

Social Security

Official Social Security Website

Occupational Information System Project

We are developing a new Occupational Information System (OIS) that will replace the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) as the primary source of occupational information in our disability adjudication process. The Department of Labor has not updated the DOT since 1991. In 2012, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) began conducting feasibility tests to determine whether they could collect the type of occupational information we need, using the platform of the National Compensation Survey (NCS). BLS calls this data collection effort the Occupational Requirements Survey (ORS). In September 2015, after three years of successful testing, BLS began collecting production data that adjudicators will eventually use to make disability decisions. The first production collection cycle will take three years. We hope that disability adjudicators can begin using the new data in 2019. We intend to update the data annually under an agreement with BLS to ensure we use current occupational data to adjudicate our disability claims.

To learn more about the 2012-2015 testing activities and background information, visit the [OIS Project History](#) page.

The Vision for the New OIS

Once completed, the new OIS will include many occupational descriptors similar to those adjudicators currently use in the DOT. However, the OIS will expand on DOT information by describing the basic mental and cognitive requirements of work. The OIS will incorporate ORS data and elements from the Department of Labor's Occupational Information Network, and will crosswalk to the Military Occupational Classification. The new OIS will combine these data in a web-based, publicly available information

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technology (IT) platform that will filter and sort the data as needed to adjudicate disability claims. The new OIS will eventually integrate with our internal electronic case processing systems.

Describing the Mental and Cognitive Demands of Work

The DOT contains discrete and well-established descriptions of the physical demands of occupations, but it does not provide information on the mental and cognitive requirements of occupations. Current collection of ORS data represents a unique opportunity to include descriptions of the mental and cognitive requirements of work in the new OIS.

To ensure that BLS collects the mental and cognitive data elements that are most useful in disability adjudication, we reached out to disability program experts for help. In FY 2013, we organized an internal workgroup of disability vocational policy experts and contracted psychiatric and psychological consultants to identify the mental and cognitive occupational descriptors that we need to adjudicate disability claims.

During FY 2014 feasibility testing, BLS tested the mental and cognitive survey questions. Results from testing and feedback from our stakeholders have resulted in changes to the mental and cognitive survey questions and responses. Our current mental and cognitive questions focus on the following work requirements:

- Decision-Making;
- Amount of supervision;
- Pace;
- Adaptability; and
- Work-related personal interactions.

We will continue working with BLS to improve these elements.

Fiscal Year 2016 Activities

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We have the following activities planned for FY 2016:

- BLS will complete the first year of production data collection, which started in September 2015, and will start the second year;
- We will work with BLS to continue refining the mental and cognitive data elements, and BLS will perform further testing if necessary;
- We will continue analyzing the pre-production data and assess whether policy changes will be necessary before using the new data in disability adjudication;
- We will develop an appropriate testing plan for the new data;
- We will continue working with our IT contractor to complete the development of the IT platform and will conduct usability testing with our adjudicators.

Activities beyond Fiscal Year 2016

As BLS production data collection moves beyond the initial stages, we will continue developing plans to implement the new OIS. Prior to implementation, we plan to perform small-scale testing and a larger pilot study to determine the impact of the new data on our program. We will also work with BLS to determine an update cycle that will keep data updated according to our program needs and fiscal restraints. Even though production data collection is underway, we will continue working with BLS as needed to improve the process until we are certain the new occupational data will meet the needs of the disability program.

More Information

For more information regarding the development of the OIS, please contact us at ordes.ois@ssa.gov.

