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**Article 43**

**Miscellaneous**

**Section 1 Purpose**

The parties are committed to greatly increasing the involvement of employees, through their Union, in improving the quality and integrity of public service at SSA. It is recognized that nothing short of a culture change in the Agency is needed. To that end, it is agreed that the following joint initiatives will be implemented no later than 60 days following the effective date of this Agreement. This does not, in any way, preclude the parties from identifying and moving forward with other cooperative efforts aimed at improving service, and increasing employee satisfaction and pride in the work that they do for the American public.

**Section 2 Strategic Planning and Policy Development**

AFGE will be fully integrated into Agency strategic planning, operations and work plan development, policy development, and related processes at all levels, with at least one Union member named to each workgroup, task force, or similar entity. This applies to those groups that exist on the

24 **effective date of this Agreement, and those that are established**  
25 **subsequently. AFGE members will be appointed by the General Committee**  
26 **or its designee(s).**

27

28

29 **Section 3 Electronic Service Delivery**

30

31 **Utilizing a partnership team chartered by the National Labor Management**  
32 **Forum (NLMF), online filing of applications and appeals will be fully**  
33 **examined, with recommendations made on an ongoing basis to the NLMF**  
34 **for decisions and implementation of those that are approved. The first**  
35 **priority work for the team will be to recommend changes needed to ensure**  
36 **that at least the following critical aspects are addressed:**

37

38 **a. Authentication of the identity of those who file claims and appeals.**

39

40 **b. Personal contact with applicants/appellants by SSA employees to**  
41 **ensure that rights and responsibilities are explained and understood,**  
42 **as required by the Social Security Act.**

43

44 **c. Immediate implementation of a statistically valid special study of**  
45 **online claims and appeals accuracy, at the point these products are**  
46 **received by SSA and before any review, correction, or contact with**

47           **applicants by SSA employees. Raw data and final reports will be**  
48           **shared with AFGE as they are produced.**

49  
50           **d. Ongoing review of electronic claims and appeals, with immediate**  
51           **feedback to employees who work these cases in order to identify and**  
52           **address deficiencies, and with raw data and reports shared with**  
53           **AFGE as they are produced.**

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55

56           **Section 4    Integrity of Work Processes and Management Information**

57

58           **Approved recommendations of the June 1996 Report of the AFGE/SSA**  
59           **Management Information Integrity Partnership Team (MIIPT) will be fully**  
60           **implemented, and the parties will expand the examination of processes and**  
61           **measures to all components, by:**

62

63           **a. reinstatement of the Management Information Integrity Monitoring**  
64           **Team (MIIM) (provided for in a February 1997 AFGE/SSA MOU and in**  
65           **AIMS GAM 16.01), with a message to all employees from SSA**  
66           **encouraging them to report allegations of the manipulation of work**  
67           **processes and measures**

68

69       **b. reinstatement of the MIIPT, and expansion beyond Field Operations to**  
70           **all Agency components**

71

72       **The Visitor Intake Process (VIP) will not be misused through “staging” the**  
73       **entry of visitor information, or by using VIP to track employee breaks,**  
74       **lunch times, restroom breaks, etc.**

75

76

77       **Section 5    Waste, Fraud, and Abuse**

78

79       **The Agency will invite AFGE to participate fully, to include pre-decisional**  
80       **involvement and input; in all efforts to identify and address waste, fraud,**  
81       **and abuse, including those aspects identified by the Government**  
82       **Accountability Office in their identification of High Risk Programs. This will**  
83       **include, but not be limited to, efforts involving the Office of Inspector**  
84       **General, and participation in all conferences and forums conducted by the**  
85       **Agency.**

86

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88       **Section 6    Third Party Involvement**

89

90 **With and without encouragement and training by SSA, third party**  
91 **involvement in claims and appeals is growing rapidly. Controls are needed**  
92 **to ensure that the Agency fulfills its obligations to applicants and**  
93 **appellants whose claims and appeals are secured and documented**  
94 **through for-profit, non-profit, and government agency third parties. The**  
95 **January 1997 AFGE/SSA Third Party Assistance Team recommendations**  
96 **will be considered for adoption by the NLMF, and the Team will be**  
97 **reinstated and given full support to continue its work, including travel and**  
98 **per diem in accordance with Federal Travel Regulations.**

99

100

101 **Section 7 Employee Use of Cell Phones and other Personal**  
102 **Communication Devices**

103

104 **SSA employees will be permitted to carry cell phones, Blackberries, I-Pods,**  
105 **and other personal communication devices while on duty, and to use them**  
106 **so long as such use does not interfere with the accomplishment of the**  
107 **Agency's mission.**

108

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110 **Section 8 Monitoring, Recording, and Records Maintenance**

111

112 **SSA will provide notice and an opportunity to bargain, in accordance with**  
113 **this Agreement, before implementing any capabilities to monitor, record, or**  
114 **maintain records through existing or new telephone or computer systems.**

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117 **Section 9 Interview Appointment Systems**

118

119 **Appointments should be scheduled at the request of the public for times**  
120 **which are mutually convenient to the caller/visitor and SSA.**

121

122 **Appointments will be established at the option of the public. The working**  
123 **assumption is that those who walk into the office wish to be served at this**  
124 **time.**

125

126 **Appointments will ordinarily be scheduled to be held within 30 days of**  
127 **initial contact. Appointments involving potential eligibility to SSI benefits,**  
128 **Military casualty cases, and cases involving terminally ill individuals,**  
129 **should be scheduled for the earliest possible date.**

130

131 **Public information will positively publicize all available service options,**  
132 **including appointments (phone or in-office). No public information should**  
133 **imply that appointments are required to conduct business with SSA.**

134

135 **Appointment times will be standardized based on a statistically valid**  
136 **national study that the Agency will complete to measure the time that it**  
137 **takes to conduct various types of interviews, including claims, appeals and**  
138 **post entitlement matters. Results of the study will be provided to the NLMF**  
139 **which will provide for pre-decisional involvement to set standardized**  
140 **appointment times for all interviews.**

141

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143 **Section 10. Nutrition**

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145 **SSA will ensure that key nutritional information is listed on all food served**  
146 **in SSA cafeterias, and in vending machines in SSA space. At a minimum,**  
147 **the information provided will list the type of fat, fat content, and calories for**  
148 **all food and beverages sold.**

149

150 **If current contracts with vendors preclude such information from being**  
151 **displayed, or do not require that it be displayed, future SSA contracts with**  
152 **vendors will require such public display of nutritional information.**

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