



# News Release

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## **SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION HONORS VIRGINIA DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES**

**(RICHMOND, Va.)** — The Social Security Administration honored Virginia’s Disability Determination Services division with its prestigious, national Phoenix Award for performance and customer service.

DDS, a division of the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, processes claims for benefits under the Social Security Disability Insurance, Supplemental Security Income, and Medicaid Disability Programs.

The award reflects Virginia DDS’ response to the significant increase in applications during the recent recession and prolonged federal hiring freeze, while maintaining its high standards for accuracy and improving overall processing time for claimants.

Virginia DDS Director Leon Scales accepted the award from Lillian Rairigh, disability program administrator in the SSA’s Philadelphia Regional Office, with oversight of the Virginia DDS.

“The DDS claims adjudicator position has a learning curve in excess of two years, thus prolonged hiring freezes can cripple a DDS for years to come. The hiring freeze and increase in applications for disability, both tied to the recession, presented significant challenges to our key customer service indicators,” said Scales. “Our customers are usually at the most vulnerable points in their lives. Despite the challenges, our extraordinary VA DDS team, from the height of the recession to present, dramatically improved our processing times. Converted to years, it would equate to approximately 10 years less wait time for our customers, something we’re extremely proud.”

Virginia’s DDS offices in Richmond, Roanoke, Norfolk and Fairfax each year process approximately 120,000 claims for benefits.

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The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, in collaboration with community partners, provides and advocates for resources and services to improve the employment, quality of life, security, and independence of older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families. For more information, visit [www.vadars.org](http://www.vadars.org) or follow DARS on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/vadars](https://www.facebook.com/vadars) or Twitter at @vadars.