

In our recent report on the Ticket to Work program (GAO-11-324) we found that SSA still lacks critical management and oversight mechanisms to assess whether the program is achieving its original purpose, and ultimately, whether the program is viable. It also has not collected adequate information on service provision that could help the agency and policymakers analyze program trends, including the increasing prevalence of sharing SSA ticket payments with ticket holders. In this regard, SSA is not well positioned to assess the long-term success of the program or whether service approaches, such as sharing payments with ticket holders, are consistent with program goals. Ultimately, we believe SSA must balance its efforts to increase participation in the program with a commitment to outcome-oriented results that emphasize reducing beneficiaries' dependence on benefits. Without improvements to existing management tools and oversight procedures in the Ticket program, the agency will not be able to provide reasonable assurance that, in a time of increasing fiscal challenges, limited tax dollars are being effectively used to achieve these important program objectives. We have made several recommendations including that SSA adopt a strategy for compiling and using data on trends in employment network service provision to determine whether service approaches, such as sharing SSA ticket payments with ticket holders, are consistent with program goals of helping ticket holders find and retain employment and reduce dependency on benefits; for example, SSA could revise existing tools to compile information on service approaches used by all ENs. We also recommended that the agency move forward to develop EN performance measures consistent with the requirements of the Ticket law. We will continue to monitor agency compliance with these and other recommendations to improve the Ticket program.