
the **NADE** **ADVOCATE**



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STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
Of The
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DISABILITY EXAMINERS

Susan Smith, President

Prepared For

**Subcommittee on Social Security
Of the Committee on Ways and Means**

**Hearing on Clearing the Disability Claims Backlogs: The Social Security
Administration's Progress and New Challenges Arising From the Recession**

November 19, 2009

Chairman Tanner, Congressman Johnson, and Members of the Subcommittee on Social Security: This hearing was called for the purpose of continuing this Subcommittee's examination of the Social Security Administration's efforts to reduce the unprecedented backlog in disability claims. The National Association of Disability Examiners (NADE) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments on this important issue and we commend the Subcommittee, and its Members, for their continuing oversight of this important issue.

Who We Are

NADE is a professional association whose purpose is to promote the art and science of disability evaluation. The majority of our members work in the state Disability Determination Service (DDS) agencies where 15,000+ employees adjudicate claims for Social Security and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits. As such, our members constitute the "front lines" of disability evaluation. However, our membership also includes many SSA Central and Regional Office personnel, attorneys, physicians, non-attorney claimant representatives, and claimant advocates. It is this diversity of our membership, combined with our extensive program knowledge and "hands on" experience, which enables NADE to offer a perspective on disability issues that is unique and which also reflects a programmatic realism which we believe is a critical factor for Members of this Subcommittee to consider.

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President's Message

AH, 2010 (WHETHER 20-10 OR two thousand ten), what a poetic sounding number. Have you made your New Year's resolution, and better yet, have you kept it? Did you know that half of all Americans make resolutions and less than ten percent of those people actually keep their resolutions? We are in the last year of the first decade of the new millennium – time to take an accounting.



Ten years ago, did you think the disability program would have advanced in the electronic environment as much as it has? Did you think there would be eCAT (electronic Case Analysis Tool), DCPS (Disability Case Processing System) or HIT (Health IT)? Did you think there would be QDD (Quick Disability Determination) and CAL (Compassionate Allowance)? Imagine what lies ahead in the next decade for the disability program!

NADE has been very busy since the National Training Conference in October. One of the highlights has been our recent testimony of record for the 11/19/09 Social Security Subcommittee hearing on the disability backlogs (you can find the report in

its entirety in this issue). We are preparing for our annual mid-year Board meeting which will take place February 11-13 in Baltimore, Maryland at the Harbor Court Hotel. All members are encouraged to attend.

January begins our annual membership drive. The future of our professional organization depends upon increases in membership. Increases in membership will provide the needed resources for our involvement in a variety of programs, projects and activities that will expand NADE's overall growth. My challenge to you is this...this year, this month, this day, this moment resolve to get just one new member to join.

Our regional training conferences will begin in March in Charleston, South Carolina, followed by Little Rock, Arkansas, Columbus, Ohio, and Boise, Idaho. Our conferences are one of the greatest benefits of NADE. The training you receive is invaluable, and the friendships you will form priceless. I urge each and every one of you to try and attend at least one.

This year promises to be full of new challenges, new opportunities, and new beginnings for NADE. Let us resolve to make it a good one!

Happy New Year!

The NADE Advocate is the official publication of the National Association of Disability Examiners. It provides a forum for responsible comments concerning the disability process. Official NADE positions are found in the comments by the NADE President and NADE Position Papers.

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Letters to the Editor are welcomed and may be selected for inclusion in future issues. Please forward ideas for future Advocate topics to the editor or your Regional Publications Representative. The next issue will be published in **Spring, 2010**.

All correspondence should be directed through your Regional representative or NADE editor by **March 15, 2010**.

Spotlight on Certification

by Ellen Cook, Professional Development Chair

The following members have been recently Certified as Disability Professionals under NADE's Certification Program. Congratulations to:

These members have successfully met the requirements for Re-Certification as Disability Professionals.

Member	State	Expiration Date
Tom Bartels	IL	Jun 2012
Lee Behnke	IL	Jun 2012
Bill Buchanan	IL	Jun 2012
Karen Brown	IL	Jun 2012
Jennifer Elders	IL	Jun 2012
David Faulkner	IL	Jun 2012
Jim Finchum	IL	Jun 2012
Pam Kietzman	IL	Jun 2012
Suzanne Maddox	IL	Jun 2012
Bemajedareki Williams	IL	Jun 2012
Debbie Yard	IL	Jun 2012
Connie Watkins	IL	Jun 2012
Andrea L. Franklin	GA	Jun 2012
Tom F. Shadid, PhD.	OK	Jun 2012
Donald K. Bruce, PhD.	VA	Jun 2012
Ellen Ryan, MD	CO	Jun 2012
Rida N. Azer MD	MD	Jun 2012
Tracey McKee	MD	Jun 2012
Beverly Moore	MD	Jun 2012
Deborra Lawson	WA	Jun 2012
Richard T. Chamberlin MD, FACB	ME	Jun 2012

Member	State	Expiration Date
Tonya M. Scott	GA	Jun 2012
Karyn W. Speight	WY	Jun 2012
Sherry Sissom	MO	Jul 2012
Sheila Beggs	MO	Jul 2012
Kyla Ressel	MO	Jul 2012
Albert N. Zarza	NJ	Jul 2012
Dayle M. Smith	MD	Jul 2012
Dennis E. Williams, Sr.	VA	Jul 2012
Cheryl A. Hann	MD	Aug 2012
Susan Smith	OH	Aug 2012
Carol Tenholder	MO	Aug 2012

Please see the NADE website under Careers, then Certification to obtain complete information about NADE's Certification Program.



*Did you know you can access the quarterly DCPS newsletters at:
<http://co.ba.ssa.gov/odd/specialprojects/dcps/news>*

Are you Certified through NADE?

**Certification applications
are available on the NADE website:
www.nade.org**

**Or You May Contact The
Professional Development
Committee Chair**

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Welcome to NADE's newest chapter! Pacific Region's Chapter 71 - Stockton, California

NADE CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

2010 National Training Conference	Crown Plaza Albany City Center Albany, NY	Sept. 11-16, 2010
SE/MA/NE Tri-Regional Conference	Francis Marion Hotel	Charleston SC Mar 7-10, 2010
SW/Great Plains Bi-Regional Conference	Doubletree Hotel	Little Rock AR April 14-16, 2010
Great Lakes Regional Conference	Holiday Inn	Columbus OH May 5-7, 2010
Pacific Regional Conference	Owyhee Plaza Hotel	Boise ID May 20-21, 2010

Disability Claims Backlog Testimony

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NADE members – throughout the DDSs, SSA Regional Offices, SSA Central Office, ODAR offices and throughout the private sector, are deeply concerned about the integrity and efficiency of both the Social Security and the SSI disability programs. Simply stated, we believe those who are entitled to disability benefits under the law should receive them; those who are not, should not. We believe decisions on disability claims should be reached in a timely, efficient and equitable manner. The continuing backlogs in disability claims are an embarrassment to SSA, to DDSs, to Field Offices, to ODAR, and they are a nightmare to those waiting for a decision.

NADE members are very appreciative of the support Members of this Subcommittee have provided to the disability program for so many years. Your recognition of the critical need for adequate resources at SSA, and your willingness to accept a leadership responsibility on this matter, has resulted in significant increases in the vital funding urgently needed for SSA to combat not only the issue of the backlogs in claims, but the myriad of other issues that were the result of chronic under-funding of SSA. We greatly appreciate the support for increased funding in recent years as well as the additional \$1.092 billion in funding included for SSA in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. We hope Members of this Subcommittee will continue to take the lead in recognizing that congressional appropriation of adequate resources is a critical component to the solution for the disability claims backlogs.

The Problem With Backlogs

The Social Security Administration is facing an unprecedented backlog of more than 1.3 million claims for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability benefits. The backlog of claims has traditionally been particularly problematic at the hearings stage, where the backlogs more than doubled since 2000 — from about 310,000 claims to more than 765,000 — and the average waiting time per claim has soared to nearly 500 days. But SSA has begun to make some progress toward resolving this issue, only to be confronted by an unexpected nightmare at the initial claims level. Just when SSA was ready to tout some success in reducing the hearings backlog, “BAM!” the deepening recession contributed to an unanticipated significant increase of 15% in the number of initial claims filed in the past year. Even before this increase in claims arrived, many DDSs (Disability Determination Services), the State Agencies charged with processing these initial (and reconsideration) claims, were reporting that staffing shortages had resulted in many disability examiners carrying caseloads two, three and even four times the number considered to be an optimum caseload. Even though these cases were assigned, the sheer volume of work made it unlikely these cases would be processed timely.

FY2009 ended with 783,000 initial claims pending in the DDSs, an increase of 18% in just the past six months! The number of initial claims pending in the DDS will exceed one million by the end of FY 2010. These high caseloads and backlogs of pending cases can, unfortunately, lead to mistakes in case development and contribute to mistakes in judgment, resulting in the potential for erroneous decisions. The time required to process claims grows longer at each stage of the claims process and claimants now must wait months for an initial decision and, if they are denied, will often find themselves waiting years for a final decision from SSA on their appeal.

Addressing the Backlogs

Addressing the backlogs in disability claims is a high priority for NADE. However, of equal concern is the average time it takes to process a claim, now 89 days for an initial claim pending at the DDS and nearly 500 days at the hearing level. Both processing times are too long and many people suffer needlessly as a result of these backlogs and extended processing times. Individual conditions can worsen during these lengthy wait times and can even lead to death. It is critical that answers be found to effectively resolve the persistent questions surrounding the backlogs and reducing the average processing time at all levels in the disability claims process.

Faced with the reality of under-funded budgets and high attrition levels, caused in part by a heavy retirement wave that swept through SSA and the DDSs, SSA made some difficult policy and personnel decisions designed to permit the Agency to deal with the increasing number of claims with decreasing numbers of personnel. Quite frankly, many of these decisions did not produce the desired result and the Agency’s ability to deal with the increasing number of claims was diminished even more so.

The growing complexity of the Social Security and SSI Disability Programs, coupled with the need to produce a huge volume of work, justifies even more the need for adequate resources in order to provide the service that the American public has come to expect and deserve from SSA. It takes an average of two years for a newly hired disability examiner to become fully trained and proficient to the point they can function independently and contribute to the process of making timely and accurate disability decisions. Thus, decisions not to replace productive personnel when they leave can take two or more years to correct even after new hires are made. NADE has long maintained that it is critical for SSA to be provided with the resources needed to hire and train new staff that can perform these duties. Low salaries, hiring restrictions and the stress of the job have contributed to high attrition (12.3%) in the DDSs. In recent years, Congress has recognized the problem of inadequate staffing and appropriated necessary funding. However, many states have imposed hiring freezes and other personnel decisions that have impacted their DDSs and limited their access to these funds. States that have accessed these funds to make

new hires are two or more years away from realizing the full productive potential of these new hires.

In FY 2008, for the first time in 15 years, Congress appropriated more money for SSA's administrative budget than the President requested. We are very grateful for this support. The congressional action of FY 2008 was a first step in what will be a long road back to management stability for SSA. Further congressional action with regard to SSA's FY 2009 and FY 2010 budget demonstrates the ongoing commitment Congress has made to providing the necessary funding for SSA to resolve its crises. It now falls to SSA, and its components, to utilize these funds in ways that will produce the desired outcome.

While we are appreciative of this increased financial support, we do wish to caution that congressional and public expectations must be realistic and acknowledge that years of constant under-funding cannot be undone overnight or even in one or two budget years. However, the additional funding will ultimately lead to a reduction in the backlogs of claims at the initial and hearing level.

State Furloughs

Incredibly, the efforts made by Congress to address the problems in the disability program may be negated by the decisions of State Governors. It most certainly will be negatively impacted. Some states have adopted hiring freezes and furloughs of state employees to reduce their state expenditures. The leadership at SSA, aided by professional organizations such as NADE, have consistently pointed out that DDS employees are 100% federally funded and have no impact on a state's budget problems and should be exempt from these drastic actions. Many Members of Congress have, likewise issued similar appeals to Governors in their States to exempt the DDS employees from these unwise budgetary decisions.

While limited success was achieved in a few states, the majority of states pursuing these personnel actions failed to exempt DDS employees from being furloughed along with other state employees with the result being that DDS employees in about ten states are being furloughed one to three days each month. A typical one day furlough will cost the State \$345,000 in administrative funding that must be returned to the federal government. An average of 731 claims will be affected by this one day furlough and \$149,900 in monthly benefits will be delayed. Furloughing state employees who are 100% federally funded reduces the amount of state and federal taxes these employees will pay, thereby making a poor state budget situation even worse. Also, potential new jobs are not created and existing jobs are not fully staffed. Claimants waiting for decisions on their claims are forced to wait even longer while State Governors turn a deaf ear to the pleas of their employees, to the pleas of professional organizations such as NADE, to the pleas of Members of Congress and, incredibly, to the pleas of the very citizens they were elected to serve.

In its November, 2009 report entitled "Impact of State Budget Issues on SSA's Disability Programs," the SSA Office of Inspector General (OIG) estimated that state imposed furloughs of DDS personnel has created a 14% shortfall of capacity for processing disability claims, delaying 69,000 claims and issuance of \$126 million in benefits. Any Governor who dares to claim their decision to furlough DDS personnel has not negatively impacted the citizens of their State is not being truthful and the statistical data will show this. In fact, SSA's Inspector General, the Honorable Patrick O'Carroll, recently declared, while addressing the issue of state furloughs, "it is indisputable that these state actions have resulted in delays and kept benefits out of the hands of those in need."

The excuse most often given by State Governors for not exempting DDS employees from the furloughs and hiring freezes is that they do not wish to treat one group of state employees differently from another. NADE can appreciate their wishes in this matter. However, we would like to ask these Governors if all of their state employees were locked in a burning building, and they could only save a few, would they allow all to perish in order to treat them all the same?

The State Treasurer of North Carolina, Ms. Janet Cowell, commented on March 24, 2009 that, "furloughs are not a long term solution and can, in fact, harm a state's financial stability." Actions that can eventually lead to financial instability should require more careful oversight and Congress should rightfully intercede on behalf of all state employees who are 100% federally funded and demand the States exempt these employees from further furloughs and hiring freezes.

Progress Is Being Made

In spite of the unanticipated increase in initial claims applications and subsequent increase in the number of initial claims pending, we would like to point out that some progress has been made. In FY 2009, DDSs processed 175,000 more initial disability claims than had been expected by SSA when FY 2009 goals were established. Even though the DDSs received nearly 400,000 more initial claims applications in FY 2009 than we had received in FY 2008, the number of initial claims pending in the DDSs actually increased only marginally. And, we reduced the average processing time for initial claims by 5 days!

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Disability Claims Backlog Testimony

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Unfortunately, new hiring in the DDSs has not yet produced an adequate number of trained disability examiners needed to process the soaring number of initial claims (3.3 million initial claims are expected in FY 2010, more than 700,000 more than was received in FY 2008). While new hiring is occurring at nearly unprecedented levels, the time required for these new hires to become proficient at their jobs will make their impact on the initial case workload minimal in FY 2010 and only marginally more so in FY 2011. Also, since the number of initial claims applications is expected to continue to increase and actually number 1.2 million more initial claims in FY 2010 than was received in FY 2008 the DDSs will continue to face extraordinary stress in dealing with the mounting number of claims. Personnel decisions made at the state level to furlough DDS employees will continue to negatively impact on the level of service the DDSs can provide. The result of these multiple forces will be that the number of initial claims pending is expected to increase over the next few years until such time that actions taken by the DDSs and by SSA can have their optimal effect and lead to a reduction in the backlog of claims.

New initiatives launched by SSA to improve the level of service we provide to the American public, including the Quick Disability Determination (QDD) and the Compassionate Allowance (CAL) decisions resulted in 100,000 Americans with the most severe disabilities receiving a decision on their claim in less than 20 days. In FY 2010, SSA plans to expand the number of CAL cases with the expectation that 140,000 cases will be processed as such.

DDSs were utilized to assist SSA in reducing the number of pending claims at the hearings level and nearly 54,000 cases were sent to the DDSs to be re-evaluated with the result being that 15,000 of these claims were allowed by the DDSs much quicker than if they had been forced to continue to wait for a hearing. We are pleased to note that the number of claims pending at the hearing level, which has been the prior focus of so many hearings by this Subcommittee, declined by 38,000 cases in FY 2009. SSA continues to explore and implement new methods to reduce the backlog of claims pending at the hearing level.

These service improvements are due, in part, to the increased hiring SSA has been able to make in the past two years as a result of the increased funding provided by Congress. Nearly 8,600 new employees have been hired since 2008, the largest number of new hires by SSA in 35+ years. However, until these new employees are fully trained, they will not achieve maximum productivity. SSA and the DDSs also maximized the availability of overtime to process cases.

Potential Solutions to the Backlogs

- NADE strongly believes the Single Decision Maker (SDM) can help to alleviate some of the backlogs at the initial level of case processing. The SDM has proven to be successful in producing high quality decisions and to also be a time saver when processing claims. SSA should expand the SDM initiative to all DDSs and to all case types, not only to reduce initial backlogs, but to lower processing times at the initial level. With the adoption of national standards for SDM and continued improvements in the availability of ongoing training for disability examiners, the SDM can represent part of the solution to the crisis of backlogs and lengthy processing times at the DDS. SSA did recently announced plans to expand SDM authority to QDD and CAL cases.

NADE absolutely supports the need for the expert medical advice in the DDS that is provided by DDS Medical and Psychological/Psychiatric Consultants. However, such advice is best utilized on the more complex cases. Allowing these medical and psychological experts to invest their years of training and practical experience on cases where it is truly needed, instead of being used simply to sign off on simple decisions, can have a truly positive impact on the quality of the decision-making in the DDS which can have the positive effect of lowering the processing time for initial claims and diminishing the backlogs of cases pending at the initial level and at ODAR.

- Continued increases in staffing at the Field Office, DDS, and ODAR are a necessity for any rational expectation that the SSA can address the backlogs. It is no coincidence the backlogs have occurred after a period of downsizing within SSA. Some downsizing occurred as SSA sought to utilize precious financial resources in other areas rather than filling vacant positions. With the expectation that new designs in service delivery would allow the Agency to absorb the workload with fewer staff, SSA chose to invest its limited financial resources into technology enhancements. The problem became magnified when the new designs for service delivery failed to produce the results forecasted and many of the technology improvements equally failed to produce the desired results. The Agency was literally caught with no back up plan in place. Recent actions to appropriate new and additional funding will likely produce positive results toward reducing the backlogs but these results cannot reasonably be expected until new staff has become adequately trained in requisite job skills to produce at the level necessary to make an impact.
- SSA and DDSs will have to initiate the development of a career path for employees and adopt other employee friendly steps to reduce the increasing attrition rates that have robbed the Agency of its institutional knowledge base. As experienced staff walk out the door, either due to retirement or because of career changing decisions, SSA and the DDSs have struggled in many parts

of the country to attract the kind of new hires that will keep the Agency at a level of competence required in its service delivery. Prior to the recent economic downturn, DDSs were reporting an annual attrition rate approaching 15% with more than 22% of newly hired disability examiners leaving by the end of their first year. The result has been an increasing lack of experienced personnel to process increasingly more complex disability claims and forcing the DDSs to utilize limited training funds to continually hire new staff, rather than provide ongoing training for existing staff. While anecdotal evidence suggests this level of attrition has diminished as a result of the economic downturn, it is reasonable to expect that, without proper planning and the development of proper career paths, the attrition will resume once the economy rebounds.

NADE believes additional staff is needed in SSA's Field Offices and tele-service centers. These are the **"Front Doors"** of SSA and people walking through these doors deserve the kind of service one should expect from SSA. Allowing phones to go unanswered and/or requiring people to wait so long in SSA's Field Offices that many give up and leave because there are insufficient number of people to answer the phones or help them fill out the proper forms, is not the way government should serve the people. Field Office personnel also perform a valuable service in maintaining program integrity.

NADE believes additional hiring is needed at the ALJ level, both in terms of support staff as well as the need for additional administrative law judges. We are pleased to see SSA has recently made significant hires at this level and has announced plans to hire additional staff. As with new DDS staff, we caution these additional hires will need time to become sufficiently trained and adequately prepared for their task.

- SSA's continued investment in technology enhancements will continue to have an impact on the overall quality of the program and can be expected to produce a positive impact on reducing the backlogs. New initiatives in the exchange of health information technology (HIT), development of a new national computer data center, and other steps to modernize the Agency's technology infrastructure will provide support for increased staffing and have a positive impact on the Agency's *ability to address the crisis of backlogged claims*.

eCAT – Electronic Claims Analysis Tool – is an example of new technology that is proving to be both innovative and extremely valuable in improving the quality and consistency of DDS decision-making. As this new technological tool is rolled out nationwide, greater efficiency of service can be expected.

- The increase in applications at the initial level and the increase in appeal filings can be expected to continue as long as the economy is in its current state of crisis. Decisions made by State governors to furlough DDS employees and to subject their DDS to state hiring freezes must be recognized for what they are – political theatre that has no real justification and, in fact, has proven to be harmful to their state's citizenry. While some Governors have had the audacity to claim their decisions have not impacted on service, statistical data proves otherwise. In each state impacted by furlough and hiring freeze decisions, the level of service provided by the DDS has been adversely affected. State Governors making these nonsensical decisions must be persuaded, by whatever means necessary, to reverse their decisions and, in those cases where state employees are 100% federally funded, allow these employees to perform their jobs unimpeded.
- Other actions, such as shifting workloads to less busier offices, have been made possible by the technological improvements to date and we expect additional positive action in this regard. With fewer staff available, SSA has deferred some workloads. Although we caution this practice can have future negative consequences, it does enable the limited staff available currently to focus their efforts and concentrate on the backlogged claims.

What Does the Future Hold?

New service initiatives announced by SSA, combined with increased funding to provide for the adequate resources and staffing necessary to meet the challenges posed by the increase in claims, will enable SSA and the DDSs to reduce the number of claims pending at the initial level to about 525,000 by the end of FY 2013. NADE pledges its support to SSA to assist in efforts to reach this goal. Likewise, SSA is expected to continue to make progress toward improving the backlog of claims pending at the hearings level.

Many of the number of claims currently pending at the initial level will eventually reach the hearing level and can potentially have an adverse impact on the backlog of claims pending at this level. However, we remain extremely hopeful that recent progress made at the hearing level to reduce their backlog will continue and ODAR will be better equipped to deal with this impending flow of new claims to their offices. However, we stress that no one component in this process has all the answers and no one component in this process can afford to relax its efforts.

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Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs) and Program Integrity Issues

Limited resources in recent years have forced SSA to reduce the number of CDRs performed. Of concern to NADE is the past history of these types of actions and the resultant impact as the agency falls behind in these critical reviews. Whenever a backlog of CDRs occurred previously it took a great deal of effort by all components of SSA to reach a point where CDR reviews were being conducted as scheduled. It took a significant number of years of dedicated funding solely for the purpose of conducting CDRs before SSA was current with CDR reviews. With the decrease in the number of CDR reviews done in the past few years, there is now a real danger the Agency will, once again, find itself in the position of having backlogs of overdue CDRs. Thus, it is possible the Agency will work itself out of one backlog into another.

While there are increased administrative costs (including the purchase of medical evidence, claimant transportation costs and increased utilization of contract medical consultants) with the performance of CDRs, there is a potential for significant savings in program costs with the elimination of benefits paid to beneficiaries who are found to be no longer eligible for disability benefits due to no longer meeting the SSA Disability program requirements. The estimate is that for every \$1 in administrative cost spent on conducting CDRs, \$10 of program funds is saved. This historical ratio of 10-1 was evidenced most recently when, in FY 2008, SSA spent \$281 million to conduct a limited number of CDRs, with eventual cessation of benefits for 36,000 individuals, leading to program cost savings of \$3.3 billion.

While NADE agrees that it was necessary to decrease the number of CDRs done over the last couple of years, given the status of SSA's budget and the need to utilize staff to process other case types, this decision has repeatedly been described by many, including a former SSA commissioner and members of this Subcommittee, as "penny-wise and pound-foolish". It is essential to program integrity that CDR reviews be conducted in a timely manner to ensure that only those who continue to be eligible are receiving disability benefits. Dedicated funding has been shown to be the best means of SSA staying current with the CDR workload.

NADE is appreciative that the proposed FY2010 budget provides \$758 million for SSA program integrity initiatives, an increase of \$254 million from FY 2009. This will enable SSA and the DDSs to complete 794,000 CDRs including 329,000 full medical CDRs. In addition to the CDRs, 2,422,000 SSI Age 18 Re-determinations will be processed. Even so, this number will lead to an increase in the CDR backlog of over 100,000 cases, leaving the number of pending cases needing full medical CDRs at approximately 1.5 million. When the increased staffing in the DDSs has reached a sufficient number to address the issue of CDR backlogs, we urge this Subcommittee to recommend that Congress should appropriate dedicated funding for CDRs to ensure this workload gets the attention it deserves.

Anti-fraud efforts such as the Cooperative Disability Investigative (CDI) units which effectively utilize the strengths and talents of OIG, disability examiners, and local law enforcement, offer a visible and effective front-line defense for program integrity and serve as a visible and effective deterrent to fraud. SSA's Inspector General attributed the success of the CDI units to investigate fraud allegations to the efforts of, "... those most qualified to detect fraud – DDS adjudicators." NADE supports the continued expansion of the CDI units to combat fraud and abuse in the disability program. An experienced disability examiner can be one of the most effective deterrents to fraud and abuse. NADE urges Congress and SSA to take appropriate action to ensure the experience level in the DDSs can be maintained.

Summary

The operational challenges facing SSA are substantial and are expected to become even more acute in the coming years as our society ages, as baby boomers continue to enter their most disability prone years, as the economy continues to offer periodic setbacks, etc. Decades of inadequate resources for SSA, combined with increased workloads and less than desirable results from multiple redesign efforts, have not only caused backlogs in the number of disability claims pending at the initial and hearing levels, but has allowed existing backlogs to increase. Processing times, expected to decline with the introduction of new technology have, instead, increased due to sufficient resources in personnel.

Recent increases in funding for SSA's administrative budget can be expected to produce reductions in the Agency's backlogged claims and lead to improvements in processing times at all levels. However, this new funding cannot, and will not, overnight, make up for mistakes of the past. The need to hire, train and deploy new staff will take several years before any realistic expectation that they will contribute significantly toward efforts to reduce the backlogs of claims. A variety of management strategies can be utilized to help diminish the backlogs and produce the desired improvements in processing time but these strategies will have future consequences.

No amount of planning by SSA can reverse the negative impact on production and processing times caused by state hiring freezes and state employee furloughs that affect DDS personnel. Congress must support the Commissioner's efforts to force the states to exempt DDS employees, who are 100% federally funded, from state hiring freezes and furloughs of state employees.

Continued on next page

The crisis of backlogged disability claims, while a significant problem, cannot be used as a reason to abandon program integrity initiatives. It remains critically important that the public's confidence in the disability program not only be restored but maintained.

No other agency has a greater impact on the quality of life in this nation than SSA and the American public will judge the ability of their government to meet their needs almost solely by the quality of service provided by SSA. People with disabilities, already burdened by the challenges of their illness/injury, are often in desperate need of benefits to replace lost income. They deserve timely and accurate decisions through a fair and understandable process. Our challenge, and one which must be met, then is to ensure the disability determination and appeals process meets those criteria. Social Security must do better in fulfilling its promise and NADE stands ready, willing, and able to assist in fulfilling that promise. Thank you.



Implications of Developments in Worker's Compensation for Social Security Disability Insurance

Policy Research seminar by

The Social Security Administration and the National Academy of Social Insurance

National Press Club - Washington, DC

Wednesday, November 18, 2009

by Attendee: Patricia D. Spearman; DDS Richmond, VA

THE SEMINAR PROMOTED dialogue and understanding among experts in the nation's two largest income maintenance programs: SSDI and Workers Compensation (WC).

Innovations to improving services to beneficiaries who qualify for both WC and SSI have been in research in five states (NM, CA, WA, WI and NY).

Currently SSA relies on self-reporting of beneficiaries. It is estimated that about 8% of beneficiaries receive both. Coordination of benefits (COB) was a significant area of reform. Social Security currently obtains verification, interprets verifications and Offset payments by calculations.

There were some overlaps in disability management between the two programs. However, barriers to data management between the two programs were significant. Some of the barriers to data management were the complicated IT systems, different definitions of disability between WC/SSI, job injury under reporting, backlog in both systems.

Twenty per cent of SSDI benefits were attributed to work related injury. Most WC claims never transition to SSDI benefits. Of the 20 percent that were

attributed to work related injury, most had exceeded the expiration date to file a worker's comp claim so appropriate data was missing. Two-thirds of job injuries were not reported to the employers.

Both Social Security and WC have a different definition of disability. The implications to the insurer were mostly in the type of treatment. WC insurers had more acute aggressive treatment and SSI insurers had more evidence based treatment. State based rehab programs were discussed. Ticket to work and return to work initiatives from employee/ employer remain constant. Return to work incentives were discussed. These included vocational rehab vouchers and linkage disability to occupational healthcare with scheduled visits.

Data management and the advantage of linkage were discussed. Administrative concerns to offset the cost of COB. Four Policy Options were Enact the SSDI Secondary Payer Act, Reform of the Entitlement Program, improving the gap between permanent partial disability and Administrative communication. Both programs found that ticket to work programs and return to work initiatives were successful.

Administrative costs in communication were projected to increase in linkage due to evaluation and monitoring systems of both SSI and WC. IT personnel cost to monitor both systems and manage both systems presented costly. IT personnel rarely remained with the agency which presented a constant turnover. Data between states when a person injured in one state leaves that state presented a gap in information. Third party representatives, litigation and due process presented a time factor when involving both agencies in having to rely on their services to obtain information from the insurer. Another factor was in the accountability and violation of the privacy act due to the number of people involved in the administrative process. Other agency involvement presented some delay in communication.

A discussion on the Benefit and Employer Cost Trends in California was presented by a special agency who received research funding to evaluate what works, costs and the impact to the insurer and beneficiary. Innovations in Return to Work was also presented by Office of Program and Development, SSA, Robert Weathers, Seth Seabury, California WC system and Terrence WC board of British Columbia. A host of presenters preceded this group.



NADE's Top Issues for 2010



(This list does not reflect level of importance – all issues have equal importance)

- Continued support for appropriate level of funding for SSA and DDSs to insure that sufficient resources, including staffing levels and funds to expand SSA's Health IT initiative, purchase medical evidence of record (MER) and consultative examinations (CEs), are available to process the increasing workloads.
- Continued support for improvements in customer service, including improvements in processing time and significant reductions in pending backlogs at the initial, reconsideration and hearing levels. Furloughs of federally funded DDS employees, imposed by some States to reduce their own budget deficits, have no effect in this regard and, in fact, have an adverse effect in higher costs to the State and diminished service to the people. Furloughs of DDS employees should be eliminated as they contribute to the backlogs of claims at the initial and reconsideration levels and may also impact on the accuracy and timeliness of decision-making.
- Continued support for a national roll-out of the Single Decision-Maker (SDM) model, coupled with the establishment of national standards for qualifications of Disability Examiners to become SDMs. NADE also seeks the enhancement of the role of the DDS Medical Consultant as a true consultant, especially on the more complicated disability cases, and for greater recognition of the DDS Medical Consultant as a Member of the DDS Adjudicative Team.
- Continued support for efforts to develop a professional certification process for Disability Examiners, DDS Medical Consultants and DDS Support Staff personnel. A professional certification process, as a professional growth plan, will enhance the potential to hire and retain more qualified staff and to ensure their continued ongoing professional education that can be expected to be reflected in the speed and accuracy of their decision-making.
- Continued support for a reduction in the 15 year relevant vocational period. Jobs change significantly in today's global economy/job market and a lengthy 15 year period is both nonsensical and problematic. Also, to save processing time, NADE supports eliminating the need for disability decision makers to consider Step 4 in Sequential Evaluation when the claimant would still be a denial at Step 5.
- Continued support for Disability Program Integrity initiatives, including revisions in the Continuing Disability Review (CDR) process and the medical improvement review standard, and expansion of the Continuing Disability Investigation (CDI) units.
- Continued support for the elimination or reduction of the 5 month waiting period for Title II claimants to receive cash benefits and for the elimination or reduction of the 24 month waiting period for eligibility for Medicare benefits. Allowing the disabled to receive cash benefits and access to health care earlier, there is a greater potential to reduce the long-term costs for health care and a greater likelihood that claimants could return to work.

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Spotlight on Regional Conferences

Southeast/Mid-Atlantic/Northeast/
Tri-Regional
Training Conference

Charleston, SC
(Historic District)

March 7-10, 2010

Welcome to Charleston, South Carolina and the NADE 2010 Tri-Regional Training Conference! Whether you are interested in shopping, history, culture, architecture, or great food Charleston has it all!

Wander the cobblestone streets, visit the excellent museums, and enjoy fresh seafood and boutique shopping. Take a carriage ride through our beautiful and historic streets. And enjoy our Southern hospitality!



Charleston's Francis Marion Hotel is a fine venue for our 2010 training conference. In the historic district, this hotel offers easy access to restaurants, shops, tours, and attractions.

This year's conference is filled with excellent programming, networking opportunities, and awards that will keep attendees busy and excited from start to finish. Also don't miss our breaks, door prizes, vendors, and our beautiful hospitality suite. Have a great time while attending our conference and enjoying all that Charleston has to offer!

Marion Hotel: \$142.00 single/double (or prevailing gov't per diem rate whichever is higher)

For online reservations use code NADE

Call 877-756-2121
and ask for the 3/2010
NADE Conference rate.

Lisa Varner, PhD
lisa.varner@ssa.gov

843.953.038

Contacts:

Cindia Deith
cindia.deith@ssa.gov

Or

803.957.1425

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800.293.1304

More Conference Updates

The Natural State of Disability

Southwest / Great Plains Bi-Regional Conference

April 14-16, 2010

Doubletree Hotel
424 West Markham
Little Rock, AR 72201

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____

Job Title: _____

Are you a Regional Board Member: __; Chapter President: __; Speaker: __; Vendor: __;

Full Conference: \$110 _____

Awards Luncheon \$25 _____

One day: \$85 _____ (includes Awards Luncheon)

One Day: \$60 _____ (w/o Awards Luncheon)

T-shirts \$10 Size: S __; M __, L __; XL __

Optional Activities:

__ World of the Pharoahs, Exhibit; Arkansas Arts Center
\$17 4:30PM Tuesday, April 13th (transportation provided)

__ Clinton Library \$7 12:30PM Wednesday, April 14th

Other tours will be available at various times during the conference.

They include: LR Central High School National Historic Site & Visitor Center, Heifer International World Headquarters, Arkansas State Capitol

**These tours will have an ARKADE representative w/each group and are free, transportation is also provided.

Total: \$ _____

Mail registration form to:
DDSSA ARKADE- Conference
Attn: Sandy Sipes
701 S. Pulaski St
Little Rock, AR 72201

Registration Chair: Sandy Sipes, 501-682-6125; Sandra.Sipes@ssa.gov

Conference Coordinator: Lance Howell, 501-683-1048; Lance.Howell@ssa.gov

Date Received: _____

By: _____

Amt: _____

Check #: _____

Registration form with the lower portion completed will be in your conference packet and will serve as receipt. If your agency requires another type of receipt, please contact Suzanne Scott, 501-683-4767; Suzanne.Scott@ssa.gov

Doubletree Hotel
(501)372-4371
(800)222-TREE
Rate: \$129/night

Contact:
Lance Howell
Lance.Howell@ssa.gov or

Suzanne Scott
Suzanne.Scott@ssa.gov

For Conference agenda, go to: <http://www.nade.org/CONFERENCEupdates.htm>

Buckeye State to Host Great Lakes Regional Training Conference “Navigating the Tides of Change”



**Holiday Inn
Columbus-Worthington**

**Columbus, OH
\$80.00 single/double**

**Contact:
Co-Chairs:**

**Susan Smith
susan.x.smith@ssa.gov**

**Claire Cowley
claire.cowley@ssa.gov
614.438.1665**

THE COLUMBUS, OHIO CHAPTER will host the Great Lakes Regional Training Conference May 5-7, 2010 at the Holiday Inn Worthington. The hotel rate will be \$80 for single or double occupancy. This rate will be honored Tuesday, May 4 through Thursday, May 6.



Topics will include psychological testing in the deaf community, stem cell research, and understanding obesity in the listings.

For reservations, call 614-436-0700 (ask for the Great Lakes Training Conference rate). For further details, contact Susan Smith at 614-438-1879, or Claire Cowley at 614-438-1665.

Chapter News

North Dakota's Peace Garden Association Is Small But Mighty

We were very pleased to send two delegates to the National NADE convention in Covington, KY in October and happier yet to meet Ruby Burrell and Commissioner Michael Astrue and have pictures taken with them. We received 1st place for small chapter in Publications, Organ Donating Life and NDPW. Kari and I will be getting together this week and plan to put some finishing touches on a CD we plan to show the rest of the ND DDS in February, 2010. Fundraisers have included soup luncheons during the noonhour. Monies collected was used to donate to the annual BECEP project for a family in need as we bought a winter coat and helped with auto expenses for the family vehicle. Money was also donated to the Ruth Meier's House for homeless individuals.

Over the Christmas holiday, PGADE decorated Christmas trees in the office and participated in decorating our office doors as well, adding to a festive look for the season. Goodies were shared with the group. We are pleased to announce that Kari Kramer was promoted to a Disability Claims Analyst II and Sandy Heck has done recon training with newly promoted analysts.

Election of officers for 2010: Ellen Berg - President, Kari Kramer - President Elect and SandyHeck - Secretary/Treasurer. We have several new employees who are “potential hopefuls” and literature/information has been shared with them as well as an invite to our January, 2010 meeting.

Sandy Heck received the PGADE Flickertale Award for October 2009 which is an in-house award given amongst group members in recognition for service given above and beyond the call of duty.

Annual Achievement Awards at the ND DDS:

Sandy Heck - 2009 Directors Award for the Best Electronic Processing Time and 2009 Directors Award for Most Claims Cleared.
Ellen Berg - 2009 Directors Award for Quality Decision-Making.



Pacific Regional Training Conference

**Owyhee Plaza Hotel
May 20-21, 2010**

**Boise, ID
\$75.00 single/double**

**Contact persons:
Brian Stewart**

**brian.stewart@ssa.gov
1-800-626-2681 x2332**

**Micaela Jones
micaela.jones@ssa.gov
1-800-626-2681 x2321**

Chapter News

**Colorado Chapter's
Community Outreach**

by Jean Leif, Colorado Chapter President

CADE has been busy over the Holidays starting with a fund raiser Turkey/Ham raffle for Thanksgiving, then Toys-For-Tots Drive for the Marines, and Food Collection for the needy.

Christmas Miracles

CADE first considered an adopt-a-family campaign in 2008 but it was done somewhat at the last minute. This year, CADE teamed up with the Salvation Army to sponsor a family and started early. The Salvation Army carefully pre-screens all applicants. As a matter of fact, all their families are 175% below the poverty line. With their assistance, the chapter chose a family consisting of a mother who was laid off and couldn't find work and her two children, a 13 year old boy and a 6 year old girl. They had also lost their house.

The mother had simple requests – coats and a couple of toys for the children as well as staples such as toilet paper, paper towels, and nonperishable food. She had nothing listed for herself. It was obvious she was proud and did not want to take advantage; she only applied because she was encouraged to and since she applied after the deadline, she was not expecting any assistance. As an organization, CADE decided to spend \$100 on each child for their coats and toys and give \$50 cash and a \$200 gift card to Wal-Mart to the mother so she could get whatever was needed. CADE partnered with the DDS Employee Relations Committee (ERC) of staff from across the agency to spread the word about the project. As word spread, donations started pouring in from both CADE and ERC members as well as staff who were not part of CADE or the ERC. A fund was started to pay for a month's rent and co-workers donated enough for a month's rent plus half toward another month's rent. Others donated gifts to the mother so she would have a Merry Christmas as well. Children as young as 4 years old donated their gently used toys for the children and one 6-year-old even donated his allowance. Together a significant amount was raised in gifts and rent for the family.

CADE representatives happily sent the donations to the Salvation Army and thought this would be the end of the story, but it was not. The Salvation Army volunteers left several messages for the family but they never came to pick up their gifts. As of Christmas Eve our pile of gifts were the only ones remaining in the building. They were also trying to reach the landlord to see who we could write a check to for the rent. They finally reached the landlord and got the information on where to send the check and on a whim asked the landlord what phone number they had for our family. It turns out the phone number was a digit off – no wonder the family didn't come pick up their gifts, they never got the messages left! In what turned out to be a true Christmas Eve miracle, the Salvation Army finally reached the mother that day and told her that her pile of gifts were ready to be picked up. They also told her that CADE had paid the next month's rent to which she responded she had just paid the previous month's rent only two days prior! She was also told that the average sponsor spends on average \$200-300 per family and that CADE went significantly above and beyond. She was in tears and ever so grateful.

While CADE didn't get to see the family's joy firsthand, the whole staff felt the holiday spirit in so many other ways this year. Seeing the children of DDS staff donate their own precious toys and money as well as seeing co-workers go above and beyond the call of duty truly warmed everyone's hearts. Also, seeing the Salvation Army go above and beyond to find the family and the landlord and of course hearing

Continued on next page



*The photo shows just SOME of the gifts for the CADE family .
From Left to Right: Jean Leif, President; Monique Serna; Christine Huntley Jayme Frakes; Paul Absalon, President Elect*

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the final outcome reinforced the holiday spirit. CADE inspired members, staff, friends and family as it was truly a holiday season to remember not only for the sponsored family but those who gave from their hearts. With CADE leading the way, there is a feeling of confidence that the organization has made a positive impact and has inspired more membership in the organization.

Alabama Excels in Planning and Giving

by Van Hayne, MD, AADE Chapter President

SINCE OCTOBER, THE ALABAMA Chapter has been active with the following

1. Development of Bulletin Board in Birmingham and Mobile offices to encourage NADE membership by our staff, who are not members.
2. Had our Quarterly meeting with a Lunch and Learn Session in October presented by one of our Ophthalmologist SAMCs on when and what VF Tests to use in Vision DDS Claims and how to interpret them with certification slips given to attending NADE members for their records for NADE Certification.
3. Breast Cancer Awareness Week with over \$300 raised in October.
4. Bake Sale for a local mission for homeless men that raised over \$300 in November.
5. Donation of canned goods and other non-perishables for The Salvation Army and a local homeless charity providing food to the needy and homeless done in conjunction with another Alabama employee association at the DDS providing 23 boxes of food to these two groups in November near Thanksgiving.
6. Our Annual Silent Auction in December raising monies that were given to the UAB Alzheimer's UNIT in memory of a long-time NADE member in Alabama who died earlier in 2009, Dr. Richard (Zeke) Carter, with over \$1,250 raised and given to them.
7. Planned Clothing/Food Drive to provide clothing and food to two different groups in the Birmingham area, who provide food and clothing directly to those in need to be carried out next week (Jan 19-22).
8. Casual Days once to twice a month since October for raising funds for our chapter needs including helping underwrite lunch provided by the chapter at our quarterly meetings to our attendees.
9. Planning to use our quarterly chapter meetings where lunch is provided (the next one planned for February, 2010) and in part underwritten by the chapter and a talk is given on a disability related topic alternating physical and mental topics for NADE certification to use the meeting and all to invite non-member guests to see what is happening and encourage membership in NADE in our chapter by seeing part of what we do and are about. Next meeting 02/10/10 with topic "ADHD."
10. Have used Silent Auction to allow bids for 2 memberships (one examiner and one support staff) donated by a NADE member of the chapter and other grant monies to increase membership in NADE in our Mobile DDS office.



**Letters to the Editor
can be sent to:
Donna Hilton
Publications Director
1117 Sunshine Drive
Aurora, MO 65605.**

**Limit is 250 words and
letters must be signed.**

**Request for
NEWSLETTER GRANTS
should
be submitted to
Donna Hilton,
Publications Director.**

**For information on
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Membership Director.**

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**Stanley W. Wallace MD
PO Box 2059
Suwanee GA 30024**

Internist/Cardiologist

Chapter News

Pacific Region Chapters Keep Busy with Training & Fund Raising

by Joe Rise, Pacific Regional Director

Alaska

The Alaska Chapter of NADE is in caretaker (inactive) status as they only have three members in the DDS who are members. They hope to revive the chapter by June of this year as they now have nine new adjudicators with less than 18 months experience on the job.

Idaho

Idaho NADE chapter is currently working hard to put together the NADE Pacific Region Conference in May 2010. We are also involved in some chapter fund raising activities.

Oregon

Medical Moments: November - chemotherapy, NCRF, and Chronic Kidney disease presented by Dr Scott Pritchard. *Professional Development:* October - DHS promotional and development opportunities presented by Clyde Seiki (a major figure in Oregon's Department of Human Services). *Food Drive/Holiday Fest:* December - raised 476 lbs of food for Marion Polk Foodshare. Raised and donated money for phone cards for active duty military and their families honored DDS Veterans with our OrADE Bulletin board. Welcomed the New Disability Adjudicators with a presentation of OrADE, and invitation to join OrADE. Celebrated the graduation of the Winter 2009 class of Disability Adjudicators with an ice cream social. Began preparations for the January membership drive by speaking to DDS employees that have allowed their membership to lapse, and they were able to increase our membership by 13 individuals.

Washington Chapters

The Olympia WA Chapter of Disability Examiners (**OWADE**) in coordination with the Diversity Committee prepared an event called Soup for the Soul on 11/18/2009. Because this event was sponsored by two groups we believe we had twice the success. We not only fed our co workers but we raised money to support member attendance at NADE Conferences

In early December, OWADE organized a Live Holiday Gift Auction. They are fortunate to have an employee who is a lively auctioneer and a good time was had by all. The purpose of this event was twofold. Half of the proceeds, \$200 was donated to the Nicholas Green Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to furthering the cause of organ and tissue donation around the world. This organization was founded by Nicholas Green's parents after he was killed while the family was on vacation in Italy. His parents donated his organs and were so moved by the gratitude and the tremendous need that they have endeavored their time and energy to this cause.

On the thirteenth of January, Ramon Valdes, OWADE President for the past two years passed the gavel to Barbara Qualls. The President Elect is Deborra Lawson, the Secretary/Historian is now Gail Fromdahl and our new Treasurer is Karen Beyer. The new leadership's vision is to increase membership, provide education and knowledge to staff by inviting professionals and medical authorities to brown bag lunches. And last but not least, help adjudicators to be certified by NADE.

EWADE and the Spokane DDS employees did a superb job this year in their donations to help others during the holiday season. Three families received presents and grocery store gift certificates to pay for their Christmas day meal. Several children in a local community program received toys and clothing from the Santas at the Spokane DDS.

EWADE held a silent auction to raise funds for the coming year's projects. Auction items included tickets to a Gonzaga Basketball game, a framed autographed photo of Kareem Abdul Jaabar, home made bread items, and more. This silent auction was a huge success thanks to the Spokane DDS staff.

The **Seattle Chapter** of NADE has been quite busy lately with the following:

They recently sponsored a blood drive and had 20 people volunteer from the DDS and Department of Corrections. It was a great success. The winter holiday project sponsored a gently-used to new clothing drive for foster care kids of all ages. The chapter also raised \$200 for them. January is dedicated to a membership drive.

Upcoming: they will be starting something new in the DDS—a fireside chat of sorts in which the staff is invited to beverages and goodies, a brief presentation from either an MC or another guest speaker, followed by a Q&A. It will serve as both a learning experience for the staff of the DDS and also promote NADE at the same time.

California

The California chapters are busy with planning and preparing for the **2011 National Training Conference**, which will be held at the Wilshire Grand Hotel (www.wilshiregrand.com) in Los Angeles. Dates for the conference are August 27 - September 1, 2011. More information can be obtained by contacting Andrew Martinez at 510-622-3385 or andrew.martinez@dds.ca.gov.

California has also formed a new chapter at Stockton. Congratulations on your growth!

Committee Updates

Be It Resolved...

by *Olivia Fralish, Resolutions Chair*

A RESOLUTION IS DEFINED as the act of resolving something or a decision as to future action. Resolutions are a formal expression of an opinion or intent. Resolutions are a means of resolving or acting on issues facing NADE. Our tried and true format for resolutions is:

WHEREAS, resolutions are a clear statement of action or intent; and
WHEREAS, our membership has a valuable voice that can be shared by making recommendations;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that NADE members will be encouraged to submit their ideas to the resolutions committee for consideration.

Once the resolutions are received by the resolutions committee, they are checked for the appropriate format, copies are sent to the NADE Board and then the resolutions are presented in the general membership meeting for consideration.

The members of the Resolution Committee are:

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Mid-Atlantic | Tami McIntyre |
| Northeast | Karyn Hannigan |
| Great Plains | Ella Timm |
| Southeast | Jennifer Pounds |
| Southwest | Mary Dumars |
| Pacific | Gail Fromdahl |

Please submit your resolutions to:

Olivia Fralish, Resolutions Chair
P.O. Box 830300
Birmingham, Al. 35283
Email: Olivia.Fralish@ssa.gov

If you have any questions, please contact me or one of the committee members.



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barbara.young@ima-us.com

2010 NADE AWARDS CRITERIA

by James "Alan" Gulley, Awards Chair

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE who goes above and beyond for NADE, someone who deserves some recognition? Why not submit a nomination for a NADE national award? The nominating procedures and criteria for each award are listed below. Please take time to nominate someone from your chapter for an award. The Awards committee, composed of one representative from each chapter, and a Presidential-appointed chairperson, will closely review, consider, and select the best nomination in each category to win the awards below. Nominations close July 2, 2010. Nominations received after the deadline will not qualify for consideration.



NOMINATING PROCEDURES

- 1) Each chapter is responsible for selecting and nominating its own members on the approved forms (available through your chapter president).
- 2) Nominations must be submitted no later than July 2, 2010 to the National Awards Chair.
- 3) The nomination form should be typed and should explain in detail how the nominee exemplifies the specific criteria for each award.
- 4) A one-page, typed attachment is permissible if needed.
- 5) Please do not refer to the member or chapter by name in the nomination. If an award contains this information, it will be disqualified.
- 6) Each chapter is limited to one nomination per award. All nominations, as well as ballots for selecting winners, will be submitted to the Awards committee members (one from each region) by the Awards Chair. The results will be announced at the Awards Presentation at the 2010 NADE conference in Albany, New York.

Nominations must be received by July 2, 2010.
Please email nominations to: james.gulley@ssa.gov.

If you have any questions, you can contact Alan at 505-841-5667 or at the above email address.

AWARDS CRITERIA

The **PRESIDENT'S AWARD** is to be given annually and presented by the NADE President in recognition of an *outstanding Chapter*. The recipient will be any organized NADE Chapter which has enhanced interactions among its professional and community partnerships through...

- (a) Outstanding achievement in innovation of programs, such as panel presentations, speeches, publication and distribution of literature, other efforts to improve the quality of medical reporting and vocational assessments, etc., to promote the factual and effective documentation of disability determinations, AND
- (b) Exemplary outreach to community service and charitable organizations through activities such as promoting cause-awareness, volunteerism, charity benefits or fundraisers, donations, or any other philanthropic initiatives.

The **CHARLES O. BLALOCK AWARD** is a service award to be presented annually and on a continuing basis in the name of the founder of NADE. It is made in recognition of an *individual* who has made extended efforts and major contributions toward the organizational advancement of NADE. The recipient

- (a) May be any professional member of the National Association of Disability Examiners who is employed either full or part-time.
- (b) Shall have provided outstanding leadership in the development and substantial expansion of his/her State Chapter, Regional, and/or the National organization.
- (c) Shall have shown consistent efforts over a period of at least three years toward the organizational advancement of NADE.
- (d) May be a Committee Chairperson, a National Board Member, a Chapter President or any Member who has promoted the advancement of NADE to an outstanding degree. The NADE AWARD is to honor and recognize the *disability professional of the year* who has made outstanding contributions not only to the service of the claimant in accordance with his/her expertise, but also has contributed substantially of his/her time and talent to promote harmonious and more effective working relationships among his/her immediate professional community. The award shall be presented annually at the National Conference. The recipient shall be:
 - (1) Anyone who is professionally identified as a disability professional, employed full or part-time.

(2) Any NADE member engaged as a professional in any capacity, i.e., Medical Consultant, Adjudicator, Vocational Evaluation Consultant, Supervisor, etc.

(3) Anyone who has consistently shown outstanding achievement by the use of initiative and humanitarian efforts and ability to effectively assist in the Social Security disability process.

The **JOHN GORDON AWARD** is presented in the name of John R. Gordon, to a *supervisor* in the disability program, and is designed to honor and recognize superior performance in a supervisory capacity. The recipient shall be:

- (a) Any supervisor who is professionally identified as a NADE member.
- (b) Any supervisor who by his/her initiative and resourcefulness promotes cohesiveness in his/her work group.
- (c) Any supervisor who provides further incentive for personal growth and professionalism among the individuals he/she supervises.
- (d) Any supervisor who acts in his/her executive capacity in the promotion and maintenance of morale.
- (e) Any supervisor who exceeds the requirements of his/her role in facilitating the workloads of his/her Agency.

The **LEWIS BUCKINGHAM AWARD** recognizes a *leader* of the National Association of Disability Examiners at either the Regional or National level.

- (a) This person must consistently have shown outstanding achievement by the use of initiative and humanitarian efforts to further advance the professionalism and goals of the National Association of Disability Examiners.
- (b) The recipient must have contributed at least ten (10) years of continuous service to the organization.
- (c) The recipient should have served on the National Board of Directors.

The **DIRECTOR'S AWARD** is to honor and recognize an outstanding member of the *support staff* who demonstrates work performance efficiency and characteristics which contribute to the efficient operation of the unit and the morale of coworkers. The recipient shall:

- (a) Be any clerical or paraprofessional employee who is employed either full or part-time and is a member of NADE.
- (b) Have shown outstanding leadership and work performance among his/her peer group.

The **EARL B. THOMAS AWARD** is to be presented annually in the name of a charter member of NADE, who actively supported NADE as an association of disability professionals. The recipient must:

- (a) Be a member and active supporter of NADE.
- (b) Be the *administrator* of a State or Federal agency OR the top *administrator* of a Regional or Satellite DDS AND must have been so for three years.
- (c) Have contributed significantly to the program in ways consistent with the policies of NADE, beyond the normal administrative duties of his/her position.

The **FRANK BARCLAY AWARD** is presented annually in recognition of an individual who has demonstrated exceptional ability to personally, or through the development and promotion of programs, motivate and challenge personnel in

(1) a disability program and/or (2) personal and professional growth. The recipient must:

- (a) Be a member of NADE.
- (b) Be assigned to job duties on a full or part-time basis. Examples of potential nominees include, but are not limited to, training officers, civil rights office employees, human resource management personnel, etc.
- (c) Have *notable accomplishments in the area of human resource development*, consistent with policies and objectives of our professional organization.

The **ROOKIE OF THE YEAR AWARD** is to be given annually to honor and recognize a disability professional who has made a significant contribution on a local, regional, and/or national level to the National Association of Disability Examiners. The recipient must have:

- (a) Been a member of NADE for less than two years, at the time of nomination, regardless of the number of years of service in a DDS.
- (b) Made a significant contribution to his or her local, regional, and/or national level of NADE.

The Membership Corner

by Michele Namenek, Membership Director

NADE's annual Membership Drive begins in January. Ring in the New Year with increased membership in your chapters. New members: Those individuals who have never joined and individuals who have not renewed their membership in three years or more, receive up to 6 free months free membership. New members who join in January through May receive extended membership status through June, 2011.

Don't forget to request NADE's Membership grant to assist your chapter in recruitment efforts. Grants can be made every 12 months.

The more members we have, the more powerful our voice. Recruit a NADE member today.

Spotlight on Corporate Member Kevin Linder



Watson & Linder is a law firm located in Springfield, Illinois. There are two attorneys; four full time staff people and two part time staff. A Nurse Consultant is employed to review medical records and files of claimants.

Currently, Watson & Linder represents Social Security claimants at the Initial; Reconsideration; Administrative Hearing level; Appeals Council and in the US District Court (Central Illinois Division). Kevin Linder has presented seminars at the state and regional level on presenting and winning Social Security Cases for other attorneys.

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NADE Remembers Lillian Gaskill

NC DDS Administrator 1985-92

by Jeff Price, North Carolina DDS

“AND THEN THERE’S MS. LILLIAN!” These words, expressed by NADE’s President in 1991, defined Ms. Lillian Gaskill in terms of her character and her support for NADE. When the words were first expressed, they were prefaced by a list of DDS Administrators who had demonstrated support for NADE. Ms. Lillian stood in a class by herself, which is only right since she was always in a class by herself. Brought into the world of disability in 1985 when she was made the Administrator of the North Carolina DDS, she quickly proved herself as a competent Administrator who led the Agency to annual recognition by SSA as one of the top performing DDSs in the nation. The North Carolina DDS received numerous awards during her tenure and she, herself, was recognized with a Commissioner’s Citation and other awards by SSA and by the State of North Carolina.

Her support for NADE was strong and proved legendary as evidenced by the fact that it endures nearly twenty years after she retired. The North Carolina NADE Chapter won three President’s Awards as the Most Outstanding NADE Chapter during her seven years as the DDS Administrator and many THADE members were recognized individually with awards and with service on NADE’s Board of Directors. Ms. Lillian’s support for NADE was recognized by the Association when it twice (1987 and 1991) presented her with the Earl B. Thomas Award for outstanding leadership by a DDS Administrator. Even after she retired, she remained an active NADE member until her death.

Ms. Lillian passed away at age 88 on Saturday, January 16, 2010. She was an extraordinary lady who achieved extraordinary accomplishments in her life. In doing so, she also made it possible for others to, likewise, achieve extraordinary accomplishments. She lived her life in a way others could only describe as, “And then there’s Ms. Lillian!”

The IMA Group



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Disability Musings

The Other Side of the Desk

Have you ever thought just a wee little bit

O how it would feel not to quite fit,

And how you would feel if you had to sit

On the other side of the desk?

Have you ever looked at a man dressed like a bum

As he sat before you, nervous and dumb

And thought of the courage that it took to come

To the other side of the desk?

Have you considered his dreams that went astray

Of the hard, real facts of his every day,

Of the things in his life that made him stay,

On the other side of the desk?

Have you thought to yourself, "It could be I

If the good things in life had passed me by,

And maybe I'd be bluster and maybe I'd lie

On the other side of the desk?

Did you make him feel he was full of greed?

Make him ashamed of his race or creed

Or did you reach out to him in his need

On the other side of the desk?

May we find some wisdom and lots of it

And much compassion and plenty of grit

So that we may be kinder to those who sit,

On the other side of the desk.

- Author Unknown



**NADE wishes to thank
the following basic
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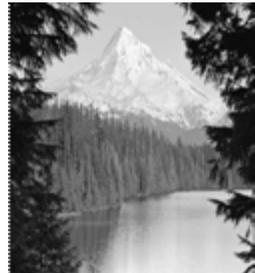
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For more information on Examiner positions, contact Ray Strutz at 503-986-4876 or ray.strutz@ssa.gov by 2/12/10. Medical Consultants, contact Dr. Habjan at 503-986-4993 or william.habjan@ssa.gov

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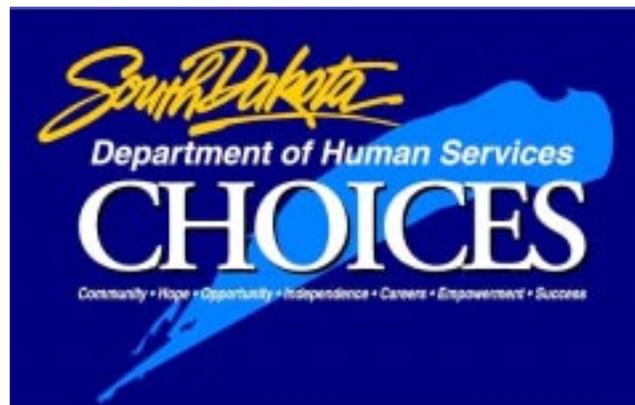


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Employment Opportunities



**STATE DIRECTOR of
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Rare Opportunity!

The Division of Rehabilitation Services is searching for a Director to carry out their mission to ensure that people with disabilities in South Dakota have every opportunity to apply for and be afforded a fair determination of eligibility for social security disability benefits.

This position manages the statewide service delivery system for individuals seeking eligibility determinations for social disability security benefits and is responsible for the leadership, oversight and guidance of all programs, activities and staff within the agency.

The preferred candidate shall possess knowledge of the disability determination processes and Social Security principles, methods and techniques used in the evaluation of disability claims as well as experience in upper-level management and supervision of staff and program budget responsibilities. Education and experience in Public Administration or a Human Services related field preferred but not required.

This position is located in Sioux Falls, a thriving city of over 100,000 in southeastern South Dakota. A great place to live, Sioux Falls ranks on the 2009 Best-Performing Cities index, Fortune Small Businesses' list of 100 Best Places to Live and ranks as America's Safest City by Allstate.

For more information or to apply, please go to www.state.sd.us/jobs and reference requisition #E19-0060 or contact the Bureau of Personnel (605-773-6944).

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Disability Benefits Analyst

Locations: Princeton, NJ; Cambridge, MA; Washington, DC

Position Description:

MATHEMATICA POLICY RESEARCH (MPR) is a nationally recognized, nonpartisan firm that conducts domestic social policy research on health care, welfare, education, labor, and related topics. MPR's mission is to improve public well-being by bringing the highest standards of quality, objectivity, and excellence to bear in our work for our clients which include federal, state, and local government agencies, and private foundations.

Mathematica is inviting applications from individuals with significant experience in the processing of claims for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. The successful applicant will participate in policy research activities related to the SSDI/SSI claims, as well as other disability and health projects

As a Disability Benefits Analyst, you would join our staff of approximately 70 health research professionals, which includes doctoral level (Ph.D., D.Sc., or Dr.P.H.) and physician researchers in the fields of public health, public policy, behavioral or social sciences, and economics, as well as MPH and other master's-level analysts. We offer our employees a stimulating team-oriented work environment, competitive salaries, and a comprehensive benefits package, as well as the advantages of employee ownership.

Disability Benefits Analysts participate in key project activities including:

- Conducting site visits to assess the operations and costs of state, federal, and local health care programs
- Provide technical support in the implementation of demonstrations.
- Conducting literature reviews
- Performing quantitative analyses with large databases to determine program outcomes or conduct policy simulations
- Writing chapters of analytic reports and proposals for new projects
- Track financial progress of projects using Excel; prepare reports for monthly project reviews; assist with budget revisions and contract proposals

Qualifications:

- Bachelors degree and a least two years experience as a disability Claims Representative in a Social Security Administration Field Office, or as an adjudicator in a state Disability Determination Service, or equivalent.
- Master's degree in public policy, public health, economics, statistics, or a related field preferred.
- Extensive, broad knowledge of all SSDI, SSI and disability claims administration
- Significant qualitative and quantitative skills
- Working knowledge of current policy issues in one or more of the following areas: managed care, public health infrastructure, state health policy, health care reimbursement issues, mental health/substance abuse, maternal and child health, disability, long-term care, or other relevant areas
- Excellent oral and written communication skills and a strong record of productive interpersonal relationships with colleagues and others

To apply, please submit cover letter, resume, and salary requirements via our online employment web-site at: <https://careers.mathematica-mpr.com/applicants/Central?quickFind=51288>

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NADE Membership Application

(Please print name, title & designation as desired on your Membership Certificate)

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NADE's membership year runs from July 1st through June 30th each year. Your membership will expire on the June 30th following your join date.

Exception: All new memberships received between January through June will receive an expiration date of June 30th of the following year. NADE does not prorate dues.

Mail to: National Association of Disability Examiners Whitaker Bank NADE Account PO Box 599 Frankfort KY 40602
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You've Been Given The Gift Of Life...give It Back

*by Patrick Didas, R.N. Buffalo, New York, DDS
Organ Donation/Transplant Chair*

What a great motto, YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN THE GIFT OF LIFE...GIVE IT BACK. How many of us have really thought about this? We are often asked to give of ourselves whether it be, our time, our talent, or our treasures. But how many of us have actually thought about giving of our whole selves?



How many times have we heard "At least you have your health"? This is often something that we take for granted until it is compromised. We all have the opportunity to give in one way or another, we just have to take that step to think outside ourselves and reach out to others.

We as Americans have been blessed with many things including the ability and resources to change lives. With over 100,000 people on the National organ donation waiting list, we all have the obligation to help out.

How can we do this? The easiest way we can dedicate our life to others is by signing an organ donation/ tissue donor card. You can also sign the back of your drivers license and when renewing ask that your license carry an organ donor designation on it.

Another way to give is through blood donation. Through local community blood banks the blood that you donate stays in your area and is used locally first. Although you can give blood every 56 days, you can donate plasma more frequently. Ask yourself, "Do I really have a reason not to help out others one time every two months?"

Now that we have given some of our time to others, how about our talent and treasures? We can best utilize these gifts by helping to educate others and to give monetarily. We can help educate family, friends and groups through available literature from local blood and organ donation organizations. Make sure your family knows your wishes and help educate them of the need out there. All organizations can use money donations. These are often used to offset mailing of literature and supplies. Refer to national websites such as UNOS.org and ORGANDONOR.gov for information.

April marks the NADE National Donate Life Contest among the nations chapters. Each chapter is encouraged to participate. All members can help their committee chairmen with just a small fraction of their time by helping to have a blood drive, an organ donation registry drive, or a fundraiser for a local organization or organ recipient.

In 2010 please take the time to get involved starting with a personal commitment to give the gift of life. You been blessed with health, how are you going to share it?