



Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor
Kimberly Belshé, Secretary
John A. Wagner, Director

Priority Process for Disabled Homeless in Los Angeles

Consultative Exam Pilot Improves Access to Disability Benefits

California's Department of Social Services' Disability Determination Service Division (DDSD), under the Social Security Act (SSA), is responsible for determining medical eligibility for residents in need of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). In a mutual agreement, the DDSD office in West Los Angeles has partnered with the Social Security field offices in Compton and Watts to establish the Consultative Examination (CE) project. This unique innovation is allowing homeless applicants, lacking adequate medical treatment or documentation, to immediately receive an appointment for a consultative examination with one of DDSD's medical vendors during the initial face-to-face application interview. The process reduces, by 30 days, the amount of time it takes to determine homeless eligibility. It assures homeless applicants are not "lost" in the system and can receive proper notification of benefits or eligibility determination.

The results of the medical or psychiatric consultative exam are sent to DDSD, where it is associated with the applicant's case file. This method has proven an effective way for DDSD to maintain contact with homeless applicants and secure sufficient evidence needed to make an independent assessment about the person's disability. Typically, new applications are first sent to DDSD where a disability analyst is assigned to begin processing the case before the state can authorize a consultative examination. Under the CE Pilot, the state authorizes consultative examinations in advance to reduce the waiting time for applicants already in the SSA office. An estimated 20 such examinations are conducted each month.

Statewide, DDSD spends nearly \$35 million, annually, for these exams and processes approximately 350,000 disability cases. In Los Angeles County, DDSD spends approximately \$11.6 million for consultative exams and processes 105,000 determination decisions annually.

Successes of the CE Pilot:

- ✓ Expedites homeless benefits through a streamlined, time-saving application process.
- ✓ Homeless applicants receive immediate authorization for a consultative medical examination, simultaneously, when meeting with SSA claims examiners.
- ✓ Assures homeless applicants are not lost in the system and can receive proper notification of benefits or eligibility determination.
- ✓ Easily reduces the eligibility determination process by at least 30 days.
- ✓ Allows DDSD to secure essential medical evidence to help make a disability determination.
- ✓ Consultative exams are free to disability applicants.

CDSS Explores Statewide Expansion of Model CE Pilot:

CDSS is committed to ending homelessness. We are exploring all options to expand this successful innovation across the state to support and improve access to benefits for California's homeless population. The Department will continue working in partnership with advocacy groups, county welfare and mental health departments, community centers and Social Security field offices to support homeless programs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: CDSS' Office of Public Affairs, (916) 657-2268