

Administrative Leave Used for Extended Absences

A-06-16-50026



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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objectives

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) took corrective action on recommendations in our July 2010 report, *Administrative Leave Use* (A-06-09-29133), and whether grants of extended periods of administrative leave from January 2009 through July 2015 were properly authorized and appropriate.

Background

Administrative leave is an authorized absence from duty without loss of pay or charge to leave. Each Federal agency has the authority and discretion to excuse employees from duty without loss of pay or charge to leave in appropriate circumstances.

When employee wrongdoing is being investigated and agency officials determine it is in the Government's best interest to have the employee off the job, the employee may be relieved from duty and continued in a pay status without charge to leave for the time necessary to process a suspension.

SSA's Office of Human Resources provided data that identified all SSA employees granted administrative leave from January 2009 through July 2015.

Findings

In October 2010, SSA responded to our July 2010 report by amending its leave delegations of authority to require senior executive approval of extended administrative leave. During the period reviewed, SSA granted 1,000 or more hours of administrative leave to 46 employees. This is a small number relative to the nearly 86,000 employees who received administrative leave during that period. Grants of extended leave in these cases were within management officials' discretion and authority; and Agency officials retained information regarding the circumstances surrounding the leave grants.

However, contrary to SSA policy, the Office of Operations did not document Regional Commissioner approval in eight instances where SSA granted employees 1,000 or more hours of administrative leave.

Several factors can extend the length of time an employee remains on administrative leave, such as the legal procedures the Agency must complete before it suspends or removes an employee, or when officials exercise discretion and allow employees to remain on administrative leave while SSA investigates their misconduct.

Senior executive review and approval of extended administrative leave helps ensure the absences are as brief as possible and are determined to be in the Government's best interest.

Recommendation

We recommend that SSA remind components that administrative leave grants in excess of 40 consecutive hours must be approved by Deputy Commissioners, the Chief Actuary, the Chief Information Officer, the Deputy Chief of Staff, the General Counsel, or Regional Commissioners; that this authority cannot be re-delegated; and that leave approval must be documented.

SSA agreed with our recommendation.