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August 15, 2011

Chairman Charles Boustany, J.D. M.D., Subcommittee on Oversight
Chairman Sam Johnson, Subcommittee on Social Security
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Boustany and Chairman Johnson,

Thank you again for providing the opportunity for NCDDD to present testimony to the Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittees on Oversight and Social Security, hearing relative to SSA payment accuracy. The following are our responses to your questions:

1. Since your State agencies are on the front lines of the disability determination process, do you see a trend towards more dependency for children who continue to receive benefits past age 18? What management or legislative tools could help?

NCDDD members have not identified any trends toward more dependency for children who continue to receive benefits past age 18. NCDDD is unaware of management or legislative tools, which could target dependency for children who receive benefits for disability.

2. To become current and stay current on both Supplemental Security Income and all continuing Disability Review work will require more funding for the Social Security Administration. However, given the long-term federal budget situation and the need to keep federal personnel costs in check, what staffing strategies should be pursued at the Disability Determination Services to ensure integrity work is completed without significant hiring increases?

Staffing strategies necessary to facilitate the integrity (Continuing Disability Review – CDR) workload at the DDS must include hiring for disability examiner losses in the DDS. It is imperative to point out that these hires are to maintain established staffing levels only. Comparable staffing for any additional workload and/or workload increases will be critical. Strategic hiring to obtain highly qualified staff is necessary to handle the complex and technical aspects of the integrity caseload. The integrity workload requires an experienced examiner in the DDSs.

Other workloads must be maintained to provide the needed public service. DDSs must have comparable staffing for all workloads. Hiring is particularly necessary to address a hemorrhaging attrition of Disability Examiners. DDSs are experiencing examiner attrition of over 13% nationally, with attrition over 20% in 11 DDSs, including three DDSs over 30%, which equates to a total loss of 1055 Disability Examiners nationally for fiscal year 2011. Incremental hiring in the DDSs is essential as the increasing complexity of the disability program criteria requires approximately 12-18 months of experience in the program for a disability examiner to become fully independent and productive. Therefore, hiring does not immediately translate to increased capacity and productivity.

3. *What are your recommendations to reduce overpayments?*

NCDDD recommends that Congress fund SSA in order to bring the integrity workload, (CDR) cases current. While this requires funding, including funding for hiring as expressed in our response to Question #2, SSA estimates \$10 in program savings for each \$1 spent for the medical integrity workload.

Thank you for allowing NCDDD the opportunity to address these questions. As always, NCDDD remains available to assist the committee and members, as deliberations regarding possible solutions are considered to address this critical situation. Please feel free to contact me at (217) 782-8283 for any information or clarification.

Sincerely,

Ann P. Robert

Ann P. Robert
President-Elect, NCDDD