, most likely due to the impact of the unfavorable decision.

Within the regions, the combined response rate (mid-process and post-adjudicative) in FY 2007 ranged from 42 percent to 46 percent; in FY 2008, the range was from 41 percent to 50 percent. We have not yet completed tabulating the FY 2009 data so we are unable to provide the combined regional response rates at this time. However, in the FY 2009 Mid-Process Survey response rates improved in 9 out of 10 regions. (Note that as part of its data validation, SSA completes a non-responder analysis to evaluate any potential impact of the response rate on survey findings. Results of that analysis are included when the survey data is reported.)

Sampling Variability

The key variable for this survey is overall satisfaction with SSA's service (percent giving a rating of excellent, very good or good). (We are using the FY 2008 satisfaction ratings to estimate sampling variability because tabulation of the FY 2009 data is still underway.) Nationally, our proposed sample size of 10,000 cases in each phase is large enough, assuming a 50 percent response rate, to provide a sampling variability at the 95-percent confidence level equal to:

Stratum	National Key Variable (E/VG/G Rating)	Sampling Variability
Mid-process	84%	+/- 1.4%
Awards	92%	+/- 1.2%
Denials	53%	+/- 1.5%

Anticipating a response rate of 50 percent as well from the regional samples of 1,000 cases, we estimate that the sampling variability will fall in the ranges shown below. These ranges are acceptable given the intended purpose of the survey.

Stratum	Regional Key Variable (E/VG/G Rating)	Sampling Variability
Mid-process	76% to 86%	+/- 3.8% to +/- 3.1%
Awards	87% to 93%	+/- 3.1% to +/- 1.9%
Denials	47% to 58%	+/- 4.4% to +/-4.3 %

SSA's Office of Quality Performance (OQP) will perform all sampling and data analysis. Dan Zabronsky, Director of SSA's Division of Modeling, OQP, will provide statistical support. He can be reached at (410) 965-5953.

IF FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS WILL RECEIVE A PAYMENT, INDICATE AMOUNT

N/A

USE OF SURVEY RESULTS:

SSA will use the results of this study to gauge satisfaction with the current initial disability application process, and to assess the impact of the agency's ongoing improvement efforts.

BURDEN HOUR COMPUTATION (*Number of responses (X) estimated response time (/60) = annual burden hours*):

Number of Responses: 30,000

Estimated Response Time: 5 minutes

Annual Burden Hours: 2,500 hours

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