

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

May 2010



Objective

To review allegations by the American Association of Social Security Disability Consultants that (1) medical consultant (MC) assessments were altered and/or destroyed in the disability determination services (DDS), (2) MCs were pressured to produce specific assessments, and (3) disability examiners (DE) were seeking certain MCs to obtain specific assessments.

Background

The MC does not have sole authority to determine whether a claimant is disabled under Social Security's criteria. The MC provides expertise in evaluating impairments, documenting findings, and preparing or reviewing assessments. The assessment does not include an opinion on whether the claimant is disabled.

To view the full report, visit
<http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO/BEPDF/A-01-10-11007.pdf>

Congressional Response Report: Disability Determination Services Medical Consultant Assessments (A-01-10-11007)

Our Findings

To perform our review, we researched the Social Security Administration's (SSA) policies regarding the processing and documenting of MC assessments and reviewed SSA system controls for the disability folder. Additionally, we contacted 468 DDS employees nationwide about processing and documenting MC assessments. Specifically, we contacted

- 52 DDS Administrators (which included each of the 50 States plus Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico),
- 208 DDS DEs (4 randomly selected from each DDS), and
- 208 DDS MCs (4 randomly selected from each DDS).

The table below shows the number of DDS employees sampled and who participated in our review.

Number of DDS Staff Who Participated in Our Review			
DDS Position	Population	Sampled	Participants
Medical Consultant	2,240	208	189 (91%)
Disability Examiner	8,172	208	197 (95%)
Administrator	52	52	52 (100%)
TOTAL	10,464	468	438 (94%)

We also contacted SSA's Regional Offices and Office of Disability Determinations and other disability insurance providers for information for our review. Furthermore, we reviewed examples of claims with an MC assessment deleted from the disability folder.

Based on feedback from DDS and SSA employees, our examination of controls over the documentation of disability determinations, and our review of some actual cases, we found that generally (1) MC assessments were not altered and/or inappropriately deleted in the DDS, and (2) MCs were not pressured to produce specific assessments. We also found that the majority of DEs responding to our survey did not seek certain MCs to obtain specific assessments.