



STATE OF VERMONT
JOINT FISCAL OFFICE

MEMORANDUM

To: Joint Fiscal Committee members
From: Daniel Dickerson, Fiscal Analyst
Date: August 15, 2020
Subject: Grant Request – JFO #3017

Enclosed please find one (1) item, which the Joint Fiscal Office has received from the Administration.

JFO #3015 – One (1) limited-service position within the VT Dept. of Children and Families. The position would be housed within the Disability Determination Services program with a title of Disability Determination Specialist I. Currently only two of the three adjudicator units within DDS have specialists, so this request will allow for a specialist to be housed in the third unit. The Social Security Administration has directed the State to create and fill this new position to help with increased workloads. The position will be federally funded.

[JFO received 08/06/20]

Please review the enclosed materials and notify the Joint Fiscal Office (Daniel Dickerson at (802) 828-2472; ddickerson@leg.state.vt.us) if you have questions or would like an item held for legislative review. Unless we hear from you to the contrary by August 31, 2020 we will assume that you agree to consider as final the Governor's acceptance of this request.

**STATE OF VERMONT
Joint Fiscal Committee Review
Limited Service - Grant Funded
Position Request Form**

This form is to be used by agencies and departments when additional grant funded positions are being requested. Review and approval by the Department of Human Resources must be obtained prior to review by the Department of Finance and Management. The Department of Finance will forward requests to the Joint Fiscal Office for JFC review. A Request for Classification Review Form (RFR) and an updated organizational chart showing to whom the new position(s) would report must be attached to this form. Please attach additional pages as necessary to provide enough detail.

Agency/Department: AHS/DCF/DDS Date: 7/28/20

Name and Phone (of the person completing this request): Trudy Lyon-Hart, DDS Director, 802-839-0135

Request is for:

- Positions funded and attached to a new grant.
- Positions funded and attached to an existing grant approved by JFO # N/A

1. Name of Granting Agency, Title of Grant, Grant Funding Detail (attach grant documents):

Social Security Administration, Disability Determination, CFDA # 96.001, see attached communications from SSA

2. List below titles, number of positions in each title, program area, and limited service end date (information should be based on grant award and should match information provided on the RFR) position(s) will be established only after JFC final approval:

Title* of Position(s) Requested # of Positions Division/Program Grant Funding Period/Anticipated End Date

Disability Determination Specialist I (1 position) Disability Determination Services, no grant end date (4 years minimum)

*Final determination of title and pay grade to be made by the Department of Human Resources Classification Division upon submission and review of Request for Classification Review.

3. Justification for this request as an essential grant program need:

Social Security has directed the DDS to immediately recruit and hire another position beyond their previous directive and our previous request. This additional position is for a DDS Specialist I. It is needed for technical case processing and adjudicative support for processing current and upcoming caseload increases while maintaining service quality. As the attached organization chart shows, one of the adjudicative units does not have Specialist support. This will be critical in providing accurate, timely service to Disability applicants. Social Security funding covers all associated costs for this position, including salaries, benefits (the state's contributions), and all direct and indirect costs.

I certify that this information is correct and that necessary funding, space and equipment for the above position(s) are available (required by 32 VSA Sec. 5(b)).

Tam Dally for Sean Brown 7/29/20
Signature of Agency or Department Head Date

Aimee Pope July 30, 2020
Date

Approved/Denied by Department of Human Resources

Adam Greshin
Digitally signed by Adam Greshin
Date: 2020.08.03 08:21:38 -04'00'

Approved/Denied by Finance and Management Date

Kristin Clouser
Digitally signed by Kristin Clouser
Date: 2020.08.03 16:03:30 -04'00'

Approved/Denied by Secretary of Administration Date

[Signature] 8/5/20
Date

Approved/Denied by Governor (required as amended by 2019 Leg. Session)

Comments:

Recommend end date 07/30/2024 AP

Request for Hiring Approval

Effective April 15, 2020, a hiring freeze was implemented to include all vacant or soon to be vacant classified, exempt, and temporary positions, including positions that are currently under recruitment. Requests will be reviewed by the Department of Human Resources and the Position Pool Committee. Recommendations for approval will be forwarded to the Secretary of Administration for a final decision. This form must be completed with all appropriate signatures and related documentation.

The standards for approving a position to fill per Act 120, Sec A.2.(1) are "that filling the position is critical for State operation or pandemic response." In addition, per Act 120, the "Secretary of Administration shall notify the Legislative Joint Fiscal Committee of any approved hiring that takes place from July 1 through September 30, 2020."

Return this form to DHR.HiringFreeze2020@vermont.gov and copy your [DHR Field Manager](#)

Agency/Department/Division/Program: AHS/DCF/DDS

Requester name, phone, email: Trudy Lyon-Hart, 802-839-0135 (work cell), Trudy.Lyon-Hart@ssa.gov

Department HR manager name, email: Kelly Knowlton, Kelly.Knowlton@vermont.gov

Job title: Disability Determination Specialist I Pay Grade: 22

Position number: pending JFO approval Date of vacancy: N/A

Position type: (classified, temporary, exempt): Classified - limited service Location: Waterbury

Total annual cost for this position including salary and benefits: \$80,925.

Are these costs fully budgeted? Yes No

Indicate source of funds: % General 1.39; % Federal 98.61; % Special _____; % Other _____

(Please provide title of federal grant funds or names/types of fees for Special Funds/Other. You may provide fund balances if appropriate.)

Social Security Administration

Please clearly explain how the position is critical for State operations or pandemic response as described in the July 13, 2020 "[Hiring Freeze Update](#)" memo.

This position is critically needed for the DDS to provide timely and accurate disability decisions to the disabled citizens of Vermont. It provides critical technical case processing and support for a unit of adjudicators. There are 3 adjudicator units and only 2 existing unit specialist support positions. With the expansion of the adjudicators needed for the expanding DDS caseload, a third Specialist is critical to keeping DDS processing of applications current and accurate for Vermonters with disabilities.

Provide a rationale why the work cannot be distributed to similar job class positions, or other reconfiguration of resources, rather than proposing a new hire? Explain what internal evaluation was done prior to making the request to fill?

Specialist work is very technical and specific to the adjudication of Social Security disability claims. In the past couple of years, the DDS has lost specialists and currently does not have a sufficient number for the volume of work. Only the simplest pieces have been temporarily covered using temps through the State's contract with ATA. A classified position is needed as the federal requirements for case documentation and technical case processing have only become ever more voluminous and complex over the past few years. Based on actuarial workload projections and current and expected growth in the workload, Social Security has directed the DDS to hire another Specialist for unit support. It is critical to future quality of service to Vermonters that the DDS take full advantage of hires Social Security authorizes when they do so. This specialist position is critical to the DDS's ability to provide timely, high quality service going forward.

Please explain the steps your department will take if this position is not filled in the next 3 to 6 months.

Unfortunately, not filling this position will result in application delays and technical issues in case determinations. All that the DDS can do is again request Social Security permission to hire, which may not be granted next year. Even if granted, waiting until next year is problematic as training new specialists takes many months.

Describe the organization structure immediately surrounding this position. Include similar positions and the number of vacancies within this job series, work unit/division.

The DDS has three units of Adjudicators. To stay timely with processing disability applications, each unit needs the support of a Specialist for technical case processing. Currently, there are only two for the three units. This position is needed to be able to handle the full projected workload for the coming years without serious degradation of service.

What is the Department's plan to pay for the position as it relates to the FY 21 and FY 22 budget decisions?

Social Security has directed and allocated funding for this position to be hired this year and to continue in the staffing budget base thereafter.

Please list the top five major job duties, highlighting the duties of this position that are directly supporting critical state operation or the pandemic.

- Receipting and assigning incoming cases
- Putting together outgoing requests for evidence and indexing incoming evidence to the correct electronic file
- Ensuring technical case accuracy and coding for determination, diagnosis, diary date, and other critical coding
- Reviewing all correspondence and notices for accuracy and confidentiality
- Responding to information requests and applicant questions

Appointing Authority Signature: _____
(Must be signed by Department Head or Agency Secretary)

Date: 7/30/20

AOA Decision

Approved Signature and Date _____



SOCIAL SECURITY

Regional Office
19th Floor - John F. Kennedy Federal Building
Boston, Massachusetts 02203

July 28, 2020

Ms. Trudy Lyon-Hart, Director
Disability Determination Services
93 Pilgrim Park Road, Suite 6
Waterbury, VT 05676

Dear Ms. Lyon-Hart:

This letter authorizes you to hire an additional employee in the form of a unit specialist for the Vermont DDS.

Please begin your state personnel hiring process immediately with the target of having your new hires on duty as soon as possible.

I want to express the importance of acting on this authorization. The moratorium on face-to-face consultative exams coupled with delays receiving medical records and our directive to hold all adverse determinations puts the DDS in a precarious position. SSA expects that you will soon see an avalanche of these workloads to go along with increased receipts of initial claims and reconsideration requests. Your prompt execution of this hiring authorization will position the DDS to cope with the expected increased business activities and your base going forward.

Experience with the DDS hiring process in Vermont gives us confidence that you will be able to meet this tight timeline.

Most importantly, the expenses associated with filling these positions are 100% federally funded, as are all salary and benefits associated with the position. The funds for these positions will be included in your Fiscal Year 2020 budget allocation and your base going forward. If you have any questions or require additional information, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Steve DeLosh

Disability Program Administrator

Cc: Jack McCormack
Erin Genova

VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL
**Request for Classification Review
Position Description Form A**

- **This form is to be used by managers and supervisors to request classification of a position (filled or vacant) when the duties have changed, and by managers and supervisors to request the creation of a new job class/title (for a filled, vacant, or new position), and by employees to request classification of their position.**
- This form was designed in Microsoft Word to download and complete on your computer. This is a form-protected document, so information can only be entered in the shaded areas of the form.
- If you prefer to fill out a hard copy of the form, contact your Personnel Officer.
- To move from field to field use your mouse, the arrow keys or press Tab. Each form field has a limited number of characters. Use your mouse or the spacebar to mark and unmark a checkbox.
- Where additional space is needed to respond to a question, you might need to attach a separate page, and number the responses to correspond with the numbers of the questions on the form. Please contact your Personnel Officer if you have difficulty completing the form.
- The form must be complete, including required attachments and signatures or it will be returned to the department's personnel office. All sections of this form are required to be completed unless otherwise stated.

INSTRUCTIONS: Tell us about the job. The information you provide will be used to evaluate the position. It will not be used in any way to evaluate an employee's performance or qualifications.

Answer the questions carefully. The information you give will help ensure that the position is fairly evaluated. Here are some suggestions to consider in completing this questionnaire:

- Tell the **facts** about what an employee in this position is actually expected to do.
- Give **specific examples** to make it clear.
- Write in a way so a person unfamiliar with the job will be able to understand it.
- Describe the job **as it is now**; not the way it was or will become.
- Before answering each question, read it carefully.

To Submit this Request for Classification Review: If this is a filled position, the employee must sign the original* and forward to the supervisor for the supervisor's review and signature. The Personnel Officer and the Appointing Authority must also review and sign this request before it is considered complete. The effective date of review is the beginning of the first pay period following the date the complete Request for Classification Review is date stamped by the Classification Division of the Department of Personnel.

*An employee may choose to sign the form, make a copy, submit original to supervisor as noted above, while concurrently sending the copy to the Classification Division, 144 State Street, Montpelier, with a cover note indicating that the employee has submitted the original to the supervisor and is submitting the copy as a **Concurrent** filing.

If this is a request (initiated by employees, VSEA, or management) for review of all positions in a class/title please contact the appropriate Classification Analyst or the Classification Manager to discuss the request prior to submitting.

Request for Classification Review Position Description Form A

For Department of Personnel Use Only

Notice of Action # _____	Date Received (Stamp)
Action Taken: _____	
New Job Title _____	
Current Class Code _____	New Class Code _____
Current Pay Grade _____	New Pay Grade _____
Current Mgt Level ____ B/U ____ OT Cat. ____ EEO Cat. ____ FLSA ____	
New Mgt Level ____ B/U ____ OT Cat. ____ EEO Cat. ____ FLSA ____	
Classification Analyst _____	Date _____
Comments:	Effective Date: _____
	Date Processed: _____
Willis Rating/Components: Knowledge & Skills: _____	Mental Demands: _____
Working Conditions: _____	Accountability: _____
	Total: _____

Incumbent Information:

Employee Name: Employee Number:

Position Number: Current Job/Class Title:

Agency/Department/Unit: Work Station: Zip Code:

Supervisor's Name, Title, and Phone Number:

How should the notification to the employee be sent: employee's work location or other address, please provide mailing address:

New Position/Vacant Position Information:

New Position Authorization: Request Job/Class Title:

Position Type: Permanent or Limited / Funding Source: Core, Partnership, or Sponsored

Vacant Position Number: Current Job/Class Title:

Agency/Department/Unit: Work Station: Zip Code:

Supervisor's Name, Title and Phone Number:

Type of Request:

Management: A management request to review the classification of an existing position, class, or create a new job class.

Employee: An employee's request to review the classification of his/her current position.

1. Job Duties

This is the **most critical** part of the form. Describe the activities and duties required in your job, **noting changes (new duties, duties no longer required, etc.) since the last review**. Place them in order of importance, beginning with the single most important activity or responsibility required in your job. The importance of the duties and expected end results should be clear, including the tolerance that may be permitted for error. Describe each job duty or activity as follows:

- **What** it is: The nature of the activity.
- **How** you do it: The steps you go through to perform the activity. Be specific so the reader can understand the steps.
- **Why** it is done: What you are attempting to accomplish and the end result of the activity.

For example a Tax Examiner might respond as follows: **(What)** *Audits tax returns and/or taxpayer records.* **(How)** *By developing investigation strategy; reviewing materials submitted; when appropriate interviewing people, other than the taxpayer, who have information about the taxpayer's business or residency.* **(Why)** *To determine actual tax liabilities.*

The DDS Specialist I must learn and correctly interpret and apply complex federal regulations associated with the Social Security Administration ("SSA") Disability Programs and the Economic Services ("ESD") Medicaid Disability program to all tasks performed. In this entry-level position, over the course of an eighteen month to a two-year on-the-job training period, the Specialist I must develop substantial knowledge of both SSA and VT state programmatic and technical regulations. The Specialist I must also develop extensive expertise with SSA and DDS computer programs and interfaces to accurately process SSA Disability and Medicaid disability claims.

All the Specialist I's job duties and tasks at DDS are interwoven. Case situations have multiple factors which the Specialist I must learn to differentially analyze to determine appropriate action. Few tasks and case situations have predetermined responses or solutions, and even with those that do, there are myriad exceptions which the Specialist I must become fully versed in recognizing and applying, in order to ensure that each disability claim is processed accurately, timely, and efficiently.

Tasks are performed with increasing independence during the training period, but always the Specialist I performs as part of a self-governing team, which is charged with processing all cases timely and accurately with minimal task by task supervision. This requires the individual and the team to creatively juggle multiple competing high-priority tasks day by day and hour by hour. The team's performance is evaluated on the outcomes it achieves in terms of DDS productivity, processing time, and accuracy, as measured by Social Security. Specialist I's receive ongoing task-specific training from the Specialist II's on the team, who also review their work and keep records of progress for the supervisor. The specialist I is gradually released from training reviews in specific tasks, as they demonstrate accuracy and the necessary speed.

As well as programmatic and technical knowledge, interpersonal skills and abilities specific to the production nature of the DDS Specialist team must be developed and exercised. The Specialist I works to develop the ability to eventually train and mentor less experienced support staff, to motivate team-mates, to collaborate successfully as part of a cohesive team, to resolve conflict, to seek and share information, and to assimilate feedback in a manner which improves team and individual performance. As part of a self-

managing team, the Specialist I must learn to creatively prioritize and complete all the competing tasks required on a daily basis, in the midst of changing agency priorities, staff absences and schedule adjustments, and changes in points of external contacts. A Specialist I also learns to assist DDS Management, Information Technology Staff, and SSA with production and system issues, testing of new or enhanced software programs, and developing and recommending efficiency improvements.

The Specialist I must learn also interact effectively with many external sources of information, claimants and interested members of the public. These include medical facilities, hospital testing departments, doctors' offices, other medical professionals, medical records personnel, congressional representatives, SSA Field Office supervisors and other employees, SSA Regional Office staff, schools, mental health agencies, other state agencies (ESD, Vocational Rehabilitation, etc.), attorneys, employers, and claimants. The purpose of these interactions vary and include, for example, responding to case inquiries with accurate information as permitted by confidentiality rules, scheduling examinations for claimants with doctors and hospitals, following up on attendance at these examinations, following up with sources for requested information, responding to sources who bill the DDS but are not entitled to the amount billed, etc.

A Specialist I must develop extensive and substantial knowledge of both SSA and State of VT programmatic and technical regulations, policies, and computer programs and interfaces. Examples of required knowledge areas are as follows:

- SSA and State of VT Confidentiality policies – the DDS as a contractor of SSA is required to follow the federal Privacy Act, as well as AHS confidentiality policy. The Specialist I is involved in frequent daily interactions (on the telephone, in writing and face-to-face) where confidentiality could easily be compromised, sometimes in very subtle ways, such as indirectly acknowledging the existence of a claim. The Specialist I has the responsibility to ensure that strict confidentiality is maintained. He/she must be able to immediately recognize who is or is not entitled to what kinds of information, and ensure throughout the interaction that confidentiality is not violated either directly or indirectly (by what is implied in the conversation), giving prompt, responsive public service.
- Federal, State of VT, and AHS requirements concerning HIPAA compliance – to ensure DDS's own compliance and to ensure that covered entities receive from the DDS the information necessary for them to respond to our requests for personal healthcare information
- SSA regulations concerning case receipt and assignment, requests for evidence from treating medical sources, authorization of consultative examinations, case clearances, technical accuracy, legal notice language, etc.
- Disability claim types and sub-types - how to identify them, the technical differences of each, and the differences in how the Specialist I must process each one. There are approximately 20 broad claim types. Each one has 2-4 subtypes and many of these subtypes have additional subtypes. In addition, one case may contain multiple claims filed by the same person for different kinds of benefits. Since all these types and subtypes have different case processing and decision criteria, the Specialist I must learn to correctly identify each upon receipt and in all further case processing actions in order for the claims to be correctly processed through the DDS
- Claims adjudicators' individual levels of expertise with different types and levels of claims and their differing case assignment capacities and limitations for the day and cumulatively

for the week

- Medical sources in and around the state of Vermont
- Medical terminology
- SSA and DDS's multiple computer program input requirements. The Specialist I must learn and apply highly complex technical coding with complete accuracy since the inputs control critical factors in case processing – claim receipt, input of the correct decision, provision of the claimant's correct legal appeal rights, onset information for correct benefit amounts to be paid out to the claimant, accurate diary dates for future eligibility reviews, correct approval for payment of bills for medical information by the correct funding source (SSA or Medicaid), etc.
- State of VT's fiscal requirements, both state law (such as laws governing payment for healthcare information) and the accounting and documentation practices that must be followed
- SSA's performance expectations and DDS internal needs and goals regarding accuracy, production, timeliness, cost efficiency, and public service. The Specialist I must develop a clear understanding of how to manage the team's tasks to best contribute to the DDS meeting all performance requirements and goals

A Specialist I learns to receipt into the SSA/DDS computer systems all incoming disability cases from SSA and ESD. The receipt process is the foundation for all subsequent actions with each disability case.

- Identifies what types and subtypes of disability claims are contained in each case (in either electronic or paper format)
- Inputs the proper information for the multiple fields required by the SSA/DDS computer systems
- Locates in the electronic and/or paper file, and verifies accuracy of, identifying information such as SSN, name, address, date of birth, parent, guardian, third party, attorney, filing dates of claims and appeals, dates of prior determinations, diary dates and other information which indicate the type of continuing eligibility review to be done, etc.
- Must be able to locate information throughout case file, both paper folder and electronic folder.
- Identifies the location and requests prior determination files as needed, from state public records and SSA record centers nationwide.

A Specialist I must learn to manage the assignment of the agency's daily case intake, as well as the backlog of unassigned cases.

- Learns to set up DDS computer programming for daily assignment of the correct types and numbers of cases to each of approximately 17 adjudicators, according to individuals' daily and weekly ceilings per case type and for overall intake. This requires ongoing communication and interaction with the Operations Supervisors, and accurate management of multiple factors, both in the logic by which the computer assigns cases, and in the details pertaining to 17 different adjudicators. An error in any one of these details may cause cases to be incorrectly assigned or backlogged when they should have been assigned. The Specialist I's accuracy with this task also ensures fair distribution of the cases among all adjudicators.

- Learns to evaluate the unassigned production caseload (staged cases) and the daily assignment capacity of the agency. The Specialist I must ensure that backlogged cases are assigned before new cases, and that all types of backlogged cases are assigned by the principle of first in, first assigned. This can be difficult to do across all case types, especially when some case types can be done only by a few adjudicators. It requires judgment and forward planning, not only for today's case assignment, but for the upcoming days as well, to make adjustments ahead of planned adjudicator outages, and differences in the volume of various case types on different days.
- Learns to operate the Daily Batch Case Assignment program, adjusting the sequence of cases assigned as necessary. Evaluates the resulting list of case assignments, and makes any necessary retroactive changes through the Single Case Transfer program. Retroactive changes must be minimized because of the program's limited capacity to adjust its weekly totals, once it has run the daily assignment. The Specialist I must learn to be creative in finding ways around the program's limits to ensure that adjudicators end up with the correct number of cases daily and weekly.
- Determines if case is in electronic folder format or still in full or partial paper format. Ensures that the adjudicator gets all the case information in the correct formats. Ensures that any development the Specialist I or other staff has done while the case was in backlog is filed with the case and/or annotated on the electronic worksheet, to prevent duplication of development and to facilitate the adjudicator's review and decisions about next actions.
- Monitors and manages the backlogged caseload. Learns to develop letters requesting medical evidence and claimant forms completion. Learns how to screen incoming information and identify situations where immediate case action is necessary, such as in terminal illness cases, hardship and obvious allowance cases, homicide and suicide threats, failure to cooperate situations, cases where all sources have responded, cases where there are no sources, etc. Learns to determine and take appropriate case-specific actions. Files all incoming information.
- Learns to Identify any staged cases requiring additional contact (follow-ups) to vendors (medical facilities, medical professionals, state agencies, and private business) or individuals (claimants, lawyers, representatives, and congressional representatives). Learns to determine what form the contact should take (telephone call, letter, fax, or other electronic method) and does it.

A Specialist I learns to perform initial development on cases. This involves such steps as the following:

- Review and interpretation of information from supplied forms to determine what further information is needed, from which sources, and for which date ranges, etc.
- Verification that a HIPAA compliant release of information is signed and dated by the legally appropriate individuals
 - o If necessary verify, guardianship papers or power of attorney papers are in folder
 - o Obtain required legal documentation, if not sent included in the file as received
- Generation of letters using the SSA computer system requesting relevant information.
- Proper preparation of HIPAA compliant releases and other necessary documentation for association with the letters after the batch print.

A Specialist I learns to ensure confidentiality of all written correspondence leaving the

agency, such as Medical Evidence of Record (MER) requests and Consultative Examination (CE) correspondence. The Specialist I checks each document page for the many items, such as but not limited to the following:

- Correct claimant name
- Correct vendor or other addressee name, address, etc.
- Legally correct signature and date on HIPAA-compliant authorization forms
- Documentation of legal guardianship, power of attorney documents, death certificates, etc. – knowledge of the situations when these are necessary, and ensuring that they are present, that they are the specific documents needed, and that they do not include other personal information which might breach a family member's confidentiality
- Accuracy of all enclosures
- Appropriate copies to attorneys and other third parties who are entitled to them (and only to those people)

The Specialist I also learns to assist adjudicators in ways similar to the work done on backlogged cases. May include but is not limited to the following tasks, as needed by the adjudicator:

- Requesting medical evidence,
- Following up for evidence not received,
- Getting further information from SSA Field Offices or ESD District Offices,
- Completing forms with claimants, employers, and teachers over the telephone,
- Screening incoming information for required immediate action (and taking that action and/or alerting the adjudicator, as appropriate), and
- Making arrangements with claimants to go to consultative examinations (providing directions, reminders, arranging rides or public transportation, determining reasons for the claimant's non-attendance, etc.).

A Specialist I learns to input accurately and quickly the receipt of all case information into the electronic case processing system. The information may arrive at the DDS via mail, fax, and electronic transfer from multiple pay and non-pay sources. Input of pay source information also involves authorizing payment, when the criteria for the expedite fee have been met by the source (prompt response within the required time-frame)

- Prints the medical reports received from medical Transcription Company, performing quality assurance for correct Social Security number, case number, name, etc. The Specialist I also faxes the medical report to the appropriate medical source for signature and may upon request provide the source with a properly edited and revised copy following the source's review and correction of the original.
- Prepares or oversees the preparation of paper documents, usually incoming medical information, for scanning and indexing to the electronic folder. Before the actual scanning is done, the Specialist I must perform preliminary verification of such elements as the following:
 - o All pages of the document belong to the claimant
 - o The title page contains the necessary indexing information (if missing, the Specialist I

creates an indexed title page)

- o Each page is properly aligned for scanning and has no tears, folded or bent corners, etc. If a page is damaged, the Specialist I decides what action is appropriate to obtain a legible scan

- Reviews scanned documents for proper coding, title page, barcode, claimant information, alignment, legibility, completeness and accuracy, and will take action as necessary to remedy any problems. Once this quality review is completed, the Specialist I uploads the documents into the SSA and DDS case processing systems. Once uploaded, no further changes may be made; thus the accuracy and quality of the Specialist I's upfront review is of critical importance.

A Specialist I learns to schedule Consultative Examinations (CE) with medical sources to obtain current medical information to satisfy SSA disability regulations.

- Identifies appropriate medical sources based on medical specialty, necessary testing facilities/equipment, applicants' impairments, geographical location, physical limitations, transportation issues, interpreter needs, etc.

- Schedules exam or test with an appropriate medical source in a timely manner, as not to delay development of case. May have to contact multiple sources and use persuasive communication to obtain a timely appointment

- Obligates funds for the exam or test.

- Arranges for transportation, interpreter, or other CE-related services, as needed.

- Generates letter of agreement with the CE source for each exam, applicant's notification, acknowledgement, special instruction, and reminder letters, third party letters, and travel vouchers, as needed.

- Prints from the electronic folder (and/or copies from the paper folder) the necessary background medical information for the consultative physician or psychologist.

- Cancels and/or reschedules the CE, if necessary.

- o Generates letters to cancel and, when appropriate, to reschedule CE with the same or a different medical source, applicant, and third party.

- o Cancels CE in SSA and DDS computer system to de-obligate monies and to ensure accuracy, not only of DDS fiscal records but also of national and state CE rate data, which is used to determine DDS funding from SSA.

- o Authorizes a record review fee when the circumstances of a cancellation warrant it

- o Generates new medical source, applicant, and third party letters, and travel vouchers, as needed for rescheduling and documentation of fiscal obligations

A Specialist I learns to manage front-line maintenance of the DDS MER (Medical Evidence of Record) Vendor File Database

- Must distinguish between vendors that receive an expedite fee and vendors that do not, so as to correctly encumber DDS funds for requests for information

- Adds new vendors to the vendor file after verifying vendor's name, address, tax ID number etc.

- Determines if the new vendor fits the pay or nonpay criteria

- Inputs the correct codes to distinguish this information in the computer
- Obtains the necessary ID numbers for the State of VT's fiscal system (VISION).
- Makes corrections to any existing vendors in the vendor files as changes to addresses and pay status are verified.
- Runs an alpha sort daily to facilitate the use of the MER vendor file by coworkers.

A Specialist I learns to perform technical accuracy reviews on all cases before clearing them from the DDS computer system

- Ensures that all medical information requiring signatures is legally signed.
- Ensures that all sources used to make decision are in the folder and stated on legal notice of the determination to claimant.
- Ensures that appropriate medical consultant, and adjudicator signatures are on all required documents.
- Ensures that claimant determination notices (which are 4-5 pages in length) have all the correct legal paragraphs and language for the type and subtype of each claim and the decisions being made on each claim
- Ensures that the legally correct pamphlets and other decision document enclosures are prepared for mailing
- Checks for special and/or case specific disposing requirements and ensures that these are clearly indicated for the person doing the disposition
- Ensures that the decision the adjudicator has prepared is accurate and will not cause an SSA system edit or an irretrievable error when the data is uploaded upon case closure.

A Specialist I learns to clear cases – those with decisions and those that must leave the office for other reasons.

- Must ensure that all the appropriate claims in the case are disposed.
- Must input the correct information into the SSA and DDS computer systems
- Must determine and input the correct folder destination.

2. Key Contacts

This question deals with the personal contacts and interactions that occur in this job. Provide brief typical examples indicating your primary contacts (**not** an exhaustive or all-inclusive list of contacts) other than those persons to whom you report or who report to you. If you work as part of a team, or if your primary contacts are with other agencies or groups outside State government describe those interactions, and what your role is. For example: you may *collaborate, monitor, guide, or facilitate change*.

The DDS Specialist I constantly interacts with the Specialist team, learning to manage ever-shifting volumes of multiple high priority tasks to successful, timely completion of all. As a team, the DDS Specialists must decide how to use each other's strengths to best advantage, while keeping everyone's skills current in all task areas. The team must understand each member's communication and work styles to collaborate effectively to achieve tight turn-around times and high quality on all tasks. The DDS Specialists must

independently work through team conflicts and personal style issues that may push each other's "buttons" and have the potential to detract from the team's effectiveness. The team creates and manages a rotation schedule of primary and back-up responsibilities for each member that provides training to the Specialist I's in each task area. Each team member keeps the entire team aware of the volume of work in each area and calls on fellow team members to assist in other areas as the shifting workload volume requires. The team makes joint decisions about daily priorities and timing sequence for getting all tasks completed.

Within the DDS, the DDS Specialist I learns to interact with adjudicators and their supervisors, the provider relations specialist, the accountant, IT staff, and management. The Specialist I must develop the necessary knowledge and skills to

- Provide feedback to adjudicators on technical errors the adjudicator may have made
- Provide information to adjudicators and supervisors about unusual issues concerning technical aspects, consultative examinations, medical requests and reports, billing, etc.
- Take issues to supervisors when an adjudicator does not fully correct technical errors, or when multiple adjudicators are causing a specific problem. Explain what adjudicators are doing and what problems it is causing in claim processing and/or in the overall business process. Brainstorm and negotiate solutions or work-arounds.
- Inform the provider relations specialist of issues with consultative examiners (scheduling problems, issues the examiners may raise when the DDS Specialist is talking to them, etc.) Seek the provider relations specialist's advice in handling unusual CE issues
- Gather information from adjudicators, supervisors, managers, IT staff, provider relations and fiscal staff to help the DDS Specialists adjust their business processes and practices as needed
- Notify IT staff of computer and other equipment problems, and assists the IT staff with troubleshooting and problem solving
- Work closely with IT staff to test new software
- Raise process and policy issues that affect DDS productivity, service provision, accuracy, etc. with DDS management
- Keep supervisor apprised of workload status and seek supervisory guidance if the team cannot find a way to achieve the required task completion.

External to the DDS, the DDS Specialist I develops the expertise to handle regular contact with claimants, doctors, advocates, consultative exam providers, Social Security and Economic Services staff, and members of the public, mostly by telephone, with some in-person contact when covering the front desk or interacting with visitors.

- Provides program and claim information to callers and visitors promptly and accurately, following the rules for confidentiality to ascertain the information to which the caller/visitor is and is not entitled.
- Maintains confidentiality even when it means tactfully refusing to give information to claimants' spouses, parents, relatives, attorneys, doctors, social workers, etc.
- Gives instructions to claimants and medical providers for responding to requests for information and to facilitate the consultative exam process
- Gives unwelcome information clearly and sensitively
- Defuses anger and eases anxiety in callers

- Persuades claimants to complete long, detailed forms and/or to attend exams when the claimant may not want to comply. Explains the purpose and the program requirements and helps people understand the complicated process by which claims are developed and decided.
- Schedules, cancels and reschedules consultative examinations with doctors, medical/hospital office staff, and claimants. Discusses next steps when the claimant fails to keep an appointment, assesses the appropriateness of rescheduling based on the reasons the claimant missed the appointment, persuades doctors to reschedule, and persuades claimants to go to the rescheduled appointment (or explains to them why an appointment will not be rescheduled)
- Calls or emails Social Security Field Office staff (or ESD staff) to explain why DDS cannot take jurisdiction of a claim that one of these offices sent to us, what more the office needs to do on the claim, and why.
- Calls or emails the Regional Social Security staff to obtain help in resolving contentious issues with the Field Office staff and/or in getting problems identified clearly from both perspectives. Raises issues to the Regional Office concerning technical systems or policy disconnects as they affect the DDS Specialists' ability to receipt or dispose cases, upload documents to the EF, etc.

3. Are there licensing, registration, or certification requirements; or special or unusual skills necessary to perform this job?

Include any special licenses, registrations, certifications, skills; (such as counseling, engineering, computer programming, graphic design, strategic planning, keyboarding) including skills with specific equipment, tools, technology, etc. (such as mainframe computers, power tools, trucks, road equipment, specific software packages). Be specific, if you must be able to drive a commercial vehicle, or must know Visual Basic, indicate so.

For this entry level specialized position, new hires must have the ability to learn and retain information of considerable complexity and detail and follow instructions with many branching decision trees. They must be able to be highly accurate in many crucial details, and to maintain accuracy while working quickly under considerable workload pressure and high expectations for workload completion. Must be able to move many cases through a routine set of processes, while remaining alert for those case situations are slightly or subtly different and must be handled in a different way. They must have the mental capacity to incorporate frequent changes in instructions and work priorities and keep processing cases speedily and accurately. The job requires a combination of focus on accuracy and detail, with drive for high volume and speed, and with the flexibility and creativity to manage perpetual change and need to find new ways to get all the work done most efficiently. The teamwork requires listening, communication, and collaboration skills and the ability to self-manage emotional reactions to workload pressure, interpersonal conflict, upset and angry claimants, etc.

4. Do you supervise?

In this question "supervise" means if you direct the work of others where you are held **directly** responsible for assigning work; performance ratings; training; reward and discipline or effectively recommend such action; and other personnel matters. List the names, titles, and position numbers of the classified employees reporting to you:

No.

5. In what way does your supervisor provide you with work assignments and review your work?

This question deals with how you are supervised. Explain how you receive work assignments, how priorities are determined, and how your work is reviewed. There are a wide variety of ways a job can be supervised, so there may not be just one answer to this question. For example, some aspects of your work may be reviewed on a regular basis and in others you may operate within general guidelines with much independence in determining how you accomplish tasks.

The DDS Specialists' work arrives through mail, telephone, email, fax, batch print jobs, electronic queues (for receipts, dispositions, consultative exam orders, case action to-do lists, etc.), and/or by hand-delivery of paper materials. The work comes from Social Security offices, Economic Services, DDS's in other states, and DDS internal staff (adjudicators, accountant, provider relations specialist, etc.) The DDS Specialists access the queues, open the mail, answer the telephones, etc. to receive the work. As a team, they independently assess and organize their day to handle the incoming flow of work in all the task areas. The DDS Specialist II's create and coordinate a rotating schedule in which each team member has primary and back-up responsibilities in various areas, and Specialist I's can train on task areas on a schedule to complete their full training within a two-year period. As a team, they are responsible for shifting the team's resources from one task area to another, as the incoming volume requires. Specialist I's learn how to do this effectively as they gain experience on the team. They learn when it is appropriate to enlist guidance and/or assistance from other support staff (fiscal, provider relations, telephone receptionist) as needed, and to alert their supervisor when they encounter an issue beyond the expertise of their more experienced teammates, or if the workload volume increases beyond the team's capacity to meet the expected outcomes for timely service.

The accuracy of the DDS Specialist I's work is reviewed by the Specialist II's. As the Specialist I gains expertise, these reviews decrease, but errors can then affect various downstream components, who will bring them to the attention of DDS management. Depending on the task, the downstream component may be a Social Security office, an Economic Services office, a hospital or doctor's office, claimants and/or their advocates/representatives, DDS adjudicators, etc. Errors in some technical inputs result in systems edits; the DDS Specialist will get an alert to fix the problem. If the DDS Specialist I does not fix the problem correctly, the case information does not upload to SSA. If a Specialist I makes repeated input errors, the Specialist II or the IT staff will alert the supervisor.

Volume and speed of the Specialist I's work, as well as accuracy, is monitored and tracked by the Specialist II trainer on progress charts. The Specialist II informs the supervisor when the Specialist I achieves milestones in their training, when he/she is ready to be released from training review of each set of tasks, etc. The supervisor may also spot check the work that is physically in the unit or in the electronic queues for timeliness and volume of work. The DDS Specialists' performance is evaluated on the outcomes achieved by the team for the office and the team's assessment of each of their member's contributions.

6. Mental Effort

This section addresses the mental demands associated with this job. Describe the most mentally challenging part of your job or the most difficult typical problems you are expected to solve. Be sure to give a specific response and describe the situation(s) by example.

- For example, a purchasing clerk might respond: *In pricing purchase orders, I frequently must find the cost of materials not listed in the pricing guides. This involves locating vendors or other sources of pricing information for a great variety of materials.*
- Or, a systems developer might say: *Understanding the ways in which a database or program will be used, and what the users must accomplish and then developing a system to meet their needs, often with limited time and resources.*

The following are aspects that affect the entire DDS Specialist Team on a daily basis. Added to these aspects for the Specialist I is that they must be able to learn a large set of very technical and complicated tasks while both they and their trainers are dealing with the ongoing, daily mental challenges of the job.

Workflow into the DDS Specialist Team is never even or predictable. It is always high volume, but the volume in different tasks varies considerably from day to day or even morning to afternoon. Many of the tasks are interrelated so that completion of one depends on sequential completion of others, and a delay in one area may adversely impact the entire office's ability to produce work in other areas. All tasks must be done very quickly; the priority may be on a task that cannot be done until several others are completed first. Deadlines must be carefully set to coincide with such critical factors as when the mail will be delivered and picked up, when DDS doctors will be available to sign cases, when consultative examination doctors' offices are open, etc. When the adjudicators bring written decisions to be disposed depends, at least in part, on when the DDS Specialists receipt the mail and scan and/or deliver the paper reports to the adjudicators; however, different adjudicators organize and move their work differently so the DDS Specialists' work remains unpredictable. The Specialists must have a high degree of versatility, flexibility, and creative collaboration as a group to successfully manage each day's multiple tasks, so that nothing falls behind and all priorities and deadlines are met, regardless of team member absences, volume challenges, and system problems/downtime.

The DDS Specialists' speed is important but cannot compromise accuracy, due to the critical nature of the work and the high concerns for confidentiality, accuracy and legality of determinations, as well as prompt responsiveness to the public and the claimants, many of whom are in dire financial need. The DDS Specialists' accuracy with voluminous critical details of considerable complexity must be exceptionally exact and fast. An error in one detail can result in serious case processing errors or delays, misinformation, confidentiality breaches, and even errors in legal due process and claim decisions. For example, inadvertently changing or incorrectly entering one code may result in the wrong decision being uploaded and automatically effectuated by SSA.

The DDS Specialists must maintain productivity, speed, and accuracy even though SSA procedural and technological instructions change frequently. They must respond to public telephone calls with professional calm and tact while in the midst of workload pressure. They must make up for time lost to unexpected system problems and team-member absences. This job requires not only intense focus but also great flexibility and emotional self-management.

7. Accountability

This section evaluates the job's expected results. In weighing the importance of results, consideration should be given to responsibility for the safety and well-being of people, protection of confidential information and protection of resources.

What is needed here is information not already presented about the job's scope of responsibility. What is the job's most significant influence upon the organization, or in what way does the job contribute to the organization's mission?

Provide annualized dollar figures if it makes sense to do so, explaining what the amount(s) represent.

For example:

- A social worker might respond: *To promote permanence for children through coordination and delivery of services;*
- A financial officer might state: *Overseeing preparation and ongoing management of division budget: \$2M Operating/Personal Services, \$1.5M Federal Grants.*

As background, the DDS yearly operating budget is currently almost \$5.4 million; its work determines medical eligibility for Social Security and SSI disability benefits for all Vermont applicants. As of 9/2012, Social Security Disability benefits paid to Vermont residents totaled \$152,833,000 in per month, or \$1,833,996,000 annually. Added to this, disabled Vermonters receive more than \$7,647,000 annually in SSI disability payments.

The DDS Specialist team's work is the "grease" that keeps the DDS operations and business process functioning efficiently, without which cases could not be processed. While this position does not adjudicate claims, it applies a separate body of technical knowledge to the processing of all claims, a knowledge that is critical to the DDS's achievement of its workload and service delivery expectations. Every task the DDS Specialists do is critical to the claims adjudicators' ability to obtain evidence and make decisions. This position ensures that all claims are receipted and disposed, and that all decisions, related technical information, and documents are uploaded to SSA systems and electronic folders timely and accurately. The adjudicators rely upon the DDS Specialists to assign and deliver their cases quickly so that development may begin; to associate their requests for evidence accurately with claimant authorizations and necessary forms; to mail the requests and receipt the responses promptly and accurately; to schedule consultative examinations without delay; and to prepare the cases technically for disposition so the determinations can be accurately effectuated and the claimants promptly notified. The DDS fiscal staff relies on the DDS Specialists for prompt and accurate authorization of payment for medical evidence, supply ordering, etc. Delays in any area impact the workflow of the entire office; the DDS Specialist is accountable for finding ways to move the work with optimal speed and accuracy and for minimizing or preventing delays. The timeliness and accuracy of the DDS Specialists' work is critical for the people the DDS serves – people with serious disabilities who are often in dire need of financial assistance and healthcare coverage.

The DDS Specialist I, as an entry-level trainee position initially has much less personal accountability than the experienced Specialist II's on the team; however, the Specialist I's are accountable for learning the job as accurately and quickly as possible, so that they can contribute most effectively to the DDS meeting its workload and performance expectations. The learning process teaches them to effectively support the DDS achieving its service delivery goals.

8. Working Conditions

The intent of this question is to describe any adverse conditions that are routine and expected in your job. It is not to identify special situations such as overcrowded conditions or understaffing.

- a) What significant mental stress are you exposed to? All jobs contain some amount of stress. If your job stands out as having a significant degree of mental or emotional pressure or tension associated with it, this should be described.

Type	How Much of the Time?
<p>The DDS Specialist must effectively handle with the competing pressure to move work fast while being exceptionally accurate in details that although small carry important ramifications, such as breach of confidentiality or erroneous decisions. There is constant stress in knowing that any delays or errors can impede claimants' ability to obtain or keep housing, adequate food for their families, and the healthcare they need; and that it is up to the team to prevent backlogs regardless of volume and resource factors beyond their control. While the Specialist I's accuracy is double-checked for a while by the Specialist II trainer, the Specialist I carries the stress of trying to be accurate with live cases while they are learning the job.</p>	<p>Constant</p>
<p>Competing pressures are placed on the DDS Specialist by the adjudicators and staff in the office who each feel that their cases need and should have priority. In addition, the Specialist has to bring back to the adjudicators work that the DDS Specialist finds has technical errors and omissions, incorrect enclosures (which sometimes would violate confidentiality if mailed), etc. Often adjudicators who are pressed for time are less than receptive to the feedback and may argue or push the DDS Specialist to let it go as is. The DDS Specialist is however responsible for the product going out the door and so cannot yield to such pressure. Specialist II's will initially help the Specialist I's with these interactions, but the Specialist I must learn to handle them independently.</p>	<p>Frequent</p>
<p>Working as a team creates pressure, especially when one or another of the team members is not carrying their weight, since the successful workflow of the office and DDS Specialist's own performance evaluation relies upon the team's achievement of all its tasks. Being personally accountable for work that relies on a group effort can be very stressful. Attempting to motivate others or to work harder oneself to compensate for others' lower expertise or</p>	<p>Constant</p>

effort can create stress and burnout if not managed well.	
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- b) What hazards, special conditions or discomfort are you exposed to? (Clarification of terms: **hazards** include such things as potential accidents, illness, chronic health conditions or other harm. Typical examples might involve exposure to dangerous persons, including potentially violent customers and clients, fumes, toxic waste, contaminated materials, vehicle accident, disease, cuts, falls, etc.; and **discomfort** includes exposure to such things as cold, dirt, dust, rain or snow, heat, etc.)

Type	How Much of the Time?
The DDS Specialists must deal with upset, angry, and even suicidal or threatening claimants or other members of the public. The interactions are usually on the telephone but can be at the reception desk as well. Many DDS claimants have serious mental impairments and can pose a risk of harm to any DDS staff person. More often, they pose a risk to themselves, and the DDS bears responsibility for taking all possible actions to ensure their safety. The DDS Specialist is the front line of the telephone or at reception. Their words and actions are critical in helping the person calm down while they enlist the help of other resources.	Many callers are upset or angry - these are frequent throughout the day. Truly threatening calls occur much less often - only occasionally. Specific threats against a staff person (including a DDS Specialist) do occur, but rarely.

- c) What weights do you lift; how much do they weigh and how much time per day/week do you spend lifting?

Type	How Heavy?	How Much of the Time?
Files, equipment, boxes of supplies, shredding, pushing carts loaded with cases, etc.	2-50 pounds	Off and on throughout the day
Moving file cabinets	50+ pounds	Once in a while

- d) What working positions (sitting, standing, bending, reaching) or types of effort (hiking, walking, driving) are required?

Type	How Much of the Time?
Sitting and working at the computer	65-95% of the time, depending on which tasks the Specialist is doing on a particular day
Walking to deliver cases, mail, supplies around the office, to offload printers, to move to different workstations, etc. Standing and bending to file cases and case material, metering mail, scanning, faxing and copying documents, refilling supplies, maintaining equipment, etc. Reaching to put cases in mailboxes above shoulder height	5-35% of the time

Additional Information:

Carefully review your job description responses so far. If there is anything that you feel is important in understanding your job that you haven't clearly described, use this space for that purpose. Perhaps your job has some unique aspects or characteristics that weren't brought out by your answers to the previous questions. In this space, add any additional comments that you feel will add to a clear understanding of the requirements of your job.

Employee's Signature **(required)**: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor's Section:

Carefully review this completed job description, but **do not** alter or eliminate any portion of the original response. Please answer the questions listed below.

1. What do you consider the most important duties of this job and why?

All tasks described above are critical to DDS case processing. In this entry-level position, it is critical that the incumbent learn the technical complexities of each task, and perform each task accurately with growing independence and speed as knowledge and skills increase. Communicating with the Specialist team, taking feedback and asking questions to enhance and speed the learning process, and collaborating to meet the daily workload goals and shift task priorities as needed, while going through the learning process, are all very important

2. What do you consider the most important knowledge, skills, and abilities of an employee in this job (not necessarily the qualifications of the present employee) and why?

The most important skills and abilities are to

1. learn and remember voluminous details, keeping abreast of frequent changes
2. organize, remember, retrieve, and accurately apply voluminous, complex, frequently changing instructions; grasp the concepts that shape the various branches of the instructional trees; apply detailed, sequential, multi-branching instructions accurately and quickly; and use the underlying concepts to figure out how to handle claim situations that are not covered specifically by the available instructions, or for which the instructions are unclear or inconsistent
3. listen, communicate and collaborate effectively as a trainee on a production-oriented team
4. manage a multitude of high priority tasks with flexibility and creativity to adjust to ever-changing volumes and relative priority among the tasks/actions/claims types, etc., without reacting negatively to the stress of high expectations for daily production volume, speed and accuracy

3. Comment on the accuracy and completeness of the responses by the employee. List below any missing items and/or differences where appropriate.

The foregoing is very complete. I have nothing further to add at this time.

4. Suggested Title and/or Pay Grade:

DDS Specialist I, pay grade 18.

Supervisor's Signature (**required**): _____ Date: _____

Personnel Administrator's Section:

Please complete any missing information on the front page of this form before submitting it for review.

Are there other changes to this position, for example: Change of supervisor, GUC, work station?

Yes No If yes, please provide detailed information.

Attachments:

- Organizational charts are **required** and must indicate where the position reports.
- Draft job specification is **required** for proposed new job classes.

Will this change affect other positions within the organization? If so, describe how, (for example, have duties been shifted within the unit requiring review of other positions; or are there other issues relevant to the classification review process).

Suggested Title and/or Pay Grade:

Personnel Administrator's Signature (**required**): _____ Date: _____

Appointing Authority's Section:

Please review this completed job description but **do not alter** or eliminate any of the entries. Add any clarifying information and/or additional comments (if necessary) in the space below.

Positions are 100% federally funded by the Social Security Administration. SSA has encouraged the DDS's to maintain or raise compensation levels of DDS staff, due to the lengthy training investment, cost to production of DDS attrition, and historically high attrition rates in all DDS's nationally. Since this work requires at least two years of DDS-specific training, we are requesting a two level, associated Disability Determination Program Technician class series, of which this is the entry level.

Suggested Title and/or Pay Grade:

Appointing Authority or Authorized Representative Signature (**required**)

Date

VERMONT DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES

