



**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SECURITY  
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATIONS, INC.**

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April 23, 2020

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Ms. Grace Kim  
Deputy Commissioner for Operations  
Social Security Administration  
6401 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Deputy Commissioner Kim:

We have been following with interest the reopening guidance issued by OMB and OPM to all federal agencies earlier this week. As you can imagine, reopening of the agency is on the minds of most managers. As the agency works to develop a definitive plan, I would like to offer our association's perspective. Our managers have been instrumental in the success of work at home by quarantine (WAHQ) and ensuring the American public receives assistance during these trying times. Managers' interests take into account field office operational capabilities and the impact of COVID-19 in their respective service areas. The following are questions, comments, and suggestions from managers across the country:

- Managers would like the opportunity to provide input as their respective offices reopen to serve the public. What amount of autonomy will managers have to ensure that both members of the public and employees stay safe as we reopen offices?
- There is concern regarding employees returning to work the same day we reopen to the public. It has been suggested that managers be given a day or two to get employees back to the office in order to reinstall equipment and ensure everything is running properly before opening to the public.
- When should we expect moratoriums on workloads to be lifted and what will the process look like?
- What is the agency's plan regarding overpayments created during this crisis and how will they be handled? Has the agency considered blanket waivers during a specified period of time or some other procedure?

- Will visitors be screened when they enter the office? Has the agency considered the use of temperature checks and/or mandatory face coverings?
- Has the agency considered restricting certain in-office workloads in order to limit the number of customers coming into field offices? Perhaps only allowing customers to visit an office if their request or need can only be resolved in person.
- What is the agency's plan on processing cases that have been held due to an adverse action? How is the agency tracking these cases and how will we process them?

Core to NCSSMA's mission is providing pre-decisional input with regard to decisions that affect field offices and teleservice centers. The ongoing pandemic, implementation of reopening plans and continued telework will have a significant impact on field office and teleservice managers and their ability to manage effectively. We have identified several issues and suggestions from managers that demonstrate the need for our involvement.

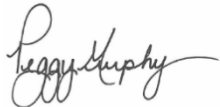
- Consistency in information and implementation across all regions is extremely important. The process by which the agency has disseminated complex information and instructions throughout this process has unfortunately led to confusion in some regions. We encourage a more streamlined and comprehensive approach going forward.
- Employees need to be able to bring home at least one extra monitor. This has not been consistent among regions.
- All employees need appropriate softphone headsets, much like the devices issued to teleworkers during the pilot. The workaround headsets, earphones, and Adobe Connect headsets do not function as well and are not conducive to an ongoing telework arrangement.
- We suggest a depot for hotspots and iPhones that can be accessed at a moment's notice, should the need arise, similar to the laptop depot.
- For more long-term consideration, the following would significantly aid managers and ensure they can devote their time to more appropriate oversight activities:
  - All automated notices and printouts should be mailed from a central location instead of printed and mailed from the local field office.
  - All mail should go to a central location for scanning into WorkTrack and then be transferred to the appropriate office.

Based on feedback, an overwhelming majority of managers are concerned about the exercise of having employees complete a daily activity log that serves to capture no more than high-level workload items. From our perspective, these logs are of no benefit to the

agency or the American public and are not a useful tool to hold employees accountable. Managers continue to hold employees accountable through the use of tools such as Skype, MI data, TSRP and VIPr reports to monitor employee work. Managers have expressed that holding employees accountable while working from home is not much different than holding them accountable in the office and that a log is not necessary. We would like to discuss the use of these logs and rationale.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and provide input from those who are responsible for frontline implementation of these critical decisions that affect field offices and teleservice centers nationwide. I look forward to your response, discussion and continued partnership during this crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peggy Murphy".

Peggy Murphy  
NCSSMA President