



# OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

## Social Security Benefits America

***Our Mission: Deliver Social Security services that meet the changing needs of the public***

In 2010, we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the signing of the *Social Security Act*. This landmark legislation provides financial support and economic security to a wide range of our population. Few government agencies touch as many lives as the Social Security Administration. The programs we administer and the services we provide are vital to the health and welfare of the Nation and are considered by many to be the most successful large-scale Federal programs in our Nation's history.

Created in response to the Great Depression, and financed through contributions of workers and their employers, Social Security continues to provide a safety net for seniors and a source of assistance for millions of Americans as our country rebounds from economic crisis. The *Social Security Act* has expanded beyond its initial coverage of only retired workers to include dependent and survivor benefits, disability insurance, and guaranteed medical insurance for seniors through Medicare. We also administer the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, which is financed through general revenue funds. SSI helps the elderly as well as blind or disabled people under 65 with limited income and resources, meet their basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter.

Over the years, we have grown from about 222,500 beneficiaries receiving \$35 million in Social Security benefits in 1940 to over 57 million Social Security beneficiaries and SSI recipients receiving a combined total of about \$740 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2010. Although Medicare is administered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, we handle all applications for Medicare and Applications for Extra Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs. Additionally, we are the collection agent for Medicare premiums.

The timeline below shows the progression of Social Security programs and responsibilities having a direct impact on the American public.



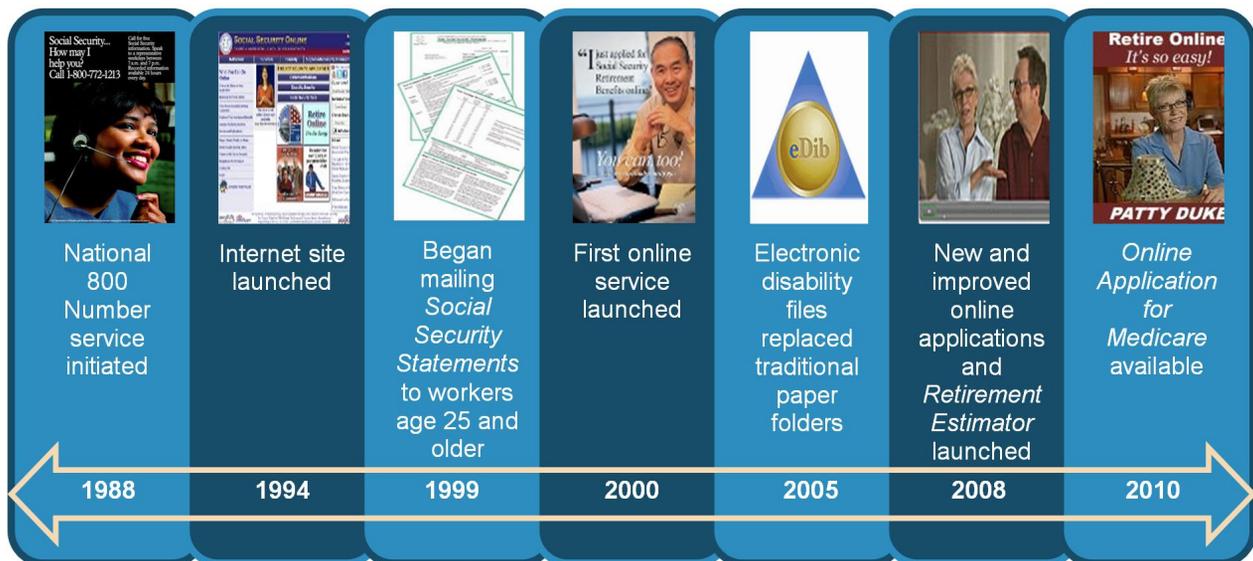
## Meeting the Changing Needs of the Public

We live in a rapidly changing world of technological and medical advances, demographic shifts, and uncertain economic times. The way we conducted business in the past no longer fits the present or the future. Through continuous assessment of the way we deliver services, we have expanded from an entirely field office-based operation to one that offers a wide array of methods the public can use to interact with us.

Technology and automation are key to providing quality service to the public, as our workloads continue to grow. For example:

- To handle the growing number of hearings requests, we are conducting more hearings remotely using video conferencing.
- To expedite disability claims, we are using predictive modeling and electronic screening tools to identify applicants whose medical conditions are likely or certain to meet our disability standards.
- To improve the speed of our disability process, we are piloting health Information Technology (health IT) to receive medical records electronically.
- To provide more convenient service to the public, we are expanding our Internet website, [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov), to enable people to file for Medicare, retirement, and disability benefits online.

The timeline below highlights some additional changes in the way we deliver our services to better accommodate the public.

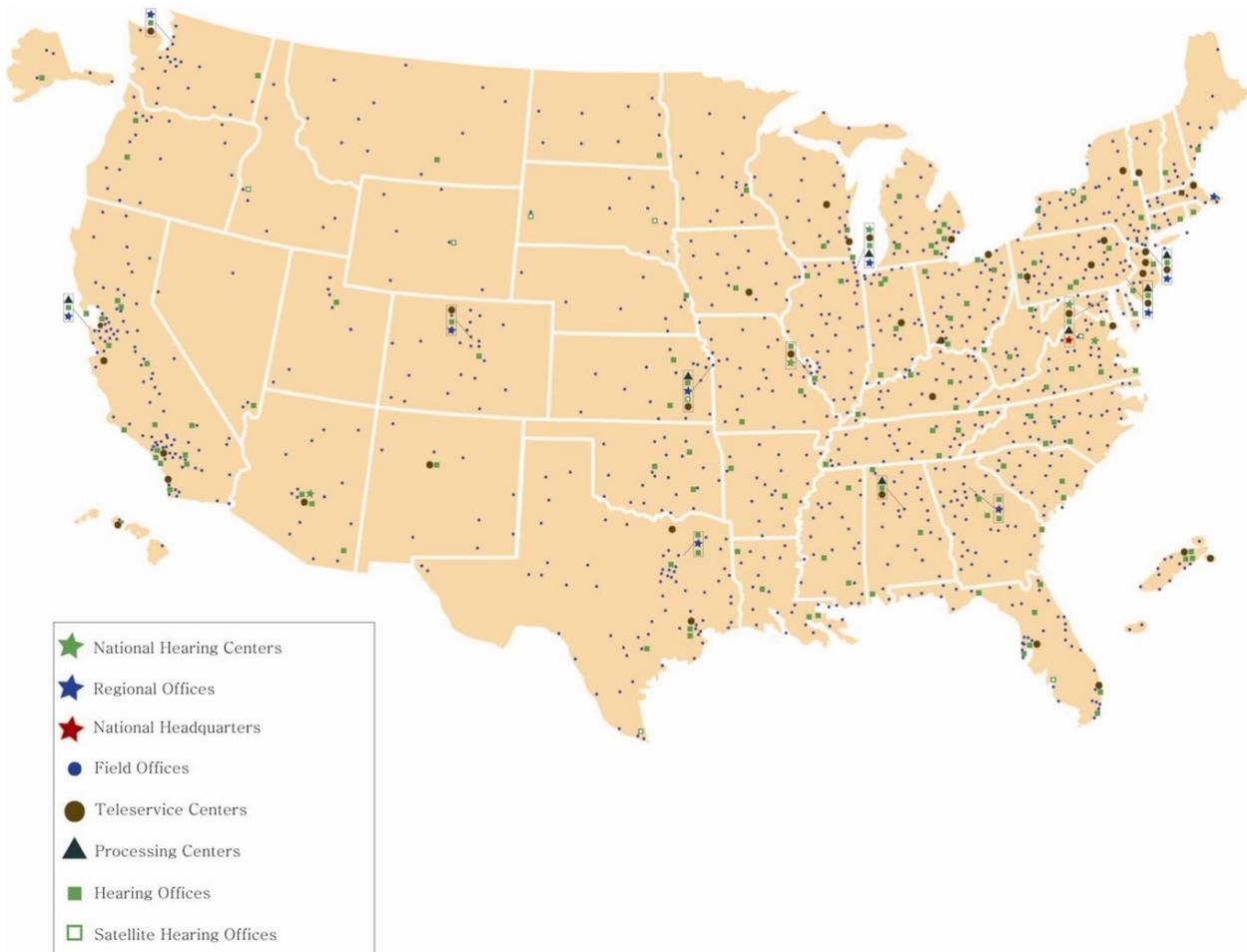


## Our Organization

We touch the lives of virtually every American, as well as many people living abroad. We administer the programs that make up the largest social insurance system in the world.

Our current organization is comprised of almost 68,000 employees. We deliver services through a nationwide network of 1,500 offices that include regional offices, field offices (including card centers), teleservice centers, processing centers, hearing offices (including satellite offices and National Hearing Centers), the Appeals Council, and our headquarters located in Baltimore, Maryland. We also have a presence in several U.S. embassies around the globe.

Our field offices and card centers are the primary points for face-to-face contact with the public. Teleservice centers primarily handle calls to our National 800 Number. Processing centers perform a wide range of workloads in addition to handling National 800 Number calls. The Appeals Council and the administrative law judges in our hearing offices and centers decide appeals of Social Security claims and SSI applications. Most of our employees deliver direct service to the public or support the services provided by these frontline workers. Additionally, our disability programs depend on the work of over 18,200 people employed by our State and territorial partners, the Disability Determination Services. A [chart of our current organizational structure](#) and the function each component performs is available at [www.socialsecurity.gov/org](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/org).



**Figure 1: The symbols on this map of the United States identify the locations of our offices.**