

Additional Information Submitted for the Record

By

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Deputy Commissioner
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**Hearing on the Use of Technology to Improve the Administration of
the Supplemental Security Income Program's
Financial Eligibility Requirements
July 25, 2012**

**The Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Human Resources
United States House of Representatives**

**Additional Information Provided by SSA's Deputy Commissioner
Carolyn W. Colvin in Response to Question Raised by Mr. Price about How to Best
Use Technology to Administer SSI's Financial Eligibility Requirements if
Unencumbered by the Current System**

I think that if someone were designing an SSI-like program today, unencumbered by the current program, the ability to quickly and automatically verify the eligibility factors for an individual's case likely would be a cornerstone of the new program. As you have heard in previous testimony, the current SSI program's reliance on self-reporting can lead to improper payments and can be labor intensive for both the beneficiary and us. While we are continuing to look for ways for data matching to replace the need for self-reporting, not every feature of the program currently lends itself to automatic verification. For example, an individual's living arrangement can affect the SSI benefit amount. If he or she is living with someone else, we need to determine in effect, who is the head of the household and whether food or shelter is being provided to the SSI beneficiary. We have not yet found a way to automate this determination.

Although automated verifications of eligibility would be an important factor in a new program, important policy decisions would also need to be made. One such decision might be to what extent the traditional rigorous means-test would be modified in order to accommodate automation. Back to the living arrangement example—would a new program ignore the fact that someone was receiving free food and shelter because these determinations are relatively complex, time-consuming, and rely on self-reporting and/or third party reports? Alternatively, would the new program maintain the traditional means-testing concept that a person receiving free food and shelter was in less need of assistance than someone who had to use his or her income to purchase food and shelter?

As I stated in my testimony, significant program simplification is difficult to achieve. You will always have to address the critical—and often competing—issues of program adequacy, program efficiency, program equity, and program integrity.

Additional Information Provided by SSA's Deputy Commissioner Carolyn W. Colvin in Response to Question Raised by Mr. Reed about Change in Priority from Conducting Post-Entitlement Reviews to Processing Initial Claims

Our past testimony on this issue acknowledged the tough choices we faced as we tried to effectively balance our core, program integrity, and other workloads in the face of limited resources. As the following charts show, in each year since 2007, when Commissioner Astrue was sworn in, we have increased the number of continuing disability reviews we have conducted. Likewise, except for a very slight decline of about 9,000 cases between FY 2010 and FY 2011, the numbers of SSI redeterminations we have conducted have also increased each year. The increased numbers of SSI redeterminations and continuing disability reviews have increased our program accuracy and program integrity.

