



SOCIAL SECURITY

The Commissioner

Dear Participant:

Thank you for helping the Social Security Administration obtain updated occupational information for use in our disability programs. Our programs provide financial assistance to almost 14 million people with disabilities.

To determine if someone qualifies for disability benefits, we follow a five-step process that requires us to consider medical and occupational evidence. At steps one through three, we look at the claimant's work activity and the medical aspects of the case. For the last two steps, we look at the claimant's physical and mental ability to perform work-related tasks to determine whether the claimant can perform his or her past job or other work in the national economy. At these later steps, we must have comprehensive occupational information about work that exists in the national economy to help us determine what type of work the claimant may be able to do. For the past half-century, we have relied upon the Department of Labor's (DOL) Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) as our primary resource for this work information. However, in the 1990s, the DOL stopped updating the DOT. Therefore, we need more up-to-date information to help us with the final steps of the disability determination process.

To make consistent, better-informed decisions on whether claimants meet our disability criteria, we are developing a new Occupational Information System (OIS) to replace the DOT. To help us with a new OIS, we entered into a partnership with the DOL's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). BLS will test the collection of functional requirement information of occupations for us. We chose BLS because they already collect information from employers nationwide to produce the National Compensation Survey (NCS). To gather NCS data, BLS employs a corps of highly skilled field economists. Partnering with BLS allows us to benefit from the knowledge and skill of their economists who have experience in collecting information from employers. These economists will now also collect information for us about the physical demands of work.

We appreciate your cooperation in providing information to BLS about the occupations in your establishment. For more information about the OIS project, visit our website at http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/occupational_info_systems.html. Thank you again for your time and for participating in this important project. Your service helps the American people.

Sincerely,

Carolyn W. Colvin
Acting Commissioner