

OIG Office of the Inspector General
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

December 11, 2012

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Mikulski:

In a January 18, 2012 letter, you asked that we evaluate the Social Security Administration's (SSA) compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) orders and the accuracy of the Agency's reporting. This request was in response to an ongoing equal employment opportunity complaint alleging SSA officials submitted inaccurate documentation as proof of compliance with the EEOC. On February 15, 2012, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit issued a decision in the case of *Barbara M. Murchison v. Michael J. Astrue* (No. 10-1200, 4th Cir. 2012) holding that SSA misled the EEOC. Because of this decision, we shifted the focus of our review from the individual complaint on which the Court had ruled to a broader review of SSA's compliance with EEOC orders.

The enclosed report presents the results of our review. To ensure SSA is aware of the information provided to your office, we are forwarding a copy of this report to the Agency.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please call me or have your staff contact Misha Kelly, Special Agent-in-Charge of Congressional Affairs at (202) 358-6319.

Sincerely,



Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr.
Inspector General

Enclosure

cc:
Michael J. Astrue

CONGRESSIONAL RESPONSE REPORT

The Social Security Administration's Compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Decisions

A-13-12-22143



December 2012

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

The Inspector General Act created independent audit and investigative units, called the Office of Inspector General (OIG). The mission of the OIG, as spelled out in the Act, is to:

- 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.**

To ensure objectivity, the IG Act empowers the IG with:

- Independence to determine what reviews to perform.**
- Access to all information necessary for the reviews.**
- Authority to publish findings and recommendations based on the reviews.**

Vision

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.

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) complied with adverse decisions¹ from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

BACKGROUND

According to Federal regulations,² each Federal agency must maintain a program to promote equal opportunity as well as identify and eliminate discriminatory practices and policies.³ As part of its program, the agency must provide for the receipt and processing of discrimination complaints.⁴ Further, the agency must ensure it fairly and thoroughly investigates individual complaints and takes timely action.⁵ When the agency or EEOC concludes an individual has been discriminated against, the agency shall provide full relief.⁶

The EEOC is responsible for enforcing Federal laws⁷ that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or employee because of their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or genetic information. The laws apply to all work situations including hiring, firing, promotions, harassment, training, wages, and benefits.

Under the Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources, the Office of Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity (OCREO) provided overall management of the Agency's equal opportunity and diversity programs, including directing the Agency's discrimination complaints program. Additionally, under the Office of the Deputy

¹ For the purpose of this review, the term "adverse decision" refers to decisions in which the EEOC ordered SSA to perform certain actions, such as paying compensatory damages, conducting training, etc.

² 29 C.F.R. § 1614.

³ 29 C.F.R. § 1614.102(a).

⁴ 29 C.F.R. § 1614.102(c)(4).

⁵ 29 C.F.R. § 1614.102(c)(5).

⁶ 29 C.F.R. § 1614.501(a).

⁷ Relevant federal laws include Title VII of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, the *Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967*, the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, *Equal Pay Act of 1963*, Title I of the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*, the *Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008*, the *Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008*, and the *Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978*. (See Appendix B for more details.)

Commissioner for Operations, each Regional Commissioner had a Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity (CREO) staff that managed the EEO program for their region. See Appendix C for a flowchart of the complaint process.

In a January 18, 2012 letter, Senator Barbara Mikulski requested our assistance in evaluating SSA's compliance with EEOC orders and the accuracy of the Agency's reporting. This request was in response to an ongoing EEO complaint alleging SSA officials submitted inaccurate documentation as proof of compliance with the EEOC. While we were gathering information to address the Senator's request, on February 15, 2012, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit issued a decision holding that SSA misled the EEOC in this case.⁸ Therefore, we shifted our focus from the individual complaint on which the Court had ruled to a broader review of SSA's compliance with EEOC orders.

To conduct our assessment, we independently researched the EEOC's Website to identify adverse decisions made against SSA from January 1, 2010 to April 30, 2012. We identified 41 adverse decisions made during that timeframe. According to the EEOC's Website of Federal sector appellate decisions,⁹ some decisions are not available online. Therefore, we coordinated with OCREO to identify additional decisions. Upon further review of OCREO's compliance logs and the EEOC's list of Federal appeals, we identified an additional 19 adverse decisions, totaling 60 decisions. Based on information we received during our review, we excluded five decisions because the complaint had been withdrawn or the Agency and the complainant had reached a settlement agreement. See Appendix D for our scope and methodology and Appendix E for details regarding these decisions.

⁸ *Barbara M. Murchison v. Michael J. Astrue*, No. 10-1200, 4th Cir. 2012, p. 12.

⁹ <http://www.eeoc.gov/federal/decisions.cfm>.

Results of Review

We reviewed 55 adverse decisions involving 177 actionable items.¹⁰ Of the 177 items, 45 were still pending¹¹ at the time of our review. For the remaining 132 actionable items, we determined SSA had complied with the EEOC orders for 108. However, for 26 of the 108 items, the Agency did not complete the actions timely. Additionally, we found SSA did not comply with the EEOC orders for 13 items.¹² OCREO acknowledged these items were not completed or not completed timely in accordance with the EEOC's orders. Also, OCREO offered no assertions or evidence that SSA was disputing, or had disputed, its compliance obligations for any of the 39 above-noted EEOC orders. Finally, we could not determine compliance for 11 items because of a lack of documentation.¹³

Compliance Assessment

Most of the EEOC decisions we reviewed involved more than one actionable item. For example, the decision may have ordered the Agency to pay compensatory damages, restore leave, pay attorney fees, conduct training, and consider disciplinary actions. The 55 EEOC decisions in our review contained 177 actionable items.

Compliance with EEOC decisions is mandatory and is subject to judicial enforcement.¹⁴ Complainants who believe an Agency has not complied with an EEOC order may file a *Petition for Enforcement* with the EEOC.¹⁵ The Agency is required to submit documentation to the EEOC identifying the corrective actions it has taken to comply with a decision. To assess SSA's compliance with EEOC decisions, we obtained and reviewed various documents provided by OCREO. In addition, we interviewed 15 (25 percent) of the complainants¹⁶ to obtain their opinion on whether they received full restitution from SSA, in accordance with the EEOC's decisions.

¹⁰ The term actionable item refers to each action the EEOC ordered the Agency to complete.

¹¹ Pending refers to those items in which the action is not yet due, the case is in litigation, or a dispute is ongoing. EEOC's compliance monitoring and enforcement activity ceases until a decision is made on pending actions such as an appeal, reconsideration, or hearing. The EEOC will issue a cease activity letter to SSA once all actionable items are completed for a case. We excluded pending actions from our analysis.

¹² These 13 items involve 4 decisions.

¹³ These 11 items involve 8 decisions.

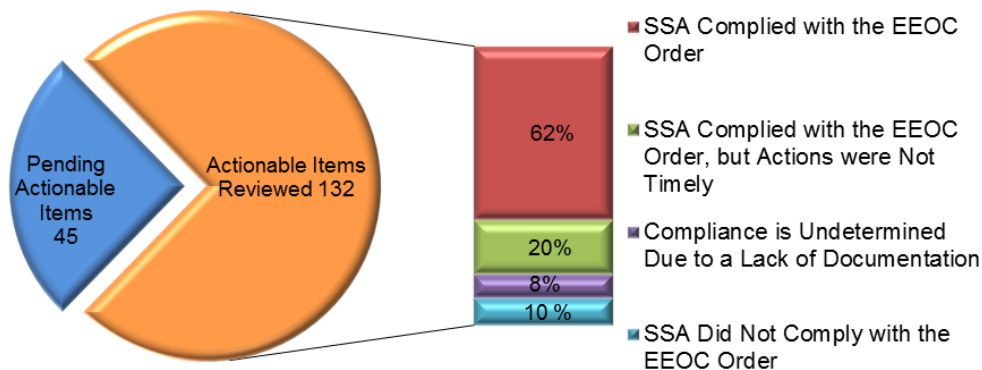
¹⁴ 29 C.F.R. § 1614.502.

¹⁵ 29 C.F.R. § 1614.503.

¹⁶ We did not interview the remaining complainants because (a) after two attempts, we could not reach the complainant, (b) the case is still pending, (c) a settlement agreement was reached, (d) the complaint was withdrawn, or (e) the status of the case had not yet been determined.

Through our analysis, we determined 45 of the 177 actionable items were still pending as of August 2012. For the remaining 132 items, we concluded SSA complied with 108 (82 percent) of the EEOC orders. However, 26 of those items were not completed timely. Additionally, we found SSA did not comply with the EEOC orders for 13 (10 percent) of the items. Further, we could not determine compliance for 11 (8 percent) of the actionable items because of the lack of documentation (see Chart 1).

Chart 1: Compliance Summary



Compliance Actions Taken

Of the 132 actionable items, we determined SSA complied with 108 (82 percent) of the EEOC orders. However, 26 (20 percent) items were not completed timely—ranging from approximately 1 week to 8 months late. With each decision, the EEOC typically identified a timeframe for when the Agency should complete the action (that is, 30 or 60 days after the decision becomes final). For these 26 items, we determined the Agency had taken the specific action ordered by the EEOC, but SSA did not complete the action within the designated timeframe.¹⁷

For example, a March 2, 2011 EEOC decision ordered the Agency to pay the complainant \$2,000 in compensatory damages within 30 days of the date the decision became final. OCREO provided a screen print from the Treasury Check Information System that showed a \$2,000 payment issued to the complainant. Also, we obtained a copy of the check endorsed by the complainant. However, the check was issued on May 6, 2011, about 1 month late.

¹⁷ We did not receive any evidence that indicated the delays occurred as a result of external Agency processing.

An August 12, 2011 decision ordered the Agency to pay the complainant \$12,000 in compensatory damages within 60 days of the date the decision became final. OCREO provided a screen print from the Treasury Check Information System showing a \$12,000 payment issued to the complainant. However, the payment was issued on February 15, 2012, about 4 months late.

In August 2012, we provided OCREO with a list of these items for review and comment. OCREO acknowledged these 26 items were not completed timely and stated the Agency's ability to comply with the orders in a timely manner was affected by

- the lack of staff designated to manage compliance functions;
- insufficient standard operating procedures for compliance;
- a lack of timely and adequate communication and confirmation from EEOC of completed compliance actions that OCREO sent to EEOC; and
- a lack of accurate EEOC tracking of timely compliance actions reported by OCREO.

OCREO stated it had implemented various steps, even before our review began, to ensure compliance actions EEOC ordered were handled timely. Specifically, OCREO reported it designated a compliance officer and backup. Additionally, OCREO developed standard operating procedures for compliance, and senior management provided oversight of compliance actions. Further, OCREO increased communication with EEOC, regional CREO managers, and the Office of the General Counsel on compliance actions.

Noncompliance

For 13 (10 percent) of the 132 actionable items, we determined SSA did not comply with the EEOC orders. The orders included restoring leave, conducting training, paying compensatory damages, posting a notice, and granting an award. All 13 actionable items occurred in 1 region; therefore, the Agency does not believe this is indicative of a widespread compliance problem. In August 2012, OCREO reported the regional staff developed a compliance plan for these items. OCREO provided information concerning the actions taken in August 2012 and the actions the region planned to take to comply with the EEOC orders.

For example, a June 16, 2011 decision ordered the Agency to pay the complainant \$1,500 in compensatory damages and pay the monetary benefit associated with an *Exemplary Contribution or Service Award* granted to the complainant. As of August 2012—over 1 year later—the complainant still had not received the money. On August 28, 2012, CREO regional staff reported the compliance actions will be completed within 60 days.

Compliance Undetermined

Because of the lack of documentation, we were unable to confirm compliance for 11 (8 percent) of the actionable items. This included such actions as paying compensatory damages, conducting training, and considering disciplinary actions against the responsible management official. During our review, OCREO provided supporting documentation, but the evidence was incomplete. Therefore, we could not fully confirm compliance. For example, one of the decisions ordered the Agency to pay the complainant \$25,000 in non-pecuniary compensatory damages plus interest from the delay of payment. Based on the documentation provided, we were unable to confirm the complainant was paid approximately \$520 in interest.

OCREO's Compliance Process

For 50 (38 percent) actionable items, SSA did not comply with the order, complete the corrective actions timely, or provide sufficient documentation to confirm compliance. Based on our interviews with OCREO staff and review of documentation, these issues, in part, may have been due to the limited controls OCREO previously had for its compliance process.

In addition to the previously noted deficiencies, we learned OCREO did not have a complete, central repository for compliance matters. Compliance documentation existed in both paper and electronic formats, as not all complaint information was stored in the iComplaints Tracking and Data System (iComplaints).¹⁸ As a result, iComplaints did not always reflect the case's status. Knowing the status of the EEOC cases and having access to the related compliance documentation is important to managing the workload. As illustrated during our review, the compliance officer had to coordinate with various OCREO staff and/or other SSA components to identify the status of the cases and locate compliance documentation for specific actions.

In Fiscal Year 2012, SSA appointed new staff in OCREO. The Acting Associate Commissioner for OCREO acknowledged he was not comfortable with the level of compliance when starting this new position in January 2012.¹⁹ At that time, he did not believe there was sufficient OCREO accountability for EEOC compliance orders. Under new executive leadership in OCREO, a Senior Advisor was appointed to serve as compliance officer. Since taking the position in February 2012,²⁰ the compliance officer has implemented new processes for the Agency's compliance with EEOC decisions. According to the Agency, the new processes include

¹⁸ OCREO uses iComplaints to store information associated with the complaint process. OCREO reported it automated the EEO complaints process to improve timeliness as well as reduce personnel-hours and operating costs.

¹⁹ The Acting Associate Commissioner for OCREO has become the permanent Associate Commissioner.

²⁰ In August 2012, OCREO designated a new EEO compliance officer who reports to OCREO's Director of Business Operations.

- developing a standard operating procedure for compliance activities;
- updating the Associate Commissioner biweekly on compliance matters;
- issuing biweekly compliance status reports;
- creating spreadsheets of all pending cases detailing the status of each case, pending actions, and follow-up requirements;
- developing template email messages to inform regional CREO offices of compliance obligations in new EEO decisions; and
- creating an electronic mailbox as a central repository for all compliance-related correspondence.

Additionally, the Agency stated the compliance officer took steps to improve communication between the Agency's regional offices and the EEOC's compliance staff. Further, at the Agency's request, the EEOC regularly coordinates activities with OCREO to ensure the Agency completes all pending compliance cases timely and accurately.

The Agency also reported it had instituted additional changes since August 2012 as part of an ongoing effort to enhance and refine its compliance process. The changes include

- working closely with the regional CREO offices to develop compliance plans for new EEOC decisions;
- updating iComplaints to better track compliance requirements and serve as an improved repository for compliance documents; and
- maintaining regular contact with the EEOC compliance officer, with proof of compliance sent to EEOC as soon as OCREO receives appropriate documentation.

With full implementation of these recent changes, the Agency reported it is able to generate reports of all pending compliance requirements. Further, the Agency plans to use its SharePoint site for compliance improvements, by providing a location for all CREO regional offices to view pending compliance requirements. The use of SharePoint will also allow OCREO to send periodic reminder messages regarding upcoming compliance items.

Conclusion

Based on our analysis, we believe SSA complied with the EEOC orders for 108 of the 132 actionable items. However, 26 of those items were not completed timely. Additionally, we found SSA did not comply with the EEOC orders for 13 of the items. Further, we could not determine compliance for 11 actionable items due to a lack of documentation.

Appendices

APPENDIX A – Acronyms

APPENDIX B – Equal Employment Laws

APPENDIX C – Complaint Process

APPENDIX D – Scope and Methodology

APPENDIX E – Adverse Decisions

Acronyms

CREO	Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
iComplaints	iComplaints Tracking and Data System
OCREO	Office of Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
Pub. L. No.	Public Law Number
SSA	Social Security Administration

Equal Employment Laws

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for enforcing certain Federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or in retaliation for complaining about discrimination, filing a discrimination charge, or participating in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. The laws apply to employment and workplace situations including hiring, firing, promotions, harassment, training, wages, and benefits.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964¹

This law makes it illegal to discriminate against someone based on race, color, religion, national origin, or sex. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complains about discrimination, files a charge of discrimination, or participates in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. The law requires that employers reasonably accommodate applicants' and employees' sincerely held religious practices, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business.

Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978²

This law amended Title VII of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* to make it illegal to discriminate against a woman because of pregnancy, childbirth, or a medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complains about discrimination, files a charge of discrimination, or participates in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit.

Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967³

This law protects people who are age 40 or older from discrimination because of age. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complains about discrimination, files a charge of discrimination, or participates in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit.

¹ Pub. L. No. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241.

² Pub. L. No. 95-555, 92 Stat. 2076.

³ Pub. L. No. 90-202, 81 Stat. 602.

Sections 501 and 505 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973⁴

This law makes it illegal to discriminate against a qualified person with a disability while working in the Government. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complains about discrimination, files a charge of discrimination, or participates in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. The law also requires that employers reasonably accommodate the known physical or mental limitations of an otherwise qualified individual with a disability who is an applicant or employee, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business.

Equal Pay Act of 1963⁵

This law makes it illegal to pay different wages to men and women if they perform equal work in the same workplace. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complains about discrimination, files a charge of discrimination, or participates in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit.

Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008⁶

This law makes it illegal to discriminate against employees or applicants because of genetic information. Genetic information includes information about an individual's genetic tests and the genetic tests of an individual's family members as well as information about any disease, disorder, or condition of an individual's family members (that is, an individual's family medical history). The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complains about discrimination, files a charge of discrimination, or participates in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit.

Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990⁷

This law makes it illegal to discriminate against a qualified person with a disability in the private sector and in State and local governments. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. The law also requires that employers reasonably accommodate the known physical or mental limitations of an otherwise qualified individual with a disability who is an applicant or employee, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business.

⁴ Pub. L. No. 93-112, 87 Stat. 355.

⁵ Pub. L. No. 88-38, 77 Stat. 56.

⁶ Pub. L. No. 110-233, 122 Stat. 881.

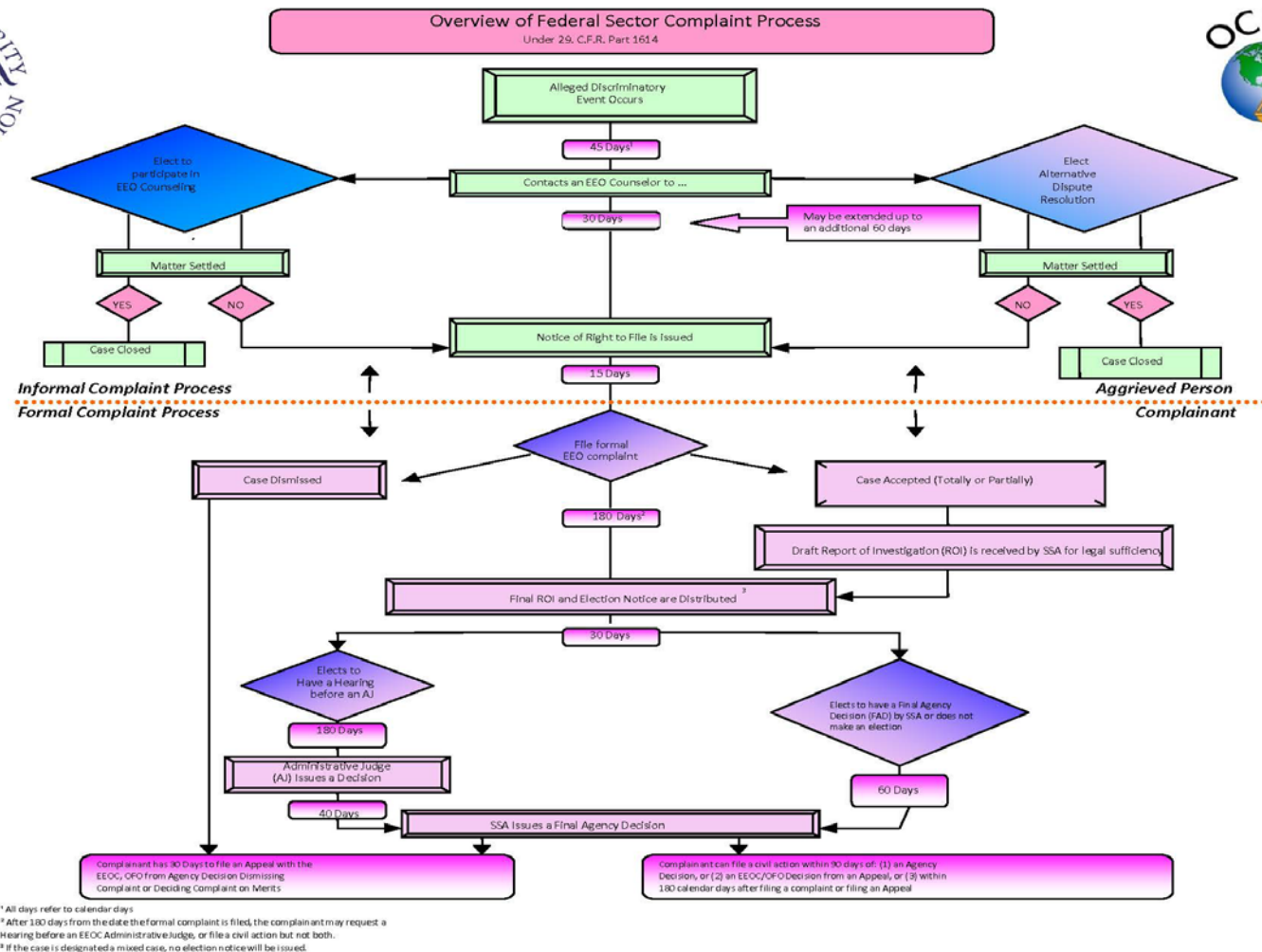
⁷ Pub. L. No. 101-336, 104 Stat. 327.

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Amendments Act of 2008⁸

This law requires that employers, including the federal Government, construe the definition of “disability” in favor of broad coverage, making it easier for an individual to establish that he/she has a disability within the meaning of the *Americans with Disabilities Act*. Congress stated specifically that the *Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008* also apply to section 501 of the *Rehabilitation Act* (which covers Federal employment).

⁸ Pub. L. No. 110-325, 122 Stat. 3553.

Complaint Process



Scope and Methodology

To achieve our objectives, we:

- Obtained and reviewed applicable Federal laws and regulations, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) resources, and SSA guidance for handling discrimination complaints.
- Interviewed personnel from the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Office of Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity (OCREO) regarding the Agency's complaint and compliance process.
- Researched EEOC's Website¹ and identified 41 adverse decisions against SSA from January 1, 2010 through April 30, 2012. Through further analysis of OCREO's compliance logs and EEOC's lists of Federal appeals pending, we identified an additional 19 decisions,² for a total of 60 adverse decisions. We excluded five decisions because the complaint had been withdrawn or the Agency and the complainant reached a settlement agreement.
- To assess SSA's compliance with the EEOC decision, we:
 - ✓ Obtained and reviewed documentation regarding the actions taken by the Agency to comply with the order.
 - ✓ Determined whether the Agency took the actions timely, as ordered by EEOC.
 - ✓ Interviewed 15 (25 percent) complainants to obtain their opinion on whether they received full restitution from SSA, in accordance with the EEOC's decisions.³
 - ✓ Interviewed OCREO officials, as appropriate, to obtain information regarding Agency actions taken for specific instances of adverse EEOC decisions.

We performed our review at SSA's Headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland, from May to August 2012. The primary entity reviewed was the Office of Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity within the Office of Human Resources. We conducted our review in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*.

¹ EEOC's Federal Sector Appellate Decisions— <http://www.eeoc.gov/federal/decisions.cfm>.

² One of the 19 decisions occurred in 2009, before our review period. However, we included this decision in our review because 3 of the 7 actionable items were completed during our review period.

³ We did not interview the remaining complainants because (a) after two attempts, we could not reach the complainant, (b) the case is still pending, (c) SSA reached a settlement agreement, (d) the complaint was withdrawn, or (e) the status of the case had not yet been determined.

Adverse Decisions

We reviewed 55 decisions that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission made against the Social Security Administration (SSA). The following tables summarize the cases by sex, SSA region/component, and type of discrimination.

Table E-1: Sex

Sex of Complainant	Number of Decisions	Percent
Male	21	38
Female	34	62
Total	55	100

Table E-2: Region/Component

Region/Component	Number of Decisions	Percent
Atlanta	14	25
Boston	3	5
Chicago	7	13
Dallas	2	4
Denver	1	2
Headquarters	7	13
New York	8	15
Office of Central Operations	4	7
Philadelphia	5	9
San Francisco	3	5
Seattle	1	2
Total	55	100

Table E-3: Type of Discrimination

Discrimination Alleged	Number of Discrimination Allegations¹	Percent
Sex	18	16
Race or Color	20	18
National Origin	7	6
Age	23	20
Disability	18	16
Religion	1	1
Hostile Environment or Reprisal	21	19
Failure to Accommodate	5	4
Total	113	100

¹ Some complainants alleged more than one type of discrimination.

Overview of the Office of the Inspector General

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is comprised of an Office of Audit (OA), Office of Investigations (OI), Office of the Counsel to the Inspector General (OCIG), Office of External Relations (OER), and Office of Technology and Resource Management (OTRM). To ensure compliance with policies and procedures, internal controls, and professional standards, the OIG also has a comprehensive Professional Responsibility and Quality Assurance program.

Office of Audit

OA conducts financial and performance audits of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) programs and operations and makes recommendations to ensure program objectives are achieved effectively and efficiently. Financial audits assess whether SSA's financial statements fairly present SSA's financial position, results of operations, and cash flow. Performance audits review the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of SSA's programs and operations. OA also conducts short-term management reviews and program evaluations on issues of concern to SSA, Congress, and the general public.

Office of Investigations

OI conducts investigations related to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement in SSA programs and operations. This includes wrongdoing by applicants, beneficiaries, contractors, third parties, or SSA employees performing their official duties. This office serves as liaison to the Department of Justice on all matters relating to the investigation of SSA programs and personnel. OI also conducts joint investigations with other Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies.

Office of the Counsel to the Inspector General

OCIG provides independent legal advice and counsel to the IG on various matters, including statutes, regulations, legislation, and policy directives. OCIG also advises the IG on investigative procedures and techniques, as well as on legal implications and conclusions to be drawn from audit and investigative material. Also, OCIG administers the Civil Monetary Penalty program.

Office of External Relations

OER manages OIG's external and public affairs programs, and serves as the principal advisor on news releases and in providing information to the various news reporting services. OER develops OIG's media and public information policies, directs OIG's external and public affairs programs, and serves as the primary contact for those seeking information about OIG. OER prepares OIG publications, speeches, and presentations to internal and external organizations, and responds to Congressional correspondence.

Office of Technology and Resource Management

OTRM supports OIG by providing information management and systems security. OTRM also coordinates OIG's budget, procurement, telecommunications, facilities, and human resources. In addition, OTRM is the focal point for OIG's strategic planning function, and the development and monitoring of performance measures. In addition, OTRM receives and assigns for action allegations of criminal and administrative violations of Social Security laws, identifies fugitives receiving benefit payments from SSA, and provides technological assistance to investigations.