
**OFFICE OF
THE INSPECTOR GENERAL**

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

**TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF
HEARING OFFICE GROUP SUPERVISORS**

December 2012

A-12-12-11240

AUDIT REPORT



Mission

By conducting independent and objective audits, evaluations and investigations, we inspire public confidence in the integrity and security of SSA's programs and operations and protect them against fraud, waste and abuse. We provide timely, useful and reliable information and advice to Administration officials, Congress and the public.

Authority

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- Conduct and supervise independent and objective audits and investigations relating to agency programs and operations.**
- Promote economy, effectiveness, and efficiency within the agency.**
- Prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse in agency programs and operations.**
- Review and make recommendations regarding existing and proposed legislation and regulations relating to agency programs and operations.**
- Keep the agency head and the Congress fully and currently informed of problems in agency programs and operations.**

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- Independence to determine what reviews to perform.**
- Access to all information necessary for the reviews.**
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We strive for continual improvement in SSA's programs, operations and management by proactively seeking new ways to prevent and deter fraud, waste and abuse. We commit to integrity and excellence by supporting an environment that provides a valuable public service while encouraging employee development and retention and fostering diversity and innovation.

MEMORANDUM

Date: December 10, 2012

Refer To:

To: The Commissioner

From: Inspector General

Subject: Training and Development of Hearing Office Group Supervisors (A-12-12-11240)

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to determine whether the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR) provided group supervisors (GS) with sufficient training to maintain their requisite skills and successfully perform their duties as first-line supervisors.

BACKGROUND

At the end of Fiscal Year 2011, ODAR had 417 GSs working at over 160 hearing offices. The GS is responsible for ensuring timely processing of hearing cases, supervising and mentoring staff, and supporting hearing office managers. The GS works as a first-line supervisor for hearing office personnel, including senior attorneys, decision writers, and technicians.¹

In August 2006, a training cadre developed a new three-phase training program for GSs. Under ODAR's Leadership and Management Training program, which is one of the Commissioner's initiatives to reduce the hearings backlog, GSs undergo classroom instruction, participate in on-the-job and video training, and work with mentors. The cadre designed the training program to allow new and tenured GSs to remain current on such topics as electronic business processes, disability policies, hearing procedures, and personnel management. ODAR's Office of the Chief Administrative Law Judge is responsible for developing and implementing the GSs training program.²

¹ See Appendices B and C for a hearing office organization chart and the position description and training requirements for each staff position supervised by a GS, respectively.

² Before 2006, GSs attended a 2-week general training program SSA developed to teach the day-to-day knowledge and skills new SSA supervisors, including new ODAR supervisors, needed to manage both the workload and the people.

The GS training phases are as follows.

- **Phase One:** On-the-job orientation and video-on-demand (VOD) training.
- **Phase Two:** On-the-job training, online training, and mentoring.
- **Phase Three:** 1 week each of classroom and online training.

To meet our objective, we interviewed ODAR managers at Headquarters and GSs at the Norfolk, Virginia, Hearing Office to understand ODAR’s process for planning, delivering, and recording GS training. As part of our methodology,³ we conducted a nation-wide electronic survey. In May 2012, we emailed a questionnaire to 417 GSs to obtain their views on the quality, timing, and usefulness of the training as well as their satisfaction with their training.⁴ We also asked the GSs to evaluate the training the hearing office staff received. Finally, we emailed a questionnaire to 164 hearing office directors (HOD) to learn their views on the GS training.⁵

RESULTS OF REVIEW

Of the GSs who responded to our questionnaire, 84 percent stated they were sufficiently trained to perform their duties or were still participating in the three-phase training. However, 16 percent felt they needed additional training, citing a need for training in such areas as labor and employee relations, performance management, and management information. All but 1 percent of the GSs had prior Agency experience before accepting a GS position, though about 72 percent had been in their GS position for less than 5 years. About 96 percent of the HODs who responded to the questionnaire stated the GSs in their offices were sufficiently trained.

Between 89 and 97 percent of the GSs who responded to the questionnaire were generally satisfied or did not state dissatisfaction with all phases of the three-phase training program (see table below). In addition, about 76 percent of the GSs stated the three-phase training program met their expectations, and approximately 66 percent said ODAR provided the training at the right time. However, 42 percent of the GSs stated they did not have enough time for on-the-job training while performing their managerial duties. The questionnaire responses highlighted other training issues, such as communication and support, which may be of interest to ODAR managers as they plan future training activities.

Responses to the Three-Phase Training Questions	Percent
Satisfied or did not state dissatisfaction with <i>Phase One</i>	97
Satisfied or did not state dissatisfaction with <i>Phase Two</i> - online training	94
Satisfied or did not state dissatisfaction with <i>Phase Two</i> - mentoring	89
Satisfied or did not state dissatisfaction with <i>Phase Three</i>	95

³ See Appendix D for a further discussion of our scope and methodology.

⁴ We used ODAR staffing data as of January 2012.

⁵ See Appendix E for a copy of the GS and HOD questionnaire.

STATUS OF GS SKILLS AND TRAINING

Of the 269 GSs who responded to our questionnaire (a 65-percent response rate), 227 (84 percent) responders stated they had received sufficient training to perform their duties or were still participating in the three-phase training (see Table 1). The remaining 16 percent replied that they did not receive sufficient training. Later in this report, we discuss additional training the GSs believed they needed to be more effective in their positions.

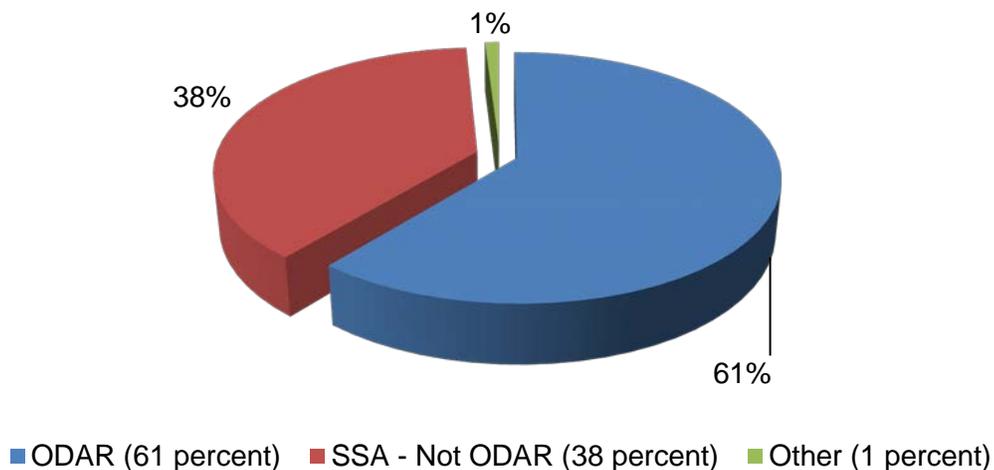
**Table 1: GS Responses on Trained to Perform Duties
(269 Responses)**

Responses	Percent
Sufficient Training	66
Still Undergoing Three-Phase Training Program	18
Not Sufficiently Trained	16
Total	100

Position Before Becoming a GS

Of the 269 GS respondents, about 99 percent⁶ had prior SSA experience before accepting a GS position, with 165 responders (61 percent) having worked in ODAR (see Figure 1). As a result, the vast majority of the new GSs already had at least a basic understanding of SSA’s mission and programs.

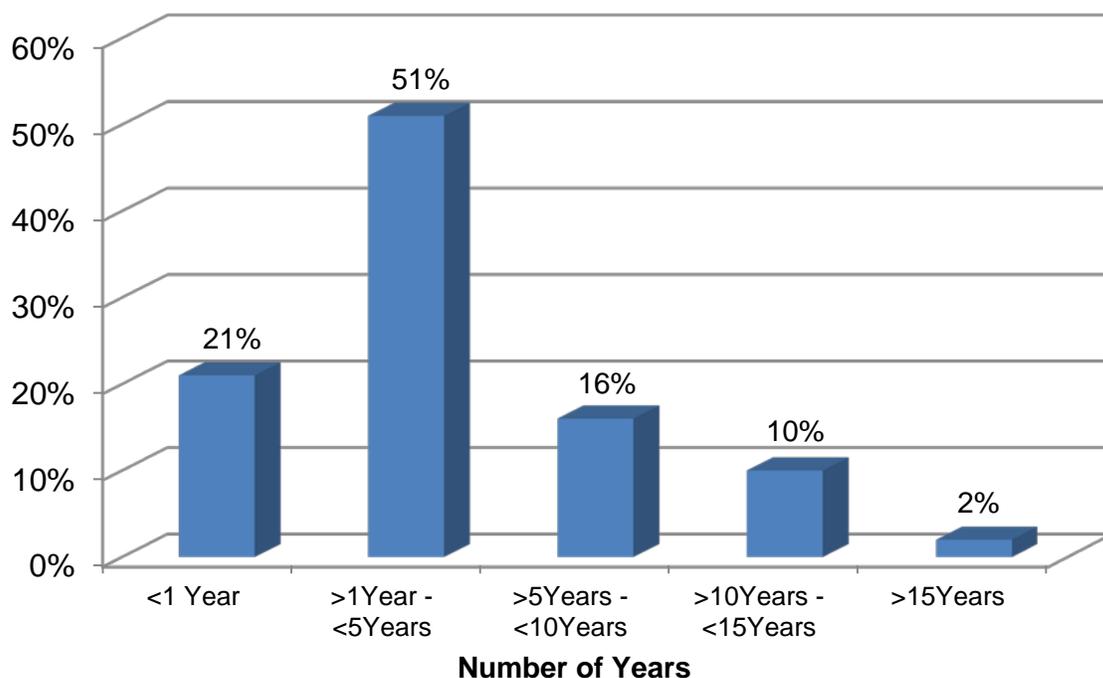
**Figure 1: GS Prior Experience
(269 Respondents)**



⁶ Responding GSs did not always answer every question. For example those GSs who had not taken the three-phase instruction could skip certain questions because this training did not pertain to them.

While the overwhelming majority had previous SSA experience, we learned that 72 percent had less than 5 years' experience as a GS (see Figure 2). About 12 percent had 10 or more years' experience.

**Figure 2: Years of Experience in GS Position
(269 Respondents)**



Of the 252 GSs providing information on their former positions, about 52 percent was formerly decision writers⁷ at hearing offices (see Table 2). Another 14 percent had experience as SSA operations managers,⁸ with the remainder holding a variety of other positions, including technical experts, disability specialists, management and program analysts, and other SSA operations personnel.

⁷ Decision writers work in hearing offices nationwide and are responsible for drafting legally sufficient decisions for the ALJ.

⁸ Operations supervisors manage Social Security field offices where people apply for a Social Security number card as well as disability and retirement benefits. The positions require knowledge of Social Security law and regulations as well as SSA policies and procedures.

**Table 2: Previous Positions of GSs
(252 Respondents)**

Title	Number of Respondents	Component
Paralegal Specialist ¹	65	ODAR
Attorney Advisor ¹	41	ODAR
Senior Attorney Advisor ¹	15	ODAR
Decision Writer	10	ODAR
Technical Expert	9	SSA
Operation Supervisor	35	SSA
Other ²	77	SSA
Total	252	

Note 1: The position relates to decision writing in the hearing office.

Note 2: Other positions include, but are not limited to, disability specialist, program and management analyst, and operations personnel.

Additional Training Needs

Our questionnaire provided the GSs a list of eight training areas they could select to identify additional training needs⁹ and asked them to identify any other areas. Of the respondents, 65 percent selected labor relations and 53 percent chose employee relations as areas requiring additional training (see Table 3). Labor management training covers a wide range of labor-management and employee relations issues, including union bargaining, conflict and dispute resolution, disciplinary and adverse actions, and union-management agreements.¹⁰ Some of the other areas selected by more than one-third of the respondents included performance management (40 percent), management information training (36 percent), and the Electronic Business Process (35 percent).¹¹

⁹ We created this list in consultation with ODAR training professionals.

¹⁰ The following four unions represent ODAR bargaining unit employees: (1) The Association of Administrative Law Judges, which is a part of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers; (2) The National Treasury Employees Union, which comprises two groups of employees—Chapter 224 and another Multi-Regional group, (3) The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE); and (4) The National Federation of Federal Employees, which represents only a small group of employees in Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹¹ The Electronic Business Process is the standardization of the core business process designed for use in hearing offices to process electronic disability folder cases.

**Table 3: Additional Training Requested by GSs
(269 Respondents)**

Training Areas	Number of Respondents Requesting Additional Training ¹	Percent of Total Respondents
Labor Relations	174	65
Employee Relations	143	53
Performance Management	108	40
Management Information	98	36
Electronic Business Process	93	35
Equal Employment	73	27
Transitional Leadership for Supervisors ²	63	23
Systems Security	32	12

Note 1: Respondents were allowed to choose more than one category.

Note 2: This 5-day national program known as “Nuts and Bolts” training takes place in a traditional classroom setting. The course topics are leadership, teambuilding, conflict management, diversity, accountability, creativity, innovation, and communication.

We also asked the GSs to name the training courses they had taken that benefited them the most. Their top three responses were

- Decision writer training program,¹²
- Transition to Leadership, and
- Performance management.

Over 80 percent of the GSs stated they discussed their training needs with their HODs, noting other parties they periodically consulted, such as the Hearing Office Chief ALJ and other GSs. About 13 percent of the GSs said they did not discuss their training needs with anyone.

HOD SATISFACTION WITH GS TRAINING

Of the 116 HODs who responded to our questionnaire (a 71-percent response rate), about 96 percent was satisfied or did not state dissatisfaction with the training the GSs received. Of these HODs, 94 (81 percent) stated that they had at least 1 GS who participated in the GS three-phase training program, and about 80 percent thought the training assisted their GSs in performing their duties. In addition, about 82 percent of the HODs thought the three-phase training was timely. We discuss the three-phase training program in the next section.

About 97 percent of the HODs reported they met with the GSs to discuss their training needs. Moreover, the HODs agreed with the GSs about additional training needed and stated more labor and employee relations training would improve GS competencies.

¹² GSs manage the decision writer’s workload, which requires that they assign and monitor their work and ensure the timeliness of the work as well as the legal sufficiency of the written decision.

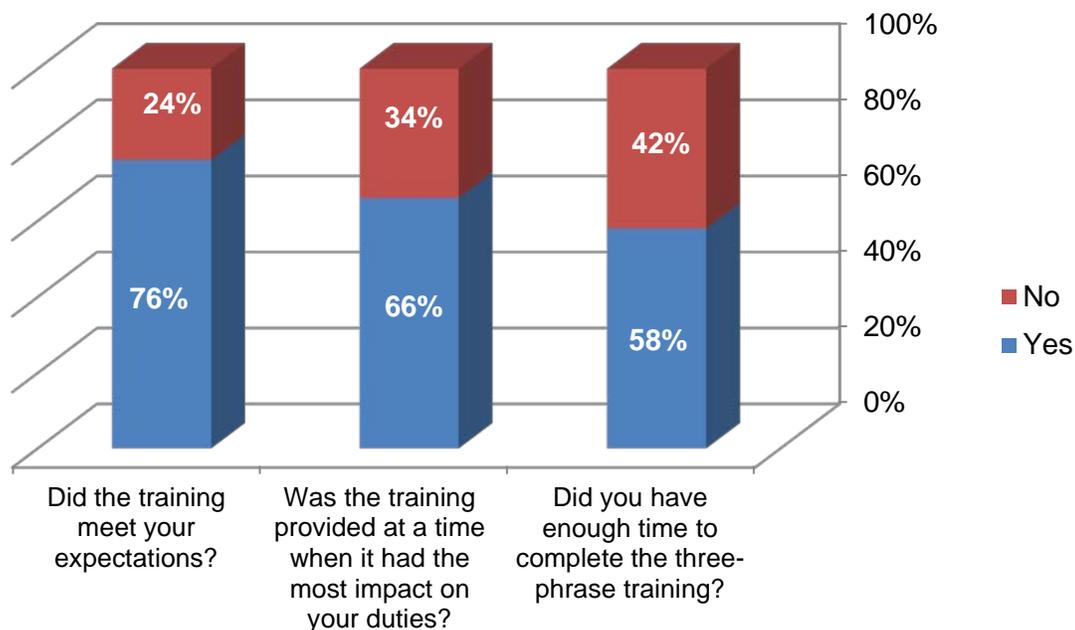
When we asked HODs to highlight some of the training that was most beneficial to the GSs, their responses were very similar to the GSs:

- Labor relations management,
- Performance Assessment and Communication System (PACS),¹³ and
- Decision writer training program.

GS SATISFACTION WITH THE THREE-PHASE TRAINING PROGRAM

About 76 percent of the 220 GSs who participated in all or part of the three-phase training said it met their expectations (see Figure 3). However, one-third of the respondents said the training was not provided at a time when it had the most impact on their ability to perform their duties. Furthermore, only a little more than half felt they had enough time to complete all phases of the training.

Figure 3: Responses to Questions about Expectations and Timeliness Under the Three-Phase Training Program (220 Respondents to Each Question)



Training Expectations

Of the 24 percent of GSs who replied that the training did not meet their expectations, 53 GSs provided comments. Of the 53 respondents, 21 had either not taken the three-phase training because it was not available when they became a new GS or were currently completing it. Ten GSs commented that their HODs did not inform them about the phases and therefore they took training phases out of sequence or did not take certain phases at all. For example, one GS commented, “I was not instructed to

¹³ PACS is the Agency’s three-tier rating system for employee performance appraisals.

complete the first two phases of training, before I attended phase three.” Another GS stated, “I wasn’t told about the three phases until I went to formal classroom training, I contacted my Regional Office when I returned to request a mentor and they never responded.”

Timely Training

Of the 34 percent of GSs who stated the three-phase training program was not timely in terms of their duties, 75 provided comments. Of those commenting, 27 GSs said (1) they were either uninformed about the various phases that made up the training, so they missed parts of the training, (2) they took it out of sequence, or (3) the training was not offered at the right time to most impact their duties. For example, one GS said, “I had been on the job two years. It may have helped to have completed training earlier.” Another five GSs said they took the three-phase classroom training out of sequence, with three of these GSs stating they attended the classroom training right after they started on the job. One of the GSs who attended the class during his first week explained that with little on-the-job experience, he was unable to understand much of the classroom instruction. A second GS from this group stated that he was unaware of the first and second phases of the training until he attended the last phase, which is the classroom training.¹⁴

HODs are required to conduct an orientation with the new GSs when they begin their employment in the hearing office as part of *Phase One*. During the orientation, the HODs are required to inform the GSs about the three-phase training, phase sequences, and related curriculum. In addition, HODs assign to each new GS a mentor during *Phase One* to ensure the comprehension and completion of each required course. The GS and the mentor also sign certificates to verify completion of each course. These certificates are later sent to the regional office. An additional certification stating the GS has been made aware of all training requirements, including the proper sequence of training, may improve GS training participant awareness.

Time to Complete Training

Of the 42 percent of GSs who stated they did not have enough time to complete the three-phase training program, 87 provided comments. Thirty-six GSs responded that meeting the job’s daily demands prevented them from completing some, or all, of the first two phases of training. For example, one GS stated, “It has been very hard to stay on pace. The GS position is extremely demanding. Oftentimes the training requirements seem to take away from the ability to perform my job, rather than assist in performing it.” A total of 11 GSs said no one had advised them of the various phases of the training or mentors met with them infrequently to discuss the progress of the training.

¹⁴ ODAR managers explained that their goal is to provide the GS training in sequence. However, when they receive their budget allocation often determines when the classroom training can be given to GSs.

GS Satisfaction with Phase One

Phase One of the three-phase training program begins as soon as the new GS joins the hearing office. New GS orientation occurs during the first month the GS is on duty, while the GS works closely with the HOD, and a mentor¹⁵ is assigned to work with the GS for the next 12 to 18 months. In this phase, the GS is expected to learn approximately 40 topics, including region-specific policies, arranging for appropriate computer profile and access, discussing critical labor-relations issues, and defining the scope of the new manager’s responsibilities. The GS is also taught the timetable to complete the three-phase GS training program.

Of the GS respondents, 97 percent was either satisfied or did not state dissatisfaction with the *Phase One* training, with 22 percent being “very satisfied” (see Table 4).

**Table 4: GS Satisfaction with Phase One Training
(183 Responses)**

Responses	Percent
Very Satisfied	22
Satisfied	58
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	17
Dissatisfied	3
Very Dissatisfied	0

We received 54 additional comments about how to improve the *Phase One* training. Slightly less than half of the respondents thought HODs needed to convey the structure, content, and access to the *Phase One* training more effectively. Others felt the relationship between the mentor and employee was ineffective because they needed more one-on-one training with the mentor or they had not been assigned a mentor. One GS commented that clearer instructions about what is expected from the mentor-employee relationship would help. Others thought shorter online lessons would improve the program.

GS Satisfaction with Phase Two (Online Training)

Under *Phase Two*, a GS spends approximately 75 hours to complete the mandatory topics and should be accomplished within a 12-month period. The mentor¹⁶ helps the GS create a workable timeline to achieve this goal. The training activities include assigned reading, VODs, and online training courses covering such topics as managing the decision writing workload, employee conduct, and the SSA/AFGE National Agreement.

¹⁵ The role and responsibilities of the GS mentor are accessible via the *ODAR Hearing Operation Leadership and Management Training Website*.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Of the 143 GS respondents, 94 percent was either satisfied or did not state dissatisfaction with the *Phase Two* training, with 21 percent being “very satisfied” (see Table 5).

**Table 5: GS Satisfaction with Phase Two Training - Online Training
(143 Responses)**

Responses	Percent
Very Satisfied	21
Satisfied	55
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	18
Dissatisfied	6
Very Dissatisfied	0

We received 50 comments about how to improve *Phase Two* training. Over one-third of respondents commented that their job duties did not allow enough time to fully participate in the *Phase Two* training or said the instructional material online was too lengthy. They felt that on-the-job training and additional time with the mentor would have helped them perform their duties. Some of the comments from GSs included the following.

- “It is hard to do Phase Two while supervising an office.”
- “The GS position is probably best learned through on-the-job experience.”
- “The VODs need to be shorter, more practical and less theoretical.”

Five GSs commented that hyperlinks to all necessary training material did not work. However, another GS noted, “Excellent reference material.”

GS Satisfaction with Phase Two (Mentoring)

During *Phase Two*, a mentor works with the new GS to complete the online and VOD training, keeps them on track with training requirements, and discusses each subject area after completion. The mentor also verifies that all training activities are completed. Many mentors and their assigned GSs are not always in the same hearing office. As a result, most of their communication is by telephone. Some mentors make themselves available by telephone during working hours whenever the GS needs practical advice. Others prefer to schedule meetings to hold training discussions with the GS or do both.¹⁷

Of the 136 GS respondents, 89 percent was either satisfied or did not state dissatisfaction with the *Phase Two* mentoring training, with 29 percent being “very satisfied” (see Table 6).

¹⁷ The mentor-protégé relationship may last as long as both parties find it is useful, but ODAR recommended that it not exceed 18 months.

**Table 6: GS Satisfaction with Phase Two Training - Mentoring
(136 Responses)**

Responses	Percent
Very Satisfied	29
Satisfied	34
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	26
Dissatisfied	8
Very Dissatisfied	3

Sixty-two GSs provided comments on the mentoring training. Thirteen GSs said they had a positive experience with the mentoring program and it needed no improvement. For example, one GS commented, "My mentor was excellent, I could ask anything, this was the best part of the training program. . . Having a mentor from another office is great. It provides someone to bounce off ideas who are not in the direct chain of command."¹⁸

However, almost half of the GSs who responded stated they had to overcome barriers to communicate with their mentor or did not have a mentor.¹⁹ For example, one GS commented that the physical distance between the mentor and the protégé limited "interaction to situational problems." Another GS noted that if the mentor is in another hearing office, ". . . [the GSs] and her mentor have a hard time getting corresponding times in our schedules for discussion," and she suggested managers should ". . . set times for mentors to speak to their protégé."

Sixteen GSs expressed barriers to communicating with their mentors including infrequent or no discussions with mentors. In at least one case, the GS stated that although he was very satisfied with his mentor, "...to find time to actually communicate with him is almost impossible." One respondent said, "There should not be weeks before you hear back from your mentor."

GS Satisfaction with Phase Three

In the *Phase Three* training,²⁰ GSs participate in required classroom training that expands on many of the topics covered in the previous training and mentoring.²¹ The

¹⁸ The role and responsibilities of the GS mentor are accessible via the *ODAR Hearing Operation Leadership and Management Training Website*.

¹⁹ In a 2011 audit of *Training of New Administrative Law Judges in the Office of Adjudication and Review* (A-12-11-11126), we reviewed the ALJ three-phase training program for newly hired ALJs. We found a similar issue in that report, with several ALJs who also said they were not assigned a mentor or their mentor had little time for them.

²⁰ *ODAR Hearing Operation Leadership and Management Training Website*.

²¹ See Appendix F for the GS 2-week classroom sessions held from March 2009 to March 2012. During this period, 300 GSs were trained. Also, see Appendix G for the March 2012 classroom Agenda.

students take part in break-out groups and group discussions. Topics include leadership, management information, employee equal opportunity issues, performance management, employee evaluations, and problem solving.

Of the 136 GS respondents, 95 percent was either satisfied or did not state dissatisfaction with the *Phase Three* training, with 43 percent being “very satisfied” (see Table 7).

**Table 7: GS Satisfaction with Phase Three Training
(136 Responses)**

Responses	Percent
Very Satisfied	43
Satisfied	44
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	8
Dissatisfied	4
Very Dissatisfied	1

Fifty-eight GSs commented on the *Phase Three* classroom training. Fifteen praised the training, with one GS stating, “This was the most satisfying part of the GS training.” Among the other responses, seven GSs felt they attended the classroom training too early or needed more time to complete the earlier phases before attending the class. For example, one GS attended the *Phase Three* classroom training on their first day on the job and said he could not understand most of the lectures.²² Ten GSs said the classroom curriculum should cover more ODAR workload reporting instruction, such as Case Processing and Management System (CPMS) and Disability Adjudication Reporting Tools (DART)²³ reports. Seven respondents said the classroom training should be longer.

GS SATISFACTION WITH STAFF TRAINING

Of the GS respondents, about 70 percent was at least satisfied or did not express dissatisfaction with the training the staff received.²⁴ However, 11 percent of the GSs was dissatisfied with lead case technician (LCT) training²⁵ mainly because they thought

²² The *Phase Three* classroom training may be available only a few times per year. See Appendix F for a copy of the training schedule.

²³ CPMS allows ODAR components to control and process electronic disability cases and produce management information reports. DART assists hearing offices with ad hoc reports that contain a wide variety of management information and workload listings designed to supplement CPMS reporting capabilities.

²⁴ See Appendix I for the various positions covered in the questionnaire.

²⁵ ODAR reported that they are instituting a mentor program for Senior Case Technicians (SCT), modeled on the ALJ mentor program. They envision these materials will serve as reference and supplemental training material for LCTs.

LCTs needed additional training or that ODAR should develop a formal national training program for them. We discuss the GS responses on each position in Appendix H and available staff training in Appendix I.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, the majority of the GSs stated they were sufficiently trained to perform their duties. In addition, the vast majority of HODs overseeing GSs similarly stated the GSs in their offices were sufficiently trained. However, 16 percent of the GSs stated they needed additional training. We also found that the majority of the GSs was relatively new to their position and stated they would benefit from additional management training to handle the requirements of the job. The majority of GSs stated the three-phase training program met their expectations and provided training when it had the most impact on their ability to perform their work. However, about 42 percent of GSs stated they needed more time to complete the three-phase training, with some GSs noting daily job demands impacted their ability to efficiently complete the three-phase training. We also received a number of comments from GSs about a lack of information about the three-phase training, and some GSs stated they took the training out of sequence. Finally, we believe the questionnaire responses highlighted a number of training issues that may be of interest to ODAR managers as they plan future training activities.

To ensure GSs have sufficient training to maintain their requisite skills and successfully perform their duties as first-line supervisors, we recommend SSA:

1. Develop and offer courses for GSs interested in additional training in those areas identified by questionnaire respondents, such as labor and employee relations.
2. As part of the orientation of new GSs, require both the HOD and new GS to certify that they have been informed about the three-phase GS training program and the proper sequence of each phase.
3. Remind HODs of the importance of setting aside sufficient time for new GSs to participate in the three-phase GS training program.

AGENCY COMMENTS

SSA agreed with the recommendations (see Appendix J). The Agency also provided technical comments, which we incorporated, as appropriate.



Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr.

Appendices

APPENDIX A – Acronyms

APPENDIX B – Hearing Office Organization Chart

APPENDIX C – Hearing Office Position Descriptions

APPENDIX D – Scope and Methodology

APPENDIX E – Group Supervisor and Hearing Office Director Questionnaires

APPENDIX F – Dates and Number of Group Supervisors Attending the GS Phase
Three Classroom Training March 2009 to March 2012

APPENDIX G – Phase-Three Training Agenda for Newly Hired Group Supervisors

APPENDIX H – Group Supervisor Satisfaction with Staff Training

APPENDIX I – National Training Requirements for Hearing Office Staff

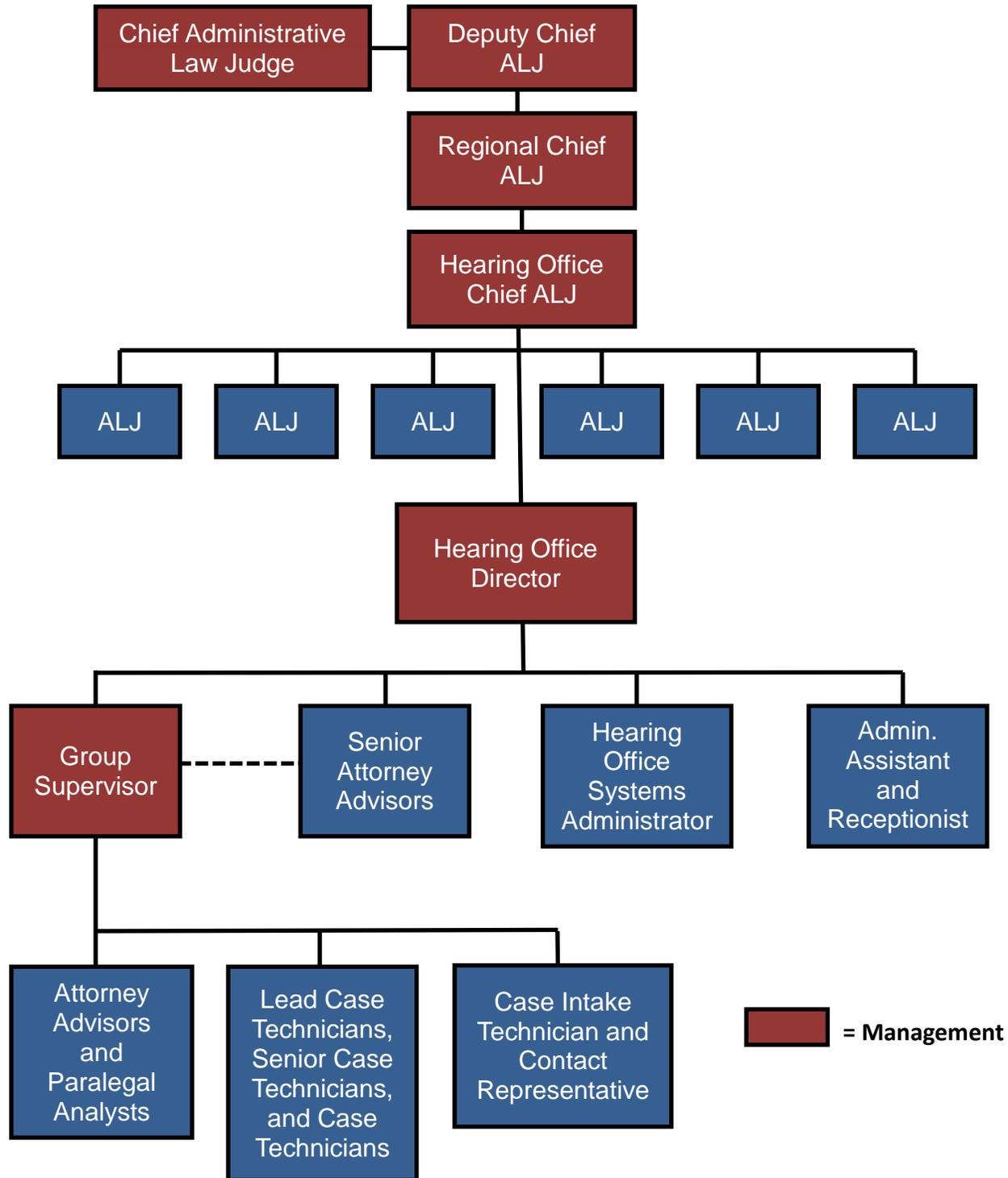
APPENDIX J – Agency Comments

APPENDIX K – OIG Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

Acronyms

AA	Attorney Advisor
AFGE	American Federation of Government Employees
CIT	Case Intake Technician
CPMS	Case Processing and Management System
CT	Case Technician
CR	Contract Representative
DART	Disability Adjudication Reporting Tools
GS	Group Supervisor
HOD	Hearing Office Director
GETA	<i>Government Employees Training Act</i>
LCT	Lead Case Technician
ODAR	Office of Disability Adjudication and Review
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
OCALJ	Office of the Chief Administrative Law Judge
OTR	On-the-Record
PA	Paralegal Analyst
PACS	Performance Assessment and Communication System
Pub. L. No.	Public Law Number
SAA	Senior Attorney Advisor
SCT	Senior Case Technician
SSA	Social Security Administration
U.S.C.	United States Code
VOD	Video-on-Demand
VSU	Virtual Screening Unit

Hearing Office Organization Chart



Hearing Office Position Descriptions

In table C-1 we have provided a description of non-managerial hearing office positions the Group Supervisor (GS) supports or supervises.

Table C-1: Non-Managerial Hearing Office Positions

Title	Position Description
Senior Attorney Advisors (SAA)	The SAA renders professional legal advice and assistance to the administrative law judges (ALJ) in prehearing development and preparing cases for hearing, post-hearing development, and other post-hearing actions. They write comprehensive decisions in the most legally complex cases for ALJs. They also screen cases and adjudicate fully favorable on-the-record (OTR) decisions. SAAs can request additional evidence and prior files or ask claimant representatives for updated medical evidence. SAAs prepare fully favorable decisions and have the authority to sign the decision.
Attorney Adviser (AA) and Paralegal Analyst (PA)	AAs and PAs render advice and assistance to the ALJ in pre-hearing development and preparing cases for hearings, post-hearing development, and other post-hearing actions. They assist the ALJ in formulating the case decision and evaluate all program, legal, and medical aspects of the case, including exhibits, all testimony, all pertinent laws and regulations, and precedent court cases. Following the analysis, research, and development of the case, they formulate and draft comprehensive decisions for the ALJ.
Lead Case Technician (LCT)	The LCT leads the work of three or more employees engaged in developing and processing a request for hearing from its receipt in the hearing office to its completion. The LCT processes the more complex hearing cases where analysis of pertinent issues and interpretation of the provisions of laws, regulations, rulings, precedents, policies, procedures and guidelines is necessary.
Senior Case Technician (SCT)	SCTs process the more complex cases. They prepare case summaries by preparing narrative outlines of information from all documents. The outlines reflect the claimant's prior medical history, the treatment undertaken, and any conflicting medical evidence.

Title	Position Description
Case Technician (CT)	The CT reviews and analyzes a variety of medical and legal documents, records, and evidence to ensure case files are received and developed in accordance with legal and regulatory authorities. The CT also schedules cases for hearing in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements and coordinates time and date of the hearing with claimants, representatives, expert witnesses, and hearing reporters.
Case Intake Technician (CIT)	The CIT serves in a specialized case assistant position, where a majority of the work involves master docket duties. At the master docket stage, the CIT develops and processes a case from its receipt in the hearing office to its completion. They identify the various requests for hearing documents and determine whether appropriate filing criteria are met. They assign cases to ALJs so claims can be processed effectively and timely. They review and analyze the case to ensure sufficiency of evidence and the case is ready to hear. In addition, the CIT contacts the claimant to secure current evidence of record and timely processes incoming and outgoing mail at the master docket level.
Contract Representative (CR)	The CR dispenses information to the public, in person, or by telephone; explains the legal provisions, regulations, and procedural requirements for obtaining benefits under the Social Security program as they relate to a specific case; and explains the application of regulatory provision and the bases for the Agency's determinations in individual cases.

Scope and Methodology

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed applicable Federal laws and regulations and pertinent Office of Personnel Management training policies.
- Reviewed the elements of the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review's (ODAR) three-phase training program and basic core curriculum for new group supervisors (GS) to complete in their first 1.5 years.
- Reviewed additional GS training at ODAR, other than the three-phase training.
- Reviewed the training for the hearing office staff, including the mandatory national training.
- Interviewed management and staff at ODAR's Office of the Chief Administrative Law Judge (OCALJ) and the Division of Training and Human Resources at Headquarters in Falls Church, Virginia.
- Interviewed the Hearing Office Director (HOD) in the Norfolk, Virginia, Hearing Office and reviewed the questionnaire with two hearing office GSs.
- Created an online questionnaire for GSs and HODs to obtain their views on the quality and timing of GS training and determine whether GSs were provided the necessary instruction to successfully perform their duties. We sent the questionnaire to the GSs and HODs employed at the Agency as of March 2012. We also sent three emails to all the GSs and HODs reminding them to complete the questionnaire.
- Analyzed and compiled the data from the online GS and HOD questionnaires.
- Shared our results with ODAR managers and obtained their comments.

The entity audited was the Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Disability Adjudication and Review. We conducted this audit from February through July 2012, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

Group Supervisor and Hearing Office Director Questionnaires

Group Supervisor Questionnaire

The Office of the Inspector General is conducting a review of the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review's (ODAR) training programs for Group Supervisors (GS). We would like your feedback in order to review whether the training prepares you with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform your job. The questionnaire is designed to guide you based on your different training experiences, which depends on when you were hired.

This survey should take approximately 10 -15 minutes. Your responses will be held in the strictest confidence. We thank you in advance for your thoughtful feedback.

Background:

1. Prior to taking your position as a GS where you were employed?

- ODAR.
- SSA component other than ODAR.
- Other (for example, another Federal Agency, private industry):

- a. Prior position title:
- b. Name of component/office, if appropriate (for example, SSA/ODAR/Dallas Hearing Office):

2. How long have you been in a GS position?

- Less than 1 year.
- 1 year to less than 5 years.
- 5 years to less than 10 years.
- 10 years to less than 15 years.
- More than 15 years.

Three-Phase Training Program:

3. Have you participated in any part of the three phases of ODAR's **Three-Phase Group Supervisor Training** program?

- Yes
- No – Please skip to Question 9.

4. Did you participate in any part of the **Phase One** training, which involves an in-depth orientation, instructional discussions with management, and on-line training?

- Yes – Please go to Questions **a** and **b**.
- No – Please skip to Question 5.

a. How satisfied were you with the content of the **Phase One** training?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

b. Are there any areas of the **Phase One** training that could be improved? If so, please discuss.

5. Have you participated in the **Phase Two training courses**, which consist of 19 subject areas involving reading, viewing videos on demand (VOD), and completing on-line training courses?

- Yes – Please go to Questions **a** and **b**.
- No – Please skip to Question 6.

a. How satisfied were you with the quality and content of the **Phase Two** training on-line?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

b. Are there any areas of the **Phase Two** on-line training that could be improved? If so, please discuss.

6. Have you participated in the **Phase Two Mentor Program**, which pairs a new GS with an experienced mentor to provide advice, coaching, and expertise during **Phase Two**?

- Yes – Please go to Questions **a** and **b**.
- No – Please skip to Question **7**.

a. How satisfied have you been with the quality of the **Mentor Program**?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

b. Are there any areas of the **Mentor Program** that could be improved? If so, please discuss.

7. Have you participated in **Phase-Three** training, which consists of one week of classroom training with instructional training material available on the GS training website?

- Yes – Please go to Questions **a** and **b**.
- No – Please skip to Question **8**.

a. How satisfied were you with the quality and content of classroom training and instructional material in the **Phase-Three** training?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

b. Are there any areas of the **Phase-Three** training coverage that could be improved? If so, please discuss.

8. Overall, was your experience with the **Three-Phase** training consistent with your expectations?

- Yes
- No

a. Did you have enough time to complete each of the three phases of training discussed above?

Yes

No – If no, please explain what portion required more/less time.

b. Was the **Three-Phase** training provided at a time when it had the most impact on your ability to perform your assigned duties?

Yes

No – If no, please explain when the training would have been more helpful.

Other Training:

9. Have you received training other than the **Three-Phase Group Supervisor Training** that has assisted with your development as a GS in ODAR in the last five years?

Yes – Please go to Question **a**.

No – Please skip to Question **10**.

a. Please name the types of training/courses that benefited you most.

10. Do you believe you have been provided with sufficient training to properly perform your duties as a GS?

Yes

No

Still undergoing the **Three-Phase training**.

11. If ODAR was to provide you with additional training, what areas would benefit you most (please select all that apply)?

Management Information (CPMS/DART data analysis)

Employee Relations

Labor Relations

Performance Management

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)

Systems Security

Electronic Business Process (eBP)

Transitional Leadership for Supervisors

Other – Please explain.

12. Who do you discuss your training needs with at the hearing office?

- Hearing Office Chief ALJ
- Hearing Office Director
- Other party (please name):
- No one.

Other Staff Training:

13. Senior Attorney Advisor

Overall, how satisfied are you with the training received by your senior attorney advisors within the past two years?

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied
- No training within 2 years
- Not Applicable – for example, this Hearing Office does have this position.

a. Please let us know if you have any comments about the training the senior attorney advisors receive in your hearing office.

14. Attorney Advisor/Paralegal Specialist

Overall, how satisfied are you with the training received by your attorney advisor/paralegal specialists within the past two years?

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied
- No training within 2 years
- Not Applicable – for example, this Hearing Office does have this position.

a. Please let us know if you have any comments about the training the attorney advisors/paralegal specialists receive in your hearing office.

15. Lead Case Technicians

Overall, how satisfied are you with the training received by your lead case technicians within the past two years?

- Very Satisfied.
- Satisfied.
- Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied.
- Dissatisfied.
- Very Dissatisfied.
- No training within 2 years.
- Not Applicable – for example, this Hearing Office does have this position.

a. Please let us know if you have any comments about the training the lead case technicians receive in your hearing office.

16. Senior Case Technicians

Overall, how satisfied are you with the training received by senior case technicians within the past two years?

- Very Satisfied.
- Satisfied.
- Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied.
- Dissatisfied.
- Very Dissatisfied.
- No training within 2 years.
- Not Applicable – for example, this Hearing Office does have this position.

a. Please let us know if you have any comments about the training the senior case technicians receive in your hearing office.

17. Case Technicians

Overall, how satisfied are you with the training received by case technicians within the past two years?

- Very Satisfied.
- Satisfied.
- Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied.
- Dissatisfied.
- Very Dissatisfied.
- No training within 2 years.
- Not Applicable – for example, this Hearing Office does have this position.

- a. Please let us know if you have any comments about the training the case technicians receive in your hearing office.

18. Contact Representative

Overall, how satisfied are you with the training received by the contact representative within the past two years?

- Very Satisfied.
- Satisfied.
- Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied.
- Dissatisfied.
- Very Dissatisfied.
- No training within 2 years.
- Not Applicable – for example, this Hearing Office does have this position.

- a. Please let us know if you have, any comments about the training the contact representatives receive in your hearing office receive.

19. Intake Representative

Overall, how satisfied are you with the training received by the intake representative within the past two years?

- Very Satisfied.
- Satisfied.
- Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied.
- Dissatisfied.
- Very Dissatisfied.
- No training within 2 years.
- Not Applicable – for example, this Hearing Office does have this position.

- a. Please let us know if you have any comments about the training the intake representatives receive in your hearing office receive.

20. Please, let us know if you have any other comments with regard to your training or the training of those you supervise.

We appreciate your response.

Hearing Office Director Questionnaire

The Office of the Inspector General is conducting a review of ODAR's training programs for Group Supervisors (GS). As the Hearing Office Director (HOD) and first line supervisor to the GSs, we would like your feedback in order to review whether the training prepares the GSs with the knowledge, skills and abilities to perform their job. This questionnaire covers general questions about your satisfaction with the training GSs receive, both prior to and after the establishment of the Three-Phase Group Supervisor Training program.

This survey should take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your responses will be held in the strictest confidence. We thank you in advance for your thoughtful feedback.

1. Did at least one of your GSs participate in the **Three-Phase Group Supervisor Training**, which consists of on-line modules, mentoring, and classroom attendance, designed to be helpful in the performance of the GS's assigned duties?

- Yes – Please go to Questions **a** and **b**.
 Not applicable – The GSs in the office arrived prior to the development of the **Three-Phase Group Supervisor Training**. Please go to Question **2**.
 No – Please discuss and then go to Question **2**.

- a. In your opinion, did the different methods of training available under the **Three-Phase Group Supervisor Training**, such as orientation, on-line modules, mentoring and classroom attendance, provide your GSs with the requisite skills to perform their assigned duties?

- Yes
 No – Please discuss.

- b. Was the **Three-Phase Group Supervisor Training** provided at a time when it had the most impact on the GS's ability to perform their assigned duties?

- Yes
 No – Please discuss.

2. Has your office, the region, or Headquarters provided **other** training opportunities to the GSs in your office in the past two years?

- Yes – Please go to Question **a**.
 No – Please discuss and then go to Question **3**.

- a. Please highlight some of the courses you believe have been the most useful to your GSs.

How satisfied have you been with the training that the GSs receive in your hearing office, both the **Three-Phase Group Supervisor Training** and other training?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied – Please go to Question a.
- Very dissatisfied – Please go to Question a.
- Not applicable – The GSs in the office have received no training.

a. If you are in any way dissatisfied with either the in-house or the national training, please explain your reasons.

3. Do you periodically meet with your GSs to discuss their training needs and development?

- Yes
- No – Please discuss.

4. Would you recommend additional training in any of the areas listed below for the GSs in your office?

- Management Information (CPMS/DART data analysis)
- Employee Relations
- Labor Relations
- Performance Management
- Employment Equal Opportunity (EEO)
- Systems Security
- Electronic Business Process (eBP)
- Transitional Leadership for Supervisors
- Other – Please explain.

5. Please let us know if you have any other comments with regard to GS training.

We appreciate your response.

Dates and Number of Group Supervisors Attending Phase Three Classroom Training March 2009 to March 2012

The Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR) designed the *Phase Three* classroom training for all newly appointed Group Supervisors (GS). ODAR holds GS training in Falls Church, Virginia, at its National Training Center. The classroom training provides new GSs with basic hearing office management skills and necessary management information as well as critical information resources. It covers a range of information from the structure of the Social Security Administration and ODAR-specific process. Between March 2009 and March 2012, 300 GSs attended GS *Phase Three* classroom training in Falls Church, Virginia.

**Table F-1: Dates and Number of GSs Trained in
Phase Three Courses**

Date of Training	Number of Group Supervisors Trained
March 9 to 13, 2009	30
May 4 to 8, 2009	31
January 25 to 29, 2010	19
May 24 to 28, 2010	30
August 23 to 27, 2010	31
April 4 to 8, 2011	27
June 5 to 11, 2011	29
August 29 to September 2, 2011	24
September 26 to 30, 2011	18
November 15 to 19, 2011	28
March 12 to 16, 2012	33
Total	300

Phase Three Training Agenda for Newly Hired Group Supervisors

Day 1		
Time	Topic	Presenter
8:00 - 9:00	Welcome, Class Overview and Introductions	Terry Calcutt Cadre
9:00 - 10:00	Role of the Group Supervisor	Carrie Roland Erin Weaver
10:00 - 12:00	Systems Security	Talinthia Bolding Robert O'Connor
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch	
1:00 – 4:00	Performance Management [Module 4]	Cherl Bertram Andrew Coffron
4:00 - 4:30	Chief ALJ Message	Judge Bice
4:30 – 5:00	Balancing Workloads/Workload Strategic Planning – A more balanced approach to case processing/Meeting weekly goals	Cadre
[5:00]	Dismiss/Feedback	
Day 2		
8:00 - 12:00	Workload Management [module 9] - Assignment of Work [Module 13] - Managing in an Electronic World - Trend Analysis	Marianne Blair Robert O'Connor Carrie Roland Erin Weaver
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch	
1:00 - 5:00	MI Exercises	Marianne Blair Robert O'Connor Carrie Roland Erin Weaver
[5:00]	Dismiss/Feedback	
Day 3		
8:00 - 11:30	Employee Relations [Module 7]	Deborah Giesen Gina Pesaresi
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch	
12:30 – 1:30	Employee Relations [con't]	Deborah Giesen Gina Pesaresi
1:30 - 3:30	Labor Relations [Module 8]	Deborah Giesen Gina Pesaresi

Day 3 (Continued)		
Time	Topic	Presenter
3:30 – 5:00	Effective Leadership in Public Service	Judge Cristaudo
[5:00]	Dismiss/Feedback	
Day 4		
8:00 - 8:30	Wellness Presentation	Judge Cristaudo
8:30 – 10:00	Avoiding the Most Common EEO Complaints [Module 5]	Clary Simmonds
10:00 – 11:00	EEO Complaints: OGC Perspective	Clary Simmonds
11:00 - 12:30	Management Philosophy	Glenn Sklar
12:30 - 1:30	Lunch	
1:30 - 2:00	Practical application of MI (quiz)	MI Team
2:00- 5:00	Inbox Exercise	Cadre
[5:00]	Dismiss/Feedback	
Day 5		
8:00 - 8:30	Soft Skills Discussion	Cadre
8:30 – 9:30	Inbox Debriefing	Terry Calcutt Cadre
9:30 – 10:00	eBP Refresher	Cadre
10:00 – 11:00	Cadre Panel Q&A	Cadre
11:00 - 12:00	Wrap Up and Feedback	Terry Calcutt
[12:00]	Dismiss	

Group Supervisor Satisfaction with Staff Training

We asked the group supervisors (GS) to evaluate the training the hearing office staff received. Of the GS respondents, about 70 percent was at least satisfied or did not express dissatisfaction with the training the staff received (see Table H-1). However, 11 percent of the GSs was dissatisfied with lead case technician (LCT) training. In addition, over 25 percent of the GS responded that the LCTs, case intake technicians (CIT), and contact representatives had not received any training over the last 2 years.¹

**Table H-1: GS Satisfaction with Staff Training
(269 respondents)¹**

Responses	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied/Unsatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	No Training Last 2 Years	Not Applicable
Senior Attorney Adjudicator	10	41	22	6	2	14	6
Decision Writer ²	12	55	19	5	1	7	2
Lead Case Technician	6	31	21	10	1	26	4
Senior Case Technician	12	53	19	6	2	6	2
Case Technicians	4	30	20	6	4	19	16
Case Intake Technician	7	26	23	3	2	28	12
Contact Representative	5	28	17	8	1	28	13
Average	8	38	20	6	2	18	8

Note 1: All figures are expressed as percentages, and numbers do not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Note 2: Decision writer includes Attorney Advisor and Paralegal Analyst.

¹ ODAR reported that they are instituting a mentor program for Senior Case Technicians, modeled on the ALJ mentor program. ODAR envisions these materials will serve as reference and supplemental training material for LCTs.

We received comments from GSs regarding training for staff. The most responses were about the LCT position. Below are some of the GS comments about training their staff had or needed.

Senior Attorney Advisors (SAA)

We received 70 comments.

- Not aware of any formal training made to SAAs.
- Each office uses SAAs per local needs - there are no consistent expectations for the position.
- I would like to see them have more training. They are expected to mentor other people, so training would be helpful.

Decision Writers

We received 72 comments.

- The new writers are getting training. However, refresher training for senior writers is limited.
- The training should be held either right as the writers are starting on the job, or training, if held later, should be for more complicated disability cases.
- The training should be geared towards making them senior attorneys.

Lead Case Technicians (LCT)

We received 83 comments. Of these, 31 comments related to the need for more LCT training, such as:

- They should get national level training for the same reason Senior Attorney Advisors and Group Supervisors receive this training.
- I think leads should be allowed to receive intro training writing. I am disappointed that my lead has no option to advance in ODAR currently.

Senior Case Technicians (SCT)

We received 77 comments.

- Two SCTs both came back very knowledgeable from initial training.
- SCT's need more training on handling paper files, non-disability cases, and some other unusual cases. The SCTs who have come on board in the last four years haven't had adequate, consistent training.

- I believe it would be much more cost effective and worthwhile to have agency specific ongoing SCT refresher training every couple of years, so that SCTs can remain connected with their job duties and not get stuck in a rut where they are no longer growing in their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Case Technicians (CT)

We received 72 comments.

- It would be helpful to have more training for CTs. We hired a lot of veterans from the street without any background in Social Security.
- Other employees train them in the office. They need to have a class similar to the SCT class.
- An orientation and training package, which pertains to tasks performed by CTs, would be beneficial rather than having the majority of their orientation be hands on training.

Contact Representative (CR)

We received 56 comments.

- Our CRs and receptionist could use more training in all relative areas, customer service, telephone techniques, effective communication skills, etc. We do the best we can with the *Government Employees Training Act (GETA)*² funding, but that is normally only available to us once a year.
- The contact representatives would benefit from training that emphasized communication and interpersonal skills.
- More intensive customer service training should be given to all contact representatives.

Case Intake Technician

We received 50 comments.

- Refresher training would be helpful for Master Docket especially since there have been so many updates with the Remand projects and other areas of the intake process.
- Training for this position is not adequate. This is another complicated and crucial position. It takes quite a while to learn it.

² Pub. L. No. 89-507, 72 Stat. as amended. The *Government Employees Training Act (GETA)* was signed into law in 1958 giving Federal agencies general authority for employee training. See also, 5 U.S.C. §§ 4101-4121.

- They have received no training. This position should have an intensive training class established considering they are solely responsible for bringing cases into the office. If this is done incorrectly, it causes problems for the entire office.

National Training Requirements for Hearing Office Staff

In Table I-1 we provide the hearing office training requirements established by the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review’s (ODAR) Division of Training and Human Resources.

Table I-1: National Training Requirements for Hearing Office Staff

Title	Mandatory Training?	National Training Requirements
Senior Attorney Advisors (SAA)	No	There is no national training program for SAA’s. However, many SAA’s have received 1 week of training in a national training program entitled Virtual Screening Unit (VSU) where they receive instruction on how to screen cases and adjudicate fully favorable on-the-record (OTR) decisions. ¹ SAA’s who are not actively adjudicating OTR cases, or did not volunteer to serve on a VSU detail, can also take the VSU training. The curriculum also involves the analysis and development of the legal issues in the disability claim; review of case law, circuit and district court cases; and other disability case screening procedures.
Attorney Adviser (AA) and Paralegal Analyst (PA)	Yes	All AAs and PAs complete the national decision writer three-phase training program. In <i>Phase One</i> , they view video-on-demand (VOD) and other online technical instructions, and witness a formal ALJ hearing. In <i>Phase Two</i> , they attend classroom training for two weeks. In <i>Phase Three</i> , they view additional VODs including analyzing credibility factors to determine disability and evaluating musculoskeletal impairments. ODAR reported it usually takes 6 weeks to complete the formal training and an additional 3 to 4 months of on-the-job and mentoring for the AAs and PAs to produce quality draft decisions.
Lead Case Technician (LCT)	No	ODAR does not have a national training program for LCTs. Since most LCTs are promoted from the Senior Case Technician (SCT) or Legal Assistant (LA) position, they have attended the LA three-phase training program earlier in their career. They also have additional work experience on-the-job that allows them to effectively lead the SCT and other Case Technicians on their team. ²

Title	Mandatory Training?	National Training Requirements
Senior Case Technician (SCT)	Yes	All new SCTs are required to complete a national LA three-phase training program (currently, just two phases as phase three is being developed). ² In <i>Phase One</i> , SCTs watch VODs about the disability evaluation process and disability claims work-up using the electronic folder. In <i>Phase Two</i> , they attend 1 week of classroom training covering such topics as sequential evaluation, dismissals, and critical and dire need cases. They are also involved in hands on exercises to use electronic folder tools. After the formal training, they receive additional on-the-job training and mentoring.
Case Technician (CT)	Yes	The CT position receives formal national training in the hearing office. A training course agenda is available online with structured VOD assignments and other online training material. This training outlines 3 full days of instruction. The training material advises hearing offices to use the CT agenda to provide a national perspective to the training of CTs and suggests that each lesson be discussed with a manager or mentor after the trainee completes it.
Case Intake Technician (CIT)	Yes	The CIT receives national training, using the same material as the LA three-phase training program (see above). In <i>Phase One</i> , they review the same VODs as the SCTs and LAs. However, in <i>Phase Two</i> , they undergo 1 week of classroom instruction geared toward their position with more emphasis on screening and docketing cases. In addition, all new CITs undergo at least 1 month of on-the-job training and mentoring.
Contract Representative (CR)	No	The CR does not receive any national training. However, they normally receive at least 1 month of on-the-job training and mentoring.

Note 1: On August 9, 2007, the Social Security Administration issued an interim final rule permitting SAAs to issue fully favorable OTR decisions thereby conserving ALJ resources for the more complex cases that require a hearing.

Note 2: ODAR reported that they are instituting a mentor program for SCTs, modeled on the ALJ mentor program. They envision these materials will serve as reference and supplemental training material for LCTs.

Agency Comments



SOCIAL SECURITY

MEMORANDUM

Date: November 8, 2012

Refer To: S1J-3

To: Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr.
Inspector General

From: Dean S. Landis /s/
Deputy Chief of Staff

Subject: Office of the Inspector General Draft Report, "Training and Development of Hearing Office Group Supervisors" (A-12-12-11240)—INFORMATION

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report. Please see our attached comments.

Please let me know if we can be of further assistance. You may direct staff inquiries to Amy Thompson at (410) 966-0569.

Attachment

**COMMENTS ON THE OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL DRAFT REPORT,
“TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF HEARING OFFICE GROUP SUPERVISORS”
(A-12-12-11240)**

Recommendation 1

Develop and offer courses for group supervisors (GS) interested in additional training in those areas identified by questionnaire respondents, such as labor and employee relations.

Response

We agree.

Recommendation 2

As part of the orientation for new GSs, require both the Hearing Office Director (HOD) and new GS to certify that they have been informed about the three-phase GS training program and the proper sequence of each phase.

Response

We agree.

Recommendation 3

Remind HODs of the importance of setting aside sufficient time for new GSs to participate in the three-phase GS training program.

Response

We agree.

OIG Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

OIG Contacts

Walter Bayer, Director, Chicago Audit Division

Nicholas Milanek, Audit Manager, Falls Church Audit Office

Acknowledgments

In addition to those named above:

Mary Ann Braycich, Auditor-in-Charge

Rajula Chandran, Senior IT Specialist

Brennan Kraje, Statistician

For additional copies of this report, please visit our Website at <http://oig.ssa.gov/> or contact the Office of the Inspector General's Public Affairs Staff at (410) 965-4518. Refer to Common Identification Number A-12-12-11240.

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