

Register, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., suite 1700, Washington, DC.

(h) This amendment becomes effective on May 16, 2003.

Issued in Fort Worth, Texas, on April 22, 2003.

Mark R. Schilling,

*Acting Manager, Rotorcraft Directorate,
Aircraft Certification Service.*

[FR Doc. 03-10507 Filed 4-30-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-13-P

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

20 CFR Parts 404 and 416

[Regulations No. 4 and 16]

RIN 0960-AF79

Claimant Identification Pilot Projects

AGENCY: Social Security Administration (SSA).

ACTION: Final rules.

SUMMARY: We are revising our regulations that pertain to the processing of initial claims for disability benefits under title II (Social Security Disability Insurance) and title XVI (Supplemental Security Income) of the Social Security Act (the Act). We will be conducting pilot projects wherein we will request photographic identification from individuals filing for title II and title XVI disability and blindness benefits in specified geographic areas covered by the pilot projects. In addition, we will require individuals to allow us to take their photograph and we will make these photographs a part of the claims folder. We will permit an exception to the photograph requirement when an individual has a sincere religious objection. This process will strengthen the integrity of the disability claims process by helping to ensure that the individual filing the application is the same individual examined by the consultative examination (CE) physician.

DATES: These regulations are effective May 31, 2003.

Electronic Version: The electronic file of this document is available on the date of publication in the **Federal Register** at http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aces140.html. It is also available on the Internet site for SSA (*i.e.*, Social Security Online) at ssa.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Martin Sussman, Regulations Officer, Office of Regulations, 100 Altmeyer Building, Social Security Administration, 6401 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, Maryland 21235-6401, regulations@ssa.gov, 410-965-1767 or TTY 410-966-5609 for

information about these rules. For information on eligibility or filing for benefits: call our national toll-free numbers, 1-800-772-1213 or TTY 1-800-325-0778 or visit our Internet web site, Social Security Online, at ssa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose of the Pilot Projects

The purpose of the claimant identification pilots is to test and gather information in the use of photographic identification to address the issue of complicit impersonation in the disability claims process. Complicit impersonation is accomplished when an individual, posing as the intended claimant, and with the consent of the claimant, responds to a consultative examination appointment in order to misrepresent the claimant's true medical condition or provides false or misleading information that affects eligibility during interviews with SSA field office employees. SSA and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) have noticed an upward trend in the number of such instances. It has become apparent that we need to strengthen our procedures for identity verification. We believe that the technology for the photographic identification process is currently available and could be implemented over a short time frame. The photographic identification process should give SSA an economical yet effective means of providing improved identity documents to CE physicians. We anticipate that it will be readily accepted by the public. We will evaluate the results of the pilot and expand or modify the procedures accordingly.

How We Will Conduct the Pilot Projects

We propose to conduct the pilots in the following designated geographic areas:

- (1) All SSA field offices in the State of South Carolina.
- (2) The Augusta, Georgia SSA field office.
- (3) All SSA field offices in the State of Kansas.
- (4) Selected SSA field offices located in New York City.

The pilots will be in effect for a six-month period of time and will begin no earlier than the first day of the month following the month that the rules become effective.

Who Will Be Affected

Individuals filing for title II and/or title XVI disability or blindness benefits at a Social Security office in the designated areas noted above will be required to participate in the claimant identification pilots. Individuals filing via the Internet or by telephone will also

be included. We will be monitoring any possible impact that the pilot procedures might have on SSA's initiative to encourage the filing of applications online via the Internet.

Providing Photographic Identification

While not part of the regulatory requirement, each individual will be asked to provide some form of photographic identification. This identification will be photocopied and the copy made a part of the SSA claims folder. SSA personnel will continue to follow regular identification procedures by asking the individuals questions based on information in the SSA database to ensure that the individuals are who they hold themselves out to be. SSA personnel will obtain additional identifying information if there is a doubt about the identity of the individual. If the individual does not have photographic identification available or does not wish to provide it to us, SSA personnel will not require it but will still follow regular identification procedures as before the pilots went into effect.

Photographs Taken by SSA

Also as part of the claimant identification pilots, each individual filing for disability or blindness benefits at a location participating in the pilot program will be required to have a photograph taken by SSA personnel, regardless of whether the individual provides the photographic identification discussed above. A copy will be made of this image and placed in the SSA claims folder. Images will also be stored electronically and accessed by authorized SSA and Disability Determination Service (DDS) personnel.

If We Request a Consultative Examination

If DDS personnel request a consultative examination for the individual, a hard copy image of the photograph will be made available to the person conducting the CE. This will help to determine whether the individual presenting himself or herself for examination is the same individual who presented himself or herself as the individual filing for disability or blindness benefits. We will ask the CE physician to copy the individual's own photographic identification when the physician was not provided with a photo or a copy of a photographic identification previously taken by SSA personnel.