

Beatrice Disman – 2013 Roger W. Jones Award – Outstanding Organization Achievement

Over the last 10 years, Bea Disman has served as the Social Security Administration's (SSA) interagency lead on Medicare and related programs while fulfilling her role as New York's Regional Commissioner with direct authority over the Social Security Administration's 128 offices and operations in New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. She provides oversight to the programs and services that touch the lives of Americans every day, including approximately 7 million beneficiaries and recipients receiving over \$7 billion in total benefits each year.

Ms. Disman exemplifies outstanding, results-oriented leadership across government. In her role, she has provided leadership to SSA and other federal and state governments in the implementation of several significant legislative changes that have positively impacted Americans including the Medicare Prescription Drug Improvement and Modernization Act (MMA) of December 2003, the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) of 2008, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010.

Ms. Disman has served as the Social Security Administration's senior-level member of an interagency Steering Committee chaired by the Federal CIO and Health Program Associate Director on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and provides executive guidance to a core team of SSA's major components.

Under her direction, agencies have partnered to provide an online process that allows the public to check their eligibility under ACA and receive a response in "real-time". This streamlined and cost-efficient process allows SSA and other agencies to electronically exchange the data needed to determine eligibility for Advanced Premium Tax Credits, Cost Sharing Reductions, Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program, and Basic Health Plans. In accomplishing this, Ms. Disman exhibited tenacity and excellent negotiating and collaboration skills. Her ever present concern for protecting the security of the personal data we are responsible for, while at the same time ensuring that the necessary information is shared with appropriate agencies in an efficient, expedient, and lawful manner, was instrumental to achieving the goal.

Ms. Disman's high level coordination among Federal and State partners, including HHS, IRS, CMS, VA, DHS, DOD/Tricare, Peace Corps, OPM and OMB has been crucial in resolving major issues including:

- Protecting the public's personally identifiable information (PII);
- Reconciling data sharing requirements and legal limitations;
- Synchronizing security policies;
- Developing a Computer Matching Agreement (CMA) and common reporting tools including project schedules and service level agreements;
- Resolving resource and budget issues;
- Achieving government goals while respecting the rule of law; and
- Developing clear, consistent and timely public outreach material.

In 2006, Social Security began administering the Medicare Part D low income subsidy program, or Extra Help, that provides seniors and the disabled with help paying their health insurance premiums, co-payments and deductibles. Implementing the Extra Help program required development of new systems, extensive outreach to the public and advocate community, recruitment of employees and training all within very short timeframes. Ms. Disman worked tirelessly to secure inter-agency policy agreements, develop regulations and procedures, and develop a systems data transfer method between several agencies. Her outstanding communication skills and ability to collaborate with other SSA executives and components within and outside Social Security were critical to the success of the initiative. She was exceptionally effective in getting input and ideas and was able to achieve extraordinary results through her ability to help diverse groups reach consensus. She led an agency-wide Medicare Task Force in communicating, obtaining feedback, determining risks and brainstorming recommendations as to how SSA could in short order create an entire program to implement the legislation. Her leadership role required extensive interaction with executives in HHS, CMS, IRS, Treasury, OMB, and others, and she was exceptionally effective in obtaining their cooperation and concurrence throughout the process. It also required ongoing interaction with the staff of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee and the Senate Finance Committee, State Medicaid Directors, Governors' offices and national advocacy organizations. Her exceptional communication skills and mastery of the many details involved with the implementation made her very effective in dealing with all parties involved.

Under Ms. Disman's skillful direction, Social Security undertook unprecedented outreach and educational campaigns to promote the Extra Help program. This extensive and innovative outreach involved holding thousands of events across the nation at local community sites to assist beneficiaries in applying for the Extra Help. Targeted marketing material encouraged low income and other vulnerable populations, including American Indians and Alaskan Natives, to apply for the assistance. The outreach displays were recognized by the National Association of Government Communicators (NAGC) for excellence and won the Blue Pencil award (first place) in their category, competing against federal, state, county and municipal governments. An interactive training CD was developed for use by advocates and social workers to assist their clients in the filing process. This CD also won first prize in the NAGC competition in its category. Under Ms. Disman's guidance, partnerships were developed with community organizations to promote the filing of the Extra Help application. Campaigns to target caregivers, starting with a Mother's Day campaign, were developed to help reach beneficiaries that might need additional assistance. NAGC recognized Social Security with the Communicator of the Year award for this campaign. Further illustrating her innovation and commitment to outreach, the services of rock and roll legend Chubby Checker were used to help with our public information campaign and materials. This outreach effort was extremely successful, resulting in an over 44% increase in applications in one year alone.

Ms. Disman was equally focused on streamlining processes to provide the public with excellent service while balancing limited agency resources and increasing workloads.

Ms. Disman simplified the application form so that family members, friends, advocates or other third parties could file on behalf of the disabled and aged Medicare beneficiaries. Medicare recipients could complete the form at their convenience, eliminating a visit to a Social Security office. In the design of the application, she initiated focus and cognitive testing to ensure it was self-explanatory. Under Ms. Disman's guidance, SSA developed an Internet application that beneficiaries can complete online. The online Extra Help application is consistently ranked in the top 4 by the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) and received first place its first year with the highest index level ever awarded at that time in the Federal e-Commerce/Transactions category. Ms Disman met frequently with national advocates, State Directors, and regional executives to promote the benefits of the online application. And, for those without computer access, Ms. Disman designed a scannable paper application that is mailed to a central location allowing these forms to be processed accurately and quickly. Cognizant of the population's diverse language needs, Ms. Disman had the Internet application translated into 14 different languages. Due to the efficiencies she built into the process, the agency handled the increased Medicare workload with a processing rate of 95.3% completed within 60 days, far exceeding our goal in the first year.

Ms. Disman developed an automated follow up procedure to ensure that those who did not complete their application in 45 days received an automated telephone reminder that provided the applicant with a toll free telephone number and Internet site address to obtain additional information, including how changes to income and resources affect eligibility.

To further help this vulnerable population, Ms. Disman established a pre-decisional step - prior to SSA releasing a denial decision we advise the individual about the potential denial to allow them additional time to rebut the decision. This has reduced appeals and resulted in providing the right decision to the public while maximizing limited agency resources.

Ms. Disman is truly a remarkable leader who, through her passion and commitment to public service, has significantly improved the lives of millions of members of the public and serves as a daily inspiration to the employees who work for the agency.