

Progress in Developing the Disability Case Processing System as of March 2017

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To evaluate the Social Security Administration's (SSA) progress in developing and implementing its Disability Case Processing System (DCPS) as of March 2017.

Background

SSA partners with State disability determination services (DDS) to evaluate disability claims and make disability determinations. The DDSs use various customized systems to process disability cases.

DCPS is an SSA initiative to develop a common system for all DDSs that the Agency expects will simplify system support and maintenance, improve the speed and quality of the disability process, and reduce the overall growth rate of infrastructure costs.

SSA is using an Agile approach to developing DCPS. The Agency continually identifies functional requirements that are expressed as user stories. Each user story is assigned a level of effort, called a story point. Velocity refers to the number of story points completed during an iteration, or "sprint." User stories that need to be addressed are considered the backlog.

Results

While SSA continued making progress in completing user stories, the total number of story points also continued growing. In June 2016, SSA identified 11,890 story points needed to deliver functionality to support initial claims and reconsiderations. As of March 14, 2017, that number had increased to 22,082 points, of which SSA had completed 12,810 (58 percent).

In May 2016, SSA estimated the first release of DCPS would be available in December 2016—at a cost of less than \$38 million—and would support initial disability claims and reconsiderations. However, the Agency subsequently scaled down the functionality it would include in the first release.

The December 2016 "Early Adopter Release" enabled three DDSs to process certain types of cases. As of March 14, 2017, the DDSs had completed 231 disability determinations using DCPS.

Conclusion

At the time of our review, SSA was planning to deliver the functionality needed to process all initial disability claims and reconsiderations (as well as initial continuing disability reviews) by January 2018 at an estimated cumulative cost of \$75 million.

SSA's ability to meet its delivery goals will depend on the backlog's future growth and the velocity with which the Agency completes the user stories.

SSA should continue reviewing its delivery targets to ensure they are feasible, taking into consideration the resources committed to the project and the Agency's development experience to-date. In addition, SSA identified—and is taking steps to address—some security concerns with the system.