

Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs)

Social Security periodically reviews cases of Americans who are receiving Social Security disability benefits to see if they have recovered enough to return to work. Social Security conducts *Medical* CDRs to assess whether an individual's medical condition has improved, regardless of whether the person has returned to work. Social Security conducts *Work* CDRs when they receive a report that a disabled Social Security recipient has earnings.

The vast majority of the reviews find that beneficiaries are unable to resume work, which is not surprising given that Social Security only pays disability benefits to Americans with very severe, long-term conditions. However, the Social Security Administration has developed and refined methods to target the reviews toward cases most likely to show a change, and as a result, CDRs are very cost-effective for taxpayers.

The Budget Control Act of 2011 provided for a significant increase in Medical CDRs starting in 2012. Congress blocked the increases in 2012 and 2013, preventing SSA from investing \$421 million in CDRs. However, the increased funding was provided for 2014 after a three-month delay.

Medical CDR Facts (2011)

Number of CDRs: 1.4 million
Cases terminated: 64,391 (5%)
Lifetime savings to Social Security (estimated by the Chief Actuary): \$5.4 billion
CDRs not conducted because of inadequate funding (2013): 1.3 million
Average Return on Investment: 13 to 1

Work CDR Facts (2010)

Earnings reports (any size): 800,000
Completed reviews: 312,471
Cases terminated: 105,279 (34%)
Gap between date of earnings and date of report via IRS: 18-24 months
Median waiting time for CDR after report: 124 days
Work CDR staff reduction since budget cuts began in 2011: 13.8%