

NADE's Top Issues for 2025

o **Recruitment and Retention:** Continued funding to achieve and maintain adequate staffing levels at the Disability Determination Services (DDS). Provide the DDSs more flexibility in hiring authority.

- Continued support of telework opportunities for the DDS as an employment tool for recruitment and retention.
- Continued partnership between the DDS and SSA Field Offices to provide remote work opportunities where telework from home is not possible.
- Ensure the DDSs have equitable ancillary support, such as access to web-based phone service, mail machine software and state level intranet software.
- Supporting DDSs to have competitive salaries will help retain experienced personnel

o **Training:** Resources are needed to train new staff as well as ongoing training for experienced staff. Ensuring adequate funding for quality training and nationally uniform materials is critical for decisional accuracy and reducing processing time. Provide cooperative training between the DDS and SSA Field Offices (FO) to improve understanding of the shared disability processes.

o **Claimant Communication:** Continue to explore ways to permit email and text messaging to claimants to aid in communication while considering privacy and security concerns. Expanding the emailer pilot. Enhancement of technology use to allow for form completion, document uploading, and secure messaging by claimants and appointed representatives.

o **Evaluation of Vocational Regulations and Processes:** While work has been done to update vocational policy and processes, NADE continues to advocate for additional streamlining, taking into consideration the overall impact on the disability workload and decisional outcomes.

- Prioritize modernizing the occupational database and software used for vocational analysis
- Involve DDS directly in the process to update and simplify the vocational regulations.
- Business processes need to be consistent between the DDS, Office of Quality Review (OQR) and ALJs.

o **CDRs:** Continued program integrity funding as an investment for timely Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs). Ensure that FOs are properly identifying the Comparison Point Decision (CPD).

o **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. Consider the impact of listing changes on Res Judicata.

o **National Case Processing System (NCPS):** To meet the needs of the DDSs, NADE advocates for adequate funding for enhancement requests for NCPS and continuous open communication with the DDSs front line users.

o **Disability Examiner Decision Authority (DEDA):** NADE supports the implementation of DEDA and encourages the continued expansion of this initiative to include additional case types and levels. NADE advocates making.

o **Customer Service Improvements:** NADE encourages efforts to build upon customer service improvements. Maintain hiring authority to keep up with attrition. Providing adequate funding for overtime to help with improving customer service. Fully staff national teleservice center to decrease customer wait times.

o **IT Modernization:** Investment in technology to make reviewing and obtaining evidence more efficient. Continued expansion and development of IMAGEN. Explore programs that can efficiently identify duplicate records. Increase recruitment of Health IT networks. Provide technical support for Electronic Records Express (ERE) systems until it is replaced.

o **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. Revisit CDI model to address challenges in recruiting local law enforcement partners and expand the law enforcement partners possibilities, such as continued use of retired annuitants. Explore ways to exclude time a claim is pending CDI investigation from mean DDS processing time.

o **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. Revise the policy to address Comparison Point Decisions (CPD) that were poorly documented or supported.