

The Occupational Requirements Survey (ORS) is an establishment survey developed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for the Social Security Administration (SSA). The survey collects information on the vocational preparation, cognitive demands, and physical requirements of occupations as well as the environmental conditions in which they are performed. This paper describes the need for ORS and the processes used to develop and validate the survey.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) administers disability programs, which provide benefit payments to millions of beneficiaries each year. Determination of eligibility is based on a process that evaluates the capabilities of the worker, the requirements of their past work, and their ability to perform other work.

For over 50 years, SSA has turned to the Department of Labor's Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) as its primary source of occupational information. The DOT was last updated in its entirety in the late 1970's, and a partial update was completed in 1991. Consequently, SSA adjudicators must refer to an increasingly outdated resource because it remains the most compatible with their statutory mandate and is the best source of data at this time.

When an applicant is denied benefits, SSA documents the decision by citing examples of jobs the claimant can still perform despite functional limitations. Since the DOT has not been updated, there are some jobs in the American economy that are not represented in the DOT and some jobs listed in DOT may no longer exist. The ORS will replace DOT with a dynamic list of jobs and work requirements that reflects current and changing conditions.

ORS will serve many stakeholders in addition to SSA, including job seekers, employment agencies, government agencies, and the disability community.