



Agency Priority Goal Action Plan

Improve Hearings Pending

Goal Leaders:

Goal Leader: Elaine Garrison-Daniels, Assistant Deputy Commissioner, Office of Hearings Operations

Deputy Goal Leader: Patrick Nagle, Chief Administrative Law Judge, Office of Hearings Operations

Overview

Goal Statement

Improve customer service in the hearings process by prioritizing those individuals who have waited the longest for a hearing decision.

- By September 30, 2018, decide 97 percent of cases that begin the fiscal year 430 days old or older (decide ~374,000 cases).
- By September 30, 2019, decide 95 percent of cases that begin the fiscal year 350 days old or older (decide ~355,000 cases).

Challenge

We continue to focus on reducing the backlog and making timely decisions that are policy compliant.

Opportunities

- Moving workloads around the country to better align with our resources;
- Transferring and scheduling cases according to established milestones to meet the 75-day hearing notice requirement and ensure completion by the end of the fiscal year; and
- Creating a top-100 oldest cases of concern report to ensure that complex cases, which are difficult to schedule and hear, receive sustained attention until they are completed.

Strategic Alignment

This APG supports strategic goal "Deliver Services Effectively" and strategic objective "Improve Service Delivery"

Implementation Strategies

The following are our implementation strategies for accomplishing this APG:

- Increase adjudicatory capacity
- Process and decisional quality improvements
- Leverage technology improvements
- Increase accountability and focus on aged cases

Risks and Mitigation

Key Risks	Mitigation
High levels of attrition	With sufficient budgetary resources, we can replace ALJs and support staff accordingly.
Catastrophic events that force closure of our facilities	We can move work to other hearing offices to avoid ceasing services in an affected area; however, postponements of some hearings would be unavoidable.
Significant increase in disability claim receipts due to factors outside our control	We would maximize effective use of overtime and move work to other hearing offices to balance workloads.

FY 2019 Q4 Progress Update

Primary Indicator

FY 2019 Target: Decide 95 percent of cases that begin the fiscal year at 350 days old or older (decide ~355,000)

FY 2019¹ Results: Decided 98.2 percent of cases that began the fiscal year 350 days old or older (decided 368,232 cases)

Quarterly Targets

	FY 2019 Target	FY 2019 Results
Q1	25 percent of aged cases decided	38.6 percent of aged cases decided
Q2	50 percent of aged cases decided	71.6 percent of aged cases decided
Q3	75 percent of aged cases decided	89.9 percent of aged cases decided
Q4	95 percent of aged cases decided	98.2 percent of aged cases decided

¹ FY 2019 Q4 results are through September 27, 2019, which is the end of the operating month.

FY 2019 Q4 Progress Update (cont.)

Secondary Indicator Q4 Results (Annual Target Only)

Total Hearings Pending

FY 2019 Target: Reduce the total hearings pending to 591,000

FY 2019 Results: Reduced the total hearings pending to 575,421

Overall APG Progress

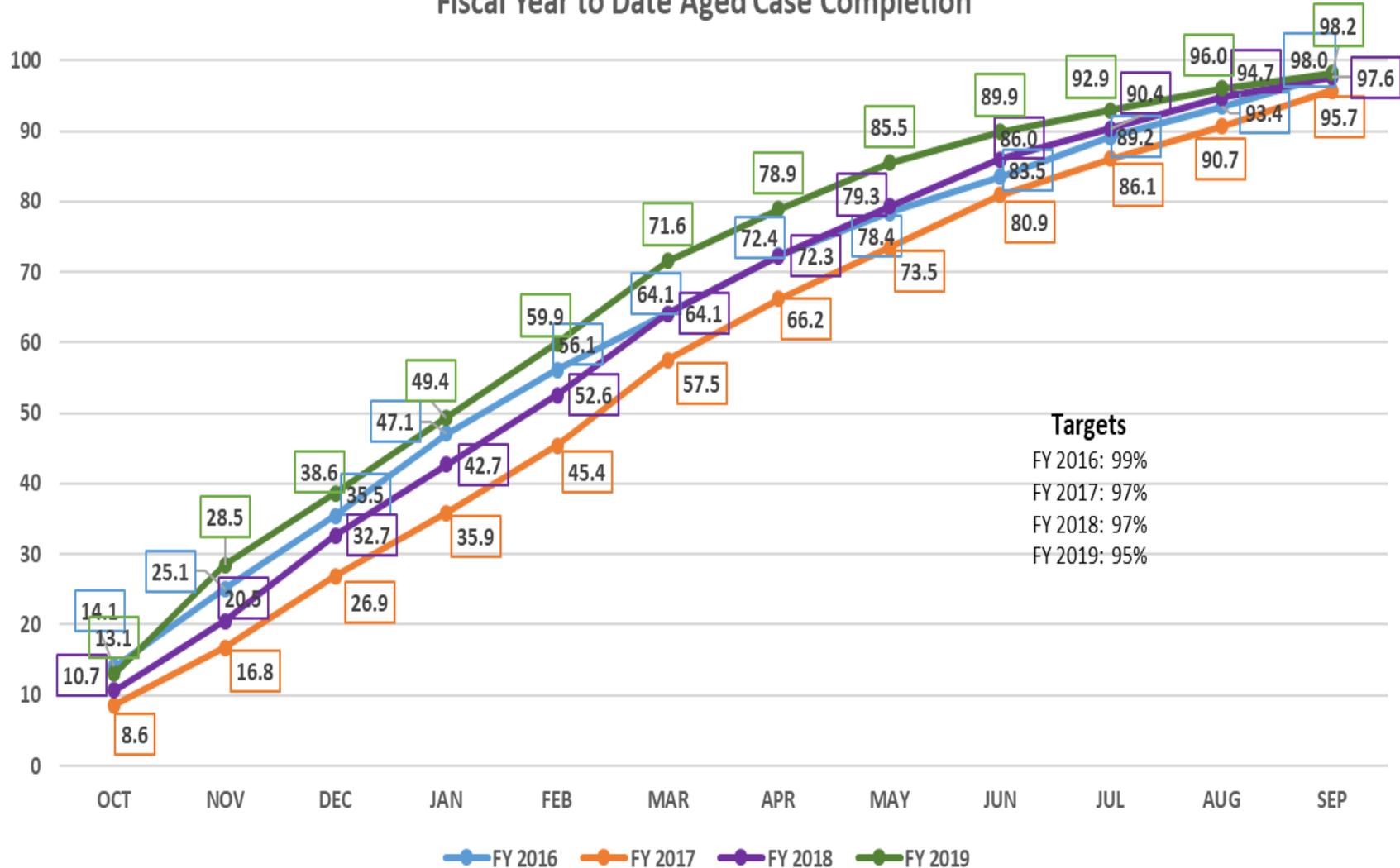
We have made great progress over the past two years in reducing our aged cases and overall hearing pending to improve service delivery to our customers. We have reduced our total hearings pending by over 54 percent, from a FY 2018 opening of 1,056,026 to an FY 2019 ending of 575,421. We have reduced the number of people awaiting a hearing decision for each consecutive month since January 2017. We will continue this APG into the next cycle (FYs 2020–2021).

FY 2019 Q4 Progress Update (cont.)

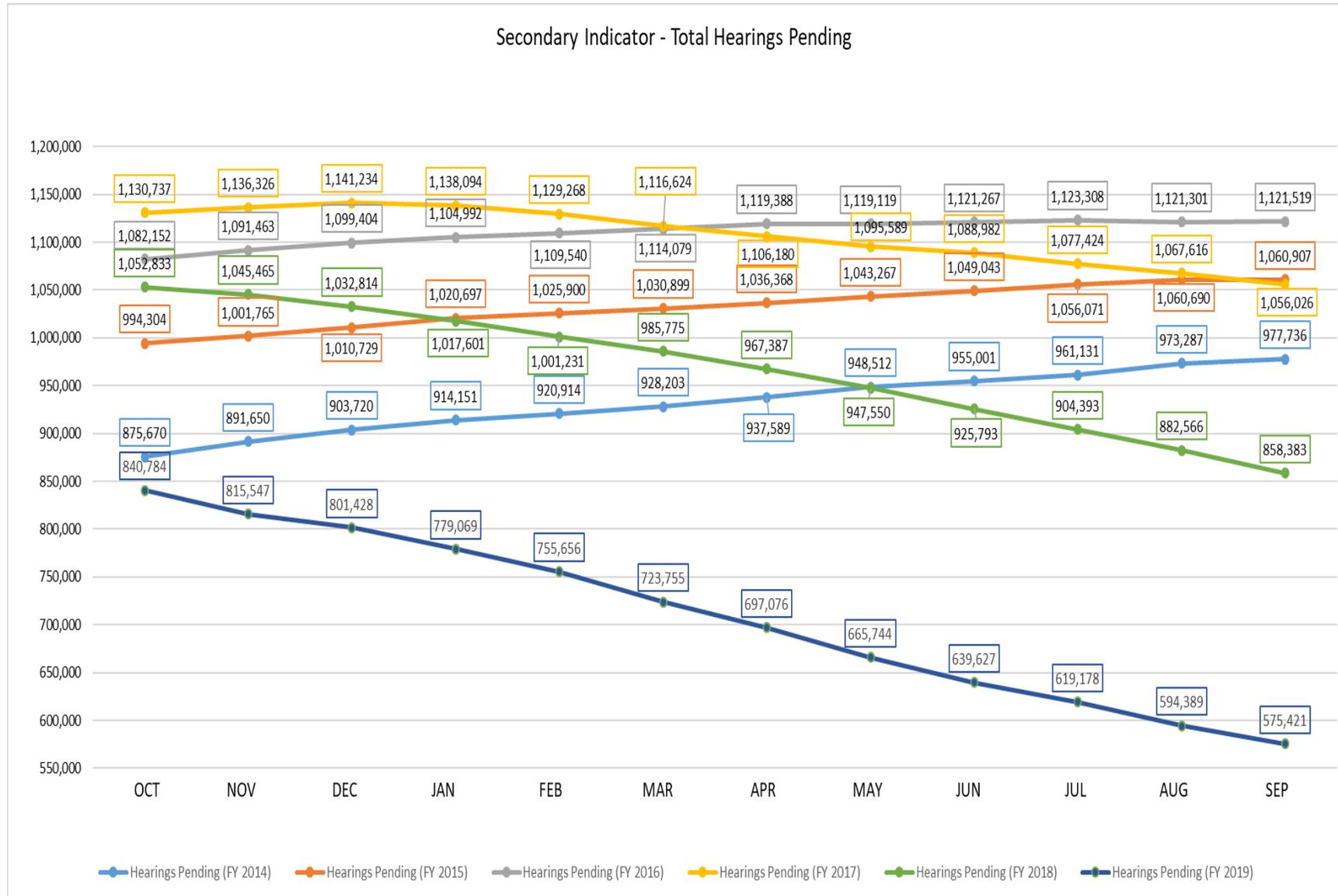
Key Milestone	Due Date	Status	Comments
Transfer 100 percent of aged cases that will be heard by ALJs in other hearings offices.	Q1 FY 2019	Complete	We completed the transfer of FY 2019 targeted aged cases in December 2018.
Schedule 100 percent of aged cases for a hearing.	Q2 FY 2019	Missed	At the close of the second quarter, we scheduled 98.1 percent of our aged cases (367,266). An additional 1.2 percent (4,465 cases) were in ready-to-schedule status. The remaining 0.7 percent (2,769 cases) included some cases that we are unable to move forward into scheduling due to legal issues.
Hold hearings for 100 percent of aged cases.	Q3 FY 2019	Missed	At the close of Q3, we held hearings on 95.9 percent (359,403) of our aged cases, with 4.1 percent (15,382) unheard.
Close 95 percent of aged cases 350 days old or older.	Q4 FY 2019	Complete	We closed 98.2 percent of aged cases 350 days old or older.

Historical Data

Fiscal Year to Date Aged Case Completion



Historical Data



Data Accuracy and Reliability

Our hearings workload data comes from our Case Processing Management System (CPMS) and is accurate and reliable. CPMS has been reviewed and validated by auditors who have endorsed its quality and reliability.

Our Target Age Summary report allows us to isolate aged cases to track their progress through the identified APG milestones. This report shows each region and office's progress toward the goal.

The Disability Adjudication Reporting Tool (DART) provides similar data to the Target Age Summary report, but with more detail, including a listing of all current aged cases that can be sorted by filing date, region, office, status, etc. DART will help us identify specific problem cases, so we can give them individualized attention to ensure they are processed timely.

Stakeholders

Congress: Our Office of Hearings Operations meets with congressional committees quarterly to discuss our CARES Plan and associated initiatives, and their feedback on this Plan is used to evaluate and improve our programs. Many of the initiatives detailed in the CARES Plan have a direct impact on our ability to hear and decide cases timely.

Claimant Representatives: We interact with claimant representatives through the National Association of Disability Representatives and National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives in order to resolve questions they have about our programs or current business processes.

Claimant Advocacy and Disability Advocacy Organizations: These organizations advocate for the rights of the disabled and those applying for disability.

Labor Union Organizations: These organizations represent our employees and ALJs. They provide input to our Hearings Operations leadership.