



NADE ADVOCATE

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N.A.D.E. National Training Conference Denver, CO 2025

The 2025 NADE National Training Conference

The Double Tree Hilton

August 10, 2025 – August 13, 2025

Collaboration Lead Innovate Motivate Believe

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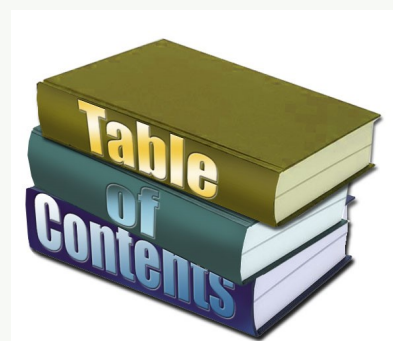
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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Greetings NADE Family,

As my term as NADE President comes to a close, I want to take a moment to reflect on this incredible journey and extend my deepest gratitude to each of you for your support, dedication, and unwavering commitment to our mission. Serving in this role has been both an honor and a privilege — one that has only deepened my respect for the important work we do and the remarkable people who make it possible.



Over the past year, we've continued to navigate a period of transition shaped by changes in policies, priorities, and processes within the Social Security Administration. These shifts have brought both challenges and opportunities, requiring flexibility, creativity, and resilience from NADE's members and leadership. Yet, through it all, NADE has remained steadfast in advocating for our profession and for those we serve.

A key priority during my presidency has been expanding our membership and encouraging deeper engagement from both new and long-standing members. NADE's future depends on fresh ideas, diverse perspectives, and the energy that comes from a vibrant, engaged community. We've made meaningful progress, but this work is far from finished. I encourage each of you to continue championing NADE: invite your colleagues to join, share your experiences, and step into leadership roles when the opportunity arises. Your voice matters, and your participation ensures NADE remains a strong, respected advocate for our profession. The last quarterly call with SSA was July 23, 2025. We appreciate SSA collaborating with NADE.

I hope you are all looking forward to the 2025 NADE National Training Conference in just a few short weeks — I know I am! You'll find the agenda in this edition of The Advocate, and as always, it promises valuable insights from voices across our profession. This year's NTC will also include elections for several leadership positions: President-Elect, Secretary, Treasurer, North Regional Director, and South Regional Director. While stepping into these roles may seem daunting given the demands of our day-to-day work, I encourage you to say "yes." My time on the NADE Board has taught me that while it's not always easy, it is always rewarding. Many hands truly do make light work.

Thank you for entrusting me to serve. I look forward to seeing NADE continue to grow and thrive under new leadership and I am excited to continue supporting our mission in the role of Past President.

With gratitude,
Ayanna Conley
NADE President

The 2025 NADE National Training Conference

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Sunday, August 10th

2:00 – 6:00 PM Registration

5:00 – 6:00 PM New Attendee Orientation

6:00 – 8:00 PM President's Reception

Monday, August 11th

7:00 – 10:00 AM Registration

8:15 – 8:30 AM Opening Ceremony

8:30 – 9:00 AM Welcome Remarks- CADE President, Teri Grasso

Colorado DDS Division Administrator, Thomas Haro

9:00 – 10:00 AM Associate Commissioner James F. van der Schalie and Deputy Associate

Commissioner Lucinda E. Davis, National Disability Determinations Office

10:00 – 10:15 AM Networking Break

10:15 – 11:15 AM Adjudicating Vision Impairments, Trista Meininger, Colorado DDS – Will cover the vision listings, statutory blindness and adjudicating claims with blind and low vision allegations.

11:15 – 12:00 PM Deputy Assistant Inspector General Kevin Huse, Office of Investigations and Special Agent Tom Os ng, Team Leader Denver Cooperative Disability Investigative (CDI) Unit

12:00 – 1:00 PM Lunch on own

1:00 – 2:00 PM Community Reintegration for Spinal Cord and Brain Injury Patients, Bri any Catalano Huber, MBA, MS, OTR/L, Craig Neuro Rehabilitation Hospital – Will discuss the lasting impact of the Community Reintegra on program on quality of life and found independence after a spinal cord injury (SCI) or brain injury (BI).

2:00 – 3:00 PM Autism 101, Jennifer Korb, Executive Director of the Colorado Autism Society – Will share information on connecting people with Autism to the resources they need to live full, vibrant, self-actualized lives.

3:00 - 3:15 PM Networking BREAK

3:15 - 4:30 PM Breakout Session: Kristopher Monson, DASH Administrator, CO DDS– Will discuss DASH and how it has positively impacted workloads at CO DDS



Monday August 11, 2025 CTD.....

3:15 – 4:30 PM Breakout Session: Council of Chapter Presidents - Meeting to discuss issues impacting local NADE chapters.

4:30 – 5:15 PM Regional Caucuses

5:15 – 6:00 PM NADE General Assembly Meeting

Tuesday August 12, 2025

8:30 – 9:15 AM Acting Associate Commissioner Robert Weathers, Office of Disability Policy

9:15 – 10:15 AM Acting Deputy Commissioner Jay Ortis and Assistant Deputy Commissioner Jim Parikh, Office of Disability Adjudication

10:15 – 10:30 AM Networking Break

10:30 – 11:30 AM Respiratory Listings: Addressing Pitfalls, Michael Canham MD, Colorado DDS
MC will discuss adjudicating claims with pulmonary impairments, including pulmonary function tests and supplemental findings to consider.

11:30 – 12:00 PM Utilizing Site to Site Training, John Diaz, Program Analyst, National Disability Determinations Office

12:00 – 1:30 PM NADE Awards Luncheon

1:30 – 2:15 PM Imposter Syndrome, What is it, Do you have it, and How to overcome it, Allie Wright Psy.D. – When people feel like they are faking it and doubt their achievements despite evidence of their abilities.

2:15 – 3:00 PM National Council of Disability Determination Directors (NCDDD)

Roundtable: Brian Garber, NCDD President, Jacqueline Russell, NCDDD
Past President, Leon Scales, NCDDD Past President, and Kimberlyn Price,
NCDDD President Elect

3:00 – 3:15 PM Networking Break

3:15 – 4:30 PM Breakout Session: Quality Assurance Roundtable Discussion - An opportunity to discuss items pertinent to completing quality assurance reviews in the DDS.

3:15 – 4:30 PM Breakout Session: Professional Relations Officers Roundtable Discussion – An opportunity to discuss items pertinent to the DDS professional relations officers.

3:15 – 4:30 PM Breakout Session: IMAGEN Tips and Tricks, Reagan Lederman, Nevada DDS - IMAGEN users will share helpful information on using IMAGEN to review evidence more efficiently.

4:30 – 6:00 PM NADE General Assembly Meeting

Wednesday, August 13th

8:30 – 9:30 AM A Day in the Life of a Field Office Representative, Roshawn Barnes, District Manager, Denver Field Office

9:30 – 10:00 AM Field Office and DDS Collaboration, Julie Mavis, MI DDS Are Administrator and Sarah Johnson, Case Specialist, Lansing Michigan DDS– Will discuss the collaboration initiative between the Michigan DDS and Field Offices, including out stationed employees.

10:00 – 10:15 AM Networking Break

10:15 – 11:30 AM Multiple Sclerosis "The Great Mimic", J. Scott Pritchard DO – Oregon DDS Lead MC will discuss evaluating Multiple Sclerosis.

11:30 – 12:00 PM Overview of the Blue Envelope Program, Jason Oehlkers, Division Chief, Boulder County Sheriff's Office – Will discuss a community initiative designed to support individuals with disabilities during contacts with law enforcement.

12:00 – 1:00 PM Lunch on own

1:00 – 2:00 PM Understanding the Liver Transplant Journey: Before and After, Lana Schoch RN MSN CCTC, University of Colorado Transplant Team - Will discuss the liver transplantation process, including the medical criteria required for transplant eligibility, potential post-transplant complications, and an introduction to the differences between living donor and deceased donor liver transplants

2:00 – 2:45 PM Reviewing School Records, Jenny St. Onge, Colorado DDS – Will discuss how to review education records, with an emphasis on Individualized Education Programs (IEP).

2:45 – 3:00 PM Networking Break

3:00 – 3:45 PM Associate Commissioner Jamie Lucero and Division Director Kasey Torres, Office of Quality Review

3:45 – 4:30 PM NADE Closing Ceremonies – NADE outgoing president will pass the gavel to the incoming president. The new NADE president will include closing remarks.

4:30 – 9:00 PM NADE New Board Meeting

THE END!!! SEE YOU NEXT YEAR

North Carolina Disability Determination Services

Social Security Administration Pilot Emailing With Claimants

In late September 2024, Hurricane Helene severely impacted the western Appalachian region of North Carolina, causing more than 100 reported deaths and significant destruction of communication infrastructure. Currently, federal policy only allows communication methods with people applying for disability benefits through phone calls, faxing and mailings via United States Postal Services. With over 6,000 disability claims from people impacted by Hurricane Helene and strained phone/postal service communications, the North Carolina Disability Determination Services (a division of DHHS) advocated to their federal partner, Social Security Administration, for a federal policy exception to contact people applying for disability benefits by email.

In December 2024, the North Carolina Disability Determination Services (NCDDS) received approval by Social Security Administration (SSA). NCDDS was asked to develop a 90-day pilot to support emailing people applying for disability benefits impacted by Hurricane Helene. NCDDS focused on developing a process that retained security of Personal Identifiable Information (PII) and decreased processing time with applications. On January 10, 2025 the NCDDS sent the first email. Since inception, 32 NCDDS processing teams have participated in the pilot. This pilot helps streamline communication to avoid untimely delays by sending emails to individuals about their claim.

The NCDDS pilot will continue through mid-April 2025 to focus continuous improvement to internal processes. At the time of this article, the NCDDS notes a timeframe of 38 days average processing time from the date the email was sent to the date the case was closed for people applying for disability benefits that respond to the NCDDS emails. NCDDS also observes a 33% response rate from emails to people applying for disability benefits. Given that this pilot is being conducted with no additional focus in obtaining email addresses and only with disability claims for people impacted by Hurricane Helene, this is exciting progress! The NCDDS is thankful for all our NCDDS team members (pictured below) who are helping improve the health and well-being of North Carolinians through faster decisions for disability benefit applications



Candidate for President Elect:

Michelle Wade



It is with great excitement that I am announcing my candidacy for position of President-elect.

I graduated from North Central College in Naperville, Illinois with a degree in Sports Medicine and worked as a Certified Athletic Trainer for nearly 20 years in schools, minor league sports, physical and aquatic therapy and medical device sales.

I transitioned into my career at DDS in 2009 when I started as a Disability Examiner in the Roanoke, Virginia DDS. I moved over to the Roanoke Extended Service Team as a Case Consultant in 2012 until serving as a Detailee at SSA Headquarters for the DCPS project in 2014. I then moved onto Jefferson City, Missouri DDS in 2015 as an Examiner and then as an Assistant District Supervisor in 2016 and in 2017, I moved to the Kalamazoo, Michigan DDS and have worked as an Examiner and Job Coach until 2020 when I transitioned into my current role as a Quality Assurance Analyst.

I joined NADE very early in my career and have served on my various state boards and nationally, as the Mid-Atlantic Region Vice President, and since 2021, as the Great Lakes/Northern Region Director. Being a part of NADE has allowed for opportunities to grow as a Disability Professional in all my various roles, and the networking opportunities have been invaluable as I have transferred to different states. The friendships and professional relationships I have gained allowed me to easily transfer to each state and into the individual NADE chapters.

I have been part of the non-dues committee, professional development committee and have been on the conference planning committee since 2023. I have created the logos and conference merchandise since 2022 and new NADE store merchandise since 2024, and have attended conferences in Los Angeles, Ohio, Vermont, Montana, Oklahoma and am excited to attend in Denver in August.

I live in Paw Paw, Michigan with my husband, Tim, stepson Trevor (24), cat Ivy and dogs Aurora and Murdock. I have a stepson Spencer (25) that lives in Texas and my son Bryce (28) that lives in Florida. In my spare time, I love spending time with friends and family, doing anything creative/crafty, antiques and up-cycling and cheering on the Illinois Fighting Illini, Steelers, Mets and anything NASCAR related!

It would be my honor to be elected as President-Elect and promise to serve and dedicate the time needed to perform the required duties. I look forward to meeting you all in Denver!

Treasurer Candidate:

Julie Kujath

It is with great enthusiasm that I announce my candidacy for re-election to the position of NADE Treasurer. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve my past terms, and would be honored to continue to serve the membership in this capacity. It has been amazing to watch NADE grow into new capacities, like virtual National Training Conference options and an all electronic Advocate. Technology is not only essential in keep us connected across the nation, but it also allows us to have more flexibility to find ways to leverage technology into bottom line savings!

I have served in many capacities in both Missouri and Nevada, and in multiple positions nationally with NADE. I continue to be active locally in the Nevada Chapter, currently serving as the Nevada Chapter Treasurer. I have a Bachelor's degree in Business Management and have managed a multi-million dollar non-profit trust in my former career. I enjoy sharing my talents, and recruiting talents to keep NADE's voice strong and our roots deep.

I would like to thank the membership for this opportunity to run as a candidate for NADE Treasurer, and appreciate your support.



Candidate for South Regional Director:

Ebony Grissett



Hi everyone! I would like to announce my candidacy for re-election for the South Regional Director position.

I have been an active member of SCADES since joining in 2008. During my tenure, I have served on the community service, membership, and social committees. I was recruited to serve as the chapter president in 2019 and currently hold this position. In this role, I made it my mission to retain and recruit membership across our four locations throughout the state even during the pandemic. Thanks to all the knowledge I have received from NADE, we have been successful in that area. I received OSC Excellence Award in 2018, the Maria T. Pierce Award in 2022, and SC VR Commissioner's Award in 2023.

On the national level, I have attended the past three conferences in VT, MT, and OK. I have served on the NPDW and awards committee for the past two years. I was honored to receive the Frank Barclay Award in 2023 at the Montana conference.

During my term as the South Regional Director, I have kept my pulse on NADE information and share it amongst our chapters. I continued to ask questions so that I can promote NADE and all the beneficial things to the chapter presidents. I pride myself on responding to questions or concerns and sharing national information via phone or email in a timely manner. I made it a goal to try to increase the South's memberships before the next conference. Since I couldn't drive to all the locations, I held a regional director's meeting to gain feedback and concerns from the chapter presidents. We have been able to achieve modest gains in the membership area and I'm looking forward to what the future will hold.

It has been an honor to serve as the South Regional Director. I strongly believe in NADE and how it benefits both citizens and Disability Determination Services. I have benefited greatly from attending the NADE conference trainings and being able to meet fellow members. I look forward to continuing to serve in this role and representing my region.

I hope I can count on your support.

See you in Colorado!

Ebony

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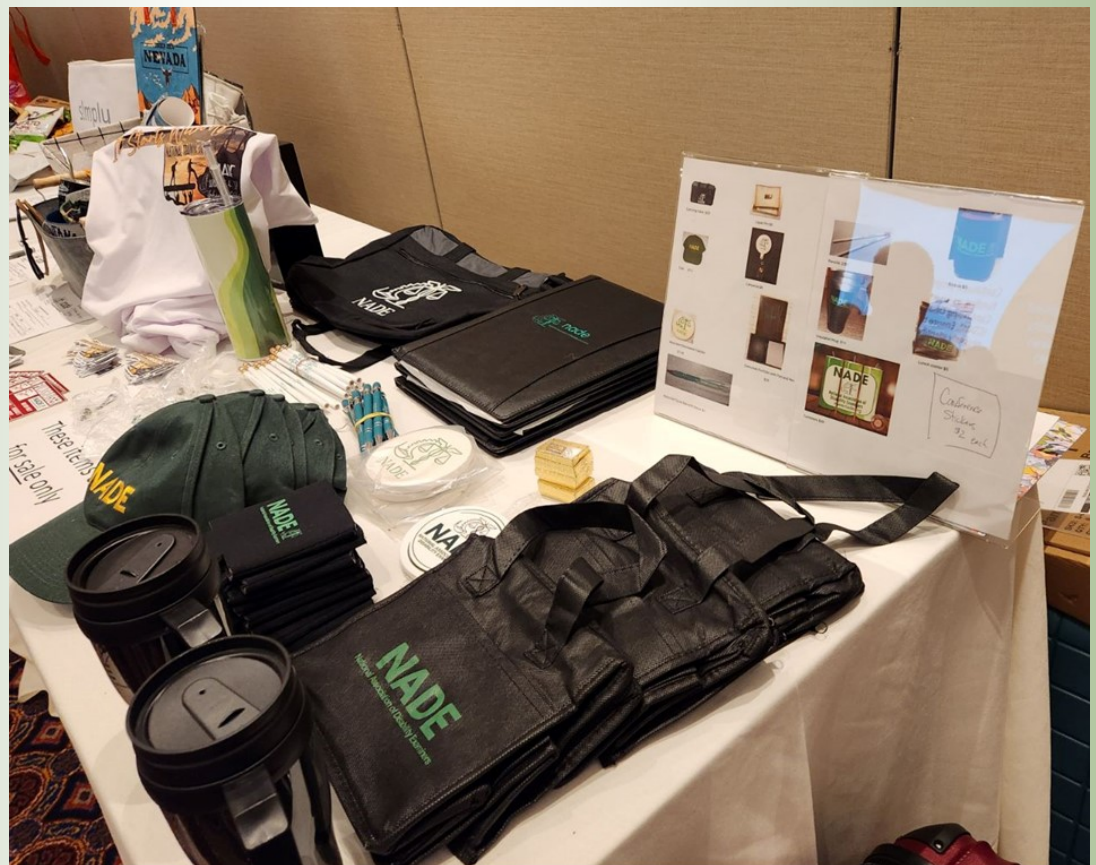


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Camera Pro?

Showcase your Chapter!



The NADE Communications director will be giving out prizes for your photos and Newsletter at the NTC conference!



Submit any photos and your newsletter to sara.b.winn@ssa.gov

HELP!

NADE needs members to volunteer for committees to help plan and organize events.

VISIT NADE WEBSITE FOR COMMITTEE CHARGES:

WWW.NADE.ORG/ABOUT-NADE/BOARD-OF-DIRECTORS/NADE-CHARGES/



Awards Committee - contact melvin.carr@ssa.gov
CDIU Committee - contact richard.deshong@ssa.gov
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