
Effective Dates: 10/01/2015 - Present (Go to [History](#))

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TN 8 (09-19)

PM 00233.900 Regional Office (RO) Guide for Evaluating Disability Determination Service (DDS) Management of the Consultative Examination (CE) Process

ROs should use the following guide to evaluate the DDSs' CE oversight management procedures. For policy relating to Key and Volume Providers, see [DI 39545.100](#).

A. DDS Quality Assurance (QA) activities in the CE process

Take the following actions when reviewing quality insurance activities:

1. When reviewing CE reports for quality, assure that the DDS only orders necessary CEs. What other areas does the QA unit cover to monitor the DDS' purchase of medical evidence?
2. Describe the DDSs business process for review of CE reports? For Ensuring Quality and Integrity of CE Reports see [DI 39545.400](#). In the report look for:
 - a. Has the DDS established a system to assure the quality of CE reports?
 - b. What review criteria does the DDS use to evaluate CE reports?
 - c. Who reviews and evaluates the CE reports?
 - d. What process does the DDS use to inform the CE provider of an incomplete or inadequate report? Does the DDS ask the provider to provide the necessary information previously omitted?
 - e. What process does DDS use for handling CE providers who continue to submit CE reports of unacceptable quality?
3. Describe the selection process for reviewing CE reports under the Independent CE Report Review System . For more information on Independent Consultative Examination (CE) Report Review System see [DI 39545.450](#).

B. Fee schedules

ROs will ensure DDS CE/MER fee schedules are current and work with the DDS, if requested, to keep them current. Questions the RO should address:

- Did you review policy for fee schedules in [DI 39545.600](#)?
- Did you obtain copies of the current CE and MER fee schedules the DDS used?

- Does the DDS use a fee schedule or pay “usual and customary” charges for medical services? Explain the methodology used to establish the rates of payment as required in [DI 39545.600](#).
- Does the DDS or State use contracts or negotiated agreements to set fees, if applicable? If yes, how does the process work?
- Does the DDS use a fee schedule established by any other agency(s) in the State, such as their parent agency? If yes, provide the agency’s name.
- Does the DDS review the fee schedule annually? If not, how often?
- What type of information does the DDS use to analyze the need for changing fees, such as vendor requests, recruitment problems, or surveys?
- Does the DDS use volume medical providers? If so, describe any negotiated discounts for the DDS fee schedule negotiated and observe any quality differences from lower volume providers.

C. Training and review of new CE providers

DDSs should provide all new CE providers a good understanding of SSA's disability programs, program requirements for examinations and CE reports, and the CE provider’s role in the CE process. Describe the procedures for the training and review of new CE providers. (Obtain a copy of the training outline or other materials given to new providers).

1. Training new CE providers

The RO should check for the following:

- What type of training did the DDS provide?
- Who conducts the training?
- What training materials did the DDS provide?
- How does DDS evaluate the quality of training?
- Does the DDS encourage CE providers to submit reports electronically?

2. Reviewing new providers

The RO should check for the following:

- What type of review does the DDS conduct? (Describe frequency, duration, method of sampling, and data collection method).
- Who conducts the review?
- Do providers receive feedback on the results of the reviews?

D. CE scheduling procedures and controls

The States designed CE scheduling procedures and controls to attain a good distribution of examinations and prevent overscheduling. Question the RO should address:

1. Does the CE authorization process:

- a. Establish procedures for medical or supervisory approval of CE requests as required in regulations; and
 - b. Include a medical review of CEs that order diagnostic tests or procedures that may involve significant risk to the claimant or beneficiary?
2. What process does the DDS use to determine which CE provider to use? What consideration does DDS give to the quality of prior CE reports? What measures does the RO take to ensure that the DDS gives each CE provider on the panel an equitable number of referrals?
3. Does the DDS use the treating source as the preferred source of the CE as required in regulations and described in [DI 22510.010](#)?
4. If the DDS does not use the treating source for the CE, does the DDS properly document the reason in the claims file on the case development summary as required by [DI 20503.001](#)? For information on selecting a Qualified Medical Source to Perform a CE, see [DI 22510.010](#).
5. Does the DDS request a medical opinion per [DI 22510.015](#)?
6. Does the DDS send copies of the background material in the claims file to the CE source for review prior to the CE as required in [DI 22510.017](#)?
7. Does the DDS follow the guides in [DI 39545.250](#) for CE scheduling intervals? If not, what precautions, if any does the DDS take to prevent overscheduling?
8. No-Shows and Cancellations
 - a. What follow-up procedures does the DDS use to ensure claimants keep the CE appointment? Does the DDS remind the claimant of the CE several days before the examination following [DI 22510.019](#)?
 - b. Does the CE provider notify the DDS that the claimant did not keep the appointment?
 - c. What rate of no shows does the DDS experience? Of cancellations? Does the DDS pay for either no-shows or cancellations? If so, provide a complete description of the payment policy.
 - d. In States that pay for “no-shows,” what steps are they taking to move toward a no-pay policy?

E. Integrity of medical evidence

The RO should check for the following:

1. Does the DDS use claimant identification controls?
2. Does the DDS check numbers of vouchers for purchased medical evidence against the actual number of pieces of purchased medical evidence in file to ensure that all evidence is in file and ensure that there is no extra billing for services not originally requested or authorized?
3. Does DDS review the authenticity of hand-delivered evidence and follow [DI 23025.010](#) for questionable sources?

F. Recruiting activities

The RO should check for the following:

1. Does the DDS see the current CE panel as adequate? Is there a need for more providers? If inadequate, in what geographical areas and specialties does the DDS need more CE panelists?
2. What recruitment activities does the DDS conduct?

NOTE: Paying attention to how often recruitment activities are carried out, i.e., on a continuing basis or periodically.

3. What sources of CE provider referrals does the DDS use? How does DDS handle the referrals?
4. Does the DDS follow the credential check procedures in [DI 39569.300](#)?

G. Claimant complaints

The RO should check for the following and reference [DI 39545.375](#):

1. Does the DDS investigate all complaints? If yes, who conducts the investigation?
2. Does the DDS have a written procedure for investigating complaints?
3. How does the DDS handle:
 - a. Congressional inquiries?
 - b. Claimant complaints?
 - c. Provider complaints?
4. Does the DDS provide the claimant a timely response to his or her complaint?
5. What remedial or corrective actions does the DDS take with the CE providers?
6. Does the DDS have procedures for handling both threats or statements regarding suicide?
7. What types of situations does the DDS refer to the RO?

H. Claimant reactions to key providers

Describe the procedures for obtaining claimant reactions to key providers to determine the quality of service. Check for the following:

1. What types of claimant contacts are made, such as a letter, by telephone, or other personal contacts, such as RO exit interviews of claimants?
2. Who makes the claimant contacts and how does the DDS select the claimants to contact?
3. Does the DDS have a systematic plan for contacting claimants seen by all key providers?
4. If the claimant requests and properly authorizes, the DDS should send copies of the CE Report, to a treating source or, appointed representative (with a signed SSA-1696-U4 (Appointment of Representative) in file). For Sending the CE Report to the Claimant's Treating Source see [DI 22510.065](#).

I. List of key providers

For Key and Volume Providers see [DI 39545.100B.1](#). Check for the following:

1. When did the DDS visit key providers during the last fiscal year?
2. Who visited the key providers?

J. Onsite reviews of CE providers

Review copies of reports of onsite reviews of CE providers made in the past year. Check for the following and reference [DI 39545.500](#) and [DI 39545.525](#):

1. Does the DDS include verification from the source that all individuals who perform support services are properly licensed?
2. Does the DDS review at least the top five key providers? How often?
3. How does the DDS select non-key providers for review? How many reviews of non-key providers did the DDS perform in the last 12 months?
4. Do DDS medical or psychological consultants, as appropriate, participate in onsite reviews?

Review copies of all reports of onsite reviews of CE providers made in the past year.

K. Contracting Out for Medical Services

Describe the procedures for determining the feasibility of contracting out for medical services with both large and small volume providers, including individual and group practices. Check for the following:

- Has the DDS targeted geographic areas within the State with high concentrations of claimants and specialists? When the DDS identified high concentrations, did the DDS attempt to negotiate a volume discount from medical providers? If not, provide an explanation of why. If so, provide the amount of the discount.
- Did the DDS conduct a survey in these areas to determine the needed CEs and the types of specialists are available to meet those needs?
- Has the State contacted these specialists to obtain a preliminary indication of provider willingness to bid at a discounted price in exchange for some or most of the expected CE needs in targeted areas?
- What action did the DDS take as a result of this study?
- If the DDS decided to contract out, what types of medical services did the provider offer? If one exists, obtain a copy of the contract for medical services and review the language using guidelines provided in [DI 39542.205](#) for Contracting for Medical Provider Services.

L. DDS records maintenance for CE providers

Ensure that DDS maintains proper records for CE providers. Check for the following:

1. Does the DDS maintain a separate file for each CE provider?
2. Do those files contain:
 - a. Provider credentials?

- b. Annual payments to the provider?
 - c. Complaints against the provider?
 - d. Results of investigations or complaints against the provider?
 - e. Reports of onsite reviews?
 - f. Claimant reaction surveys?
 - g. Verification of System for Award Management (SAM) check?
3. Does the DDS complete the CE Oversight Report annually and send it to the RO?

Section History

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Action Item Explanation

Effective Date	Title
05/25/2016	Regional Office (RO) Guide for Evaluating Disability Determination Service (DDS) Management of the Consultative Examination (CE) Process

Prior Versions of Section

Effective Date	Title
10/01/2015 - 09/03/2019	Regional Office (RO) Guide for Evaluating Disability Determination Service (DDS) Management of the Consultative Examination (CE) Process
10/01/2015 - 09/30/2015	Regional Office (RO) Guide for Evaluating Disability Determination Service (DDS) Management of the Consultative Examination (CE) Process
05/23/2007 - 09/30/2015	Exhibit 1 - Regional Office (RO) Guide for Evaluating Disability Determination Service (DDS) Management of the Consultative Examination (CE) Process
04/23/2007 - 05/22/2007	Exhibit 1 - Regional Office (RO) Guide for Evaluating Disability Determination Service (DDS) Management of the Consultative Examination (CE) Process
04/20/2007 - 04/22/2007	Exhibit 1 - Regional Office (RO) Guide for Evaluating Disability Determination Service (DDS) Management of the Consultative Examination (CE) Process
09/29/2006 - 04/19/2007	Exhibit 1 - Regional Office (RO) Guide for Evaluating Disability Determination Service (DDS) Management of the Consultative Examination (CE) Process
09/24/2003 - 09/28/2006	Exhibit 1 - RO Comprehensive Review Guide for DDS Management of the CE Process
01/28/1999 - 09/23/2003	Exhibit 1 - RO Comprehensive Review Guide for DDS Management of the CE Process

Link to this section:

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