# **NADE’s Top Issues for 2022**

* **Staffing:** Continued funding to achieve and maintain adequate staffing levels at the Disability Determination Services (DDS). Provide the DDSs more flexibility in hiring authority.
* **Training:** Investment in quality training and materials is critical for timely and accurate determinations. Resources are needed to train new staff as well as ongoing training for experienced staff. Provide cooperative training between the DDS and SSA Field Offices (FO) to improve understanding of the shared disability processes.
* **Expand Communication Methods:** Explore ways to email and send text messages to claimants to aid in communication while considering privacy and security concerns. Expanding the emailer pilot.
* **Evaluation of Vocational Regulations and Processes**: NADE suggests a review of the vocational regulations and business processes to ensure consistency between the DDS, Office of Quality Review (OQR) and ALJs. Vocational business processes need to be simplified. Complex and subjective policies such as transferable skills analysis should be reviewed as it can be very time consuming with relevancy in a small number of claims. NADE continues to advocate for the reduction in the 15-year work history.
* **Customer Service Improvements:** NADE encourages efforts to build upon customer service improvements. Hiring authority policies make it hard to keep up with attrition. Having adequate funding for training and overtime will help with processing time and improve decisional accuracy. Supporting DDSs to have competitive salaries will help retain experienced personnel. Ensure the DDSs have equitable ancillary support, such as access to VOIP, mail machine software and state level intranet software.
* **IT Modernization:** Investment in technology to make reviewing and obtaining evidence more efficient. Continued expansion and development of IMAGEN and Duplicate Identification Process (DIP) software. Increase recruitment of Health IT networks.
* **CDRs:** Continued investment in timely Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs).
* **DCPS:** Continued development of the Disability Case Processing System.
* **CDI:** Continued support for Cooperative Disability Investigation (CDI) units and expansion efforts to decrease fraud and abuse. Develop a training program for new CDI sites and new team members.
* **Remote work:** Expand remote work opportunities, which can be a staffing and recruitment incentive.
* **Medical Improvement Review Standard (MIRS):** NADE supports a careful re-examination of the Medical Improvement Review Standard (MIRS) and its impact on the disability program. The policy should be revised to address Comparison Point Decisions (CPD) that were poorly documented or supported.
* **Timely Revision of the Listings:** NADE supports SSA’s ongoing efforts to make timely revisions to the Listings of Impairments to reflect technological advancements and current medical research.