



Maryland Disability Determination Services Medical Relations News

SUMMER 2016

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We at the Maryland Disability Determination Services Medical Relations Office can't say THANK YOU enough! With the ever increasing workloads we all face and the continuous changes with the electronic environment we now work in, you continue to impress us day in and day out.

For joining the Electronic Records Express train and Electronic Outbound Requests via Fax ~ Merci!

For submitting your reports within 14 calendar days or less ~ Gracias!

For completing all critical aspects of your CE report ~ Obrigado!

For notifying the disability examiner of a broken CE appointment within 24 hours ~ Arigato!

For providing the best customer service to our claimants ~ Danke!

For your continued service and participation on our CE panel ~ Bedankt!

~ Thank you ~

Caroline, Carol, Cindi, Marge, Joyce, Navonne,
Nickole, Tamaqua, Sunny, Katrina & Bobbi



Introducing our newest Medical Relations Officer Joyce Lee

Joyce has worked at the Maryland Disability Determination Services (DDS) for 8 years and joined the Medical Relations Office in May of 2016. Prior to coming to DDS, she worked in the Baltimore City Public School system as an elementary and middle school Spanish Teacher.

“This promotion to Medical Relations Officer provides a profound opportunity to serve the citizens of Maryland in a different arena. I strive to provide a joyful spirit and optimum customer service for those applying for disability benefits.”

FOR THE RECORD

Disability Benefits - FAQs

- ⇒ Studies show a 20 year old worker has a 1 in 4 chance of becoming disabled before reaching full retirement age.
- ⇒ Under the Social Security Act, a person is disabled if he/she cannot work due to a severe medical condition that is expected to last at least one year or result in death and must prevent him/her from doing past work or adjusting to other work.
- ⇒ Social Security does not provide benefits to partial or short-term disability.
- ⇒ At the beginning of 2015, Social Security paid an average monthly disability benefit of \$1,165.
- ⇒ The number of people qualifying for benefits has increased due to the baby boomers and more women joining the workforce.
- ⇒ Social Security now offers many options to conduct business online, including applying for disability benefits.



Tips and Reminders



- * If an exam must be cancelled by the DDS, you will receive a call from the scheduler or examiner. Once the scheduler cancels the request in our legacy system, the authorization will be moved from your Open Requests to your Closed Requests. Do not use the ERE website to notify us of a cancelled appointment. The website is used only when submitting a report or notifying the disability examiner when a consultative examination (CE) has been broken by the claimant.
- * A paper claim in our office will not show up in your electronic queue. You will receive the CE authorization in the mail. The CE authorization is mailed out the day the CE is scheduled, which could be a few weeks prior to the exam. Please remember to make a note of the scheduled appointment and have the CE authorization available the day of the exam. You will receive a reminder phone call a few days before the CE, from a member of the CE scheduling staff.
- * Occasionally SSA will solicit providers to participate in ERE enhancement usability testing. Anyone interested in future testing can submit their name to: cindi.cannon@ssa.gov
- * **ERE NOT OPENED** - if the CE authorization is not opened before the CE date and time, the disability examiner will receive an **ERE Not Opened** message in the claimant's electronic file. We try to include medical records that should be reviewed prior to the CE appointment. Please take time to view the CE authorization in its entirety prior to the CE.



Scheduling... All in a day's work

The Scheduling Unit is comprised of four schedulers, an office clerk, an administrative aide and a supervisor. This small team of worker bees is tasked with scheduling and rescheduling all the CE appointments for claimants who live in every corner of the state of Maryland. In Fiscal Year (FY) 15, we scheduled 58,800 exams. We have over 400 CE Providers to manage by our staff of seven.

As you can imagine...we are extremely busy!

How can you help, you ask?

- If you are a “block” doctor, please give us dates at least four weeks or more before the exam date. The earlier - the better.
- If you are going on vacation, relocating your office or retiring, notify us as soon as possible - preferably at least four weeks in advance. If there is a change in your fax number or office phone number, notify us immediately.
- Clinic cancellations at the last minute create a huge workload that affects the claimant, scheduler and examiner. We understand emergencies do come up, however, please try to avoid cancellations whenever possible.
- Appointment rescheduling must be done by the examiner, as a new invoice with the correct date must be generated. If you need to reschedule a CE, you must call the claimant and the disability examiner.
- Renew your license in a timely manner. You cannot perform a CE with an expired license.
- Purchase the current editions of necessary testing. Although we do provide reminders, it is the responsibility of the practitioner to keep up-to-date with current testing requirements. New testing must be used one year after being published.

As a Consultative Exam Provider, you should...



- * Allow the claimant at least a ten minute window after the exam time. Although we ask our claimants to arrive on time, unforeseen circumstances do arise.
- * See the claimant at the scheduled time or shortly thereafter.
- * Notify the Medical Relations Director, E. Caroline Mason, via phone or email of any change in your license status, including suspension or other disciplinary measures by the state licensing authority.
- * Not perform additional testing without prior approval from the disability examiner.
- * Submit your signed report and invoice within 14 days from the date of the exam. If you expect a delay in submitting your report, notify the disability examiner that the report will be late.
- * Carefully review our authorization **prior** to testing to insure you are using appropriate testing and performing evaluation in full.



As the CE provider, you play an important part in our disability decision. Your detailed report provides the disability examiner with the additional evidence that is critical to making a fair and accurate disability determination.

It is good practice to begin your examination by explaining to the claimant why they are there. Let the claimant know you are conducting the exam or testing to get the specific information requested by the DDS. You will not take part in deciding whether or not they are disabled and cannot prescribe treatment or medication.

As you are representing our State agency, public perception is a priority. Do not give advice or suggestions or make statements our claimants may find offensive.

We value the service you provide to our agency.



Cooperative Disability Investigations (CDI) Program

In the autumn of 2014, the Maryland DDS first established their fraud investigations unit. During this fiscal year, SSA's fraud investigations have resulted in 23 claims denied or ceased with SSA savings over one million dollars; non-SSA savings of almost two million dollars; as well as one arrest. With the creation of the DDS fraud unit, the number of fraud referrals has increased from our examiners, doctors, field office representatives, and from the public. With the number of increased fraud referrals, we ask our CE providers to be on the lookout for potential fraud and know how to act in accordance with claimants flagged as a potential fraud investigation.

When a claimant is scheduled to attend a CE, please be on the look out for a notification for "fraud or similar fault". This will be noted in the examiner comments of the CE request. If the investigation is complete, the fraud investigator will document the findings in a Report of Investigation (ROI). The ROI will include observations of the claimant from surveillance, interviews, and social media/online postings. The ROI is included with any other relevant medical evidence and we ask that the CE Provider evaluate objectively. In other words, we do not want the providers to develop a bias.

Although we do not want our providers to develop a bias or provide personal opinions on whether the claimant is being fraudulent, we do want our providers to be more aware of the claimant's actions.

For example, did the claimant truly give good effort? Do the claimant's alleged and portrayed symptoms match the allegations? How did the claimant present himself or herself during the evaluation? Did the claimant bring a cane or other assistive device that showed usual wear and tear or did it appear the claimant brought it only for the evaluation?

In addition, the CE reports tend to provide a valuable opportunity for our investigator to conduct surveillance. Our investigator may try to observe the claimant as he or she enters the evaluation and may try to follow the claimant afterwards. The CE provider can further assist our investigations by documenting any observations in the waiting room and the claimant's mannerisms after the exam.

If a claimant is not under investigation, but the CE provider suspects the claimant is not being truthful with his or her statements or exaggerating limitations, the provider can do one of four things:

- **Call the Disability Fraud Hotline at 1-800-269-0271**
- **Alert the DDS Examiner**
- **Contact John Quattrociocchi, DDS CDI Analyst, at 410-308-4441**
- **Contact the Medical Relations Office at 410-308-4335**



WISC-V Scoring Reminder

There has been an increase in missing subtest scores and miscalculations with the WISC-V, so just as a reminder, the following 10 subtests are required to obtain the Full Scale Score and the Primary Index Scores we need to adjudicate the childhood claims using the WISC-V:

- Block Design, Similarities, Matrix Reasoning, Digit Span, Coding, Vocabulary, Figure Weights, Visual Puzzles, Picture Span, and Symbol Search.

All 10 subtests are needed, but use caution when calculating the Full Scale Score. The last three subtests listed (VP, PS, and SS) are used for index scores only and are not used in calculating the Full Scale Score.

To Our SLP Providers:

- Please provide a clear description of the claimant (did they arrive on time, who accompanied them, what language is spoken in the home, was there eye contact with the child, could the child make appropriate greetings, was the child neat and appropriately dressed or disheveled and disorganized?)
- Please provide behavioral observations and interactions, with examples (child rolls on floor, needs repetition, stares off into space, complies w/parental instructions, complies with CE provider tasks or not.)
- Please provide a history (is child in speech/language services, if so where? Is child coded on IEP under speech/language impairment?)
- Did the DDS examiner send any evidence prior to seeing the child. If so, was it reviewed?
- We need to know % intelligibility to an unfamiliar listener in unknown context. Does intelligibility improve with repetition? If it improves, what is the new % intelligibility?



CE Provider Recruitment Needs

Do you have colleagues who may be interested in performing consultative exams for our agency???

We are currently recruiting the following:

ENT/Otolaryngologists in Western Maryland
Neurologists in Prince Georges County

Although our specialty needs and location vary, your colleagues can send an email to the Medical Relations Supervisor to obtain our current needs.

carol.harsel@ssa.gov.



Fiscal Issues

- When our fees were updated in April of 2015, we included an additional billable fee when an interpreter is present at the CE. We can pay an additional fee of \$16.00. This additional fee will appear on our invoice page as "interpreter utilized at consultative exam". For verification purposes, please provide a written statement in the body of the report that an interpreter was in attendance at the CE.
- Faxed invoices are verified by the disability examiner, processed for payment by our fiscal staff and forwarded to the Maryland Comptroller's Office for payment. Submit invoices timely to receive faster payment.





Maryland DDS Recruitment

As part of the disability adjudication process, the Maryland DDS employs Physicians and Psychologists. This is a professional position responsible for providing consultative medical services and a review of medical records in accordance with regulations of the Social Security Administration.

We currently have a position for a part-time psychiatrist and part-time psychologist. See links below for the position description:

<http://www.jobaps.com/MD/sup/bulpreview.asp?R1=13&R2=006805&R3=001>

<http://www.jobaps.com/MD/sup/bulpreview.asp?R1=13&R2=006249&R3=002>

As our recruitment needs vary, visit the Maryland State Government website periodically to inquire about current openings at:

www.maryland.gov

For additional information, contact the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) Personnel Office at 410-554-9391.

NOTE: - if you perform CE's for our agency, you cannot also work at the Maryland DDS.

Part of the CE oversight process mandated by SSA, includes compiling data from claimants and report reviews from our in house consulting physicians and psychologists. Please sit back and enjoy a small sampling of the positive feedback we received over the past year!

Claimant feedback:

- ◆ The doctor was honest and sincere with their assessment.
- ◆ This doctor performed one of the most thorough examinations that I have received. Great doctor!
- ◆ They have every reason to be proud of the service they provide to all who enter those doors.

Consultant Feedback:

- ◆ They did their best with a very oppositional and poorly motivated claimant.
- ◆ They produced a very well-documented evaluation that hit on key points.
- ◆ It is always a pleasure reading this CE doctor's reports.
- ◆ The report was detailed and well written. It provided all the information we needed here at the DDS for our adjudication purposes.

THANK YOU



It is important to experience what your customers experience and listen to their ideas for improvement.

We want to hear from you! How can we make the process better?

Feel free to email E. Caroline Mason at: elizabeth.c.mason@ssa.gov