

# The Medical Improvement Review Standard During Continuing Disability Reviews

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Office of Audit Report Summary

### Objective

To (a) determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) would consider beneficiaries disabled using the Initial Disability Standard, rather than the Medical Improvement Review Standard (MIRS), during continuing disability reviews (CDR) and (b) evaluate data on the MIRS exceptions.

### Background

Under MIRS, an individual's disability continues unless the (1) disabling condition has improved since the last favorable disability determination and (2) individual can engage in substantial gainful activity.

SSA may apply an exception to MIRS. The exceptions allow a finding that disability ceased in limited situations without showing medical improvement occurred, but evidence clearly showed the person should no longer be, or should never have been, considered disabled.

### Our Findings

We estimated, after all appeals, SSA will pay about \$269 million in benefits until the next CDR due date to about 4,000 adult beneficiaries who would not be disabled if SSA used the Initial Disability Standard, rather than MIRS, during a CDR.

Additionally, although the cessation determinations were correct, we found issues with the reason coded for cessation for some types of MIRS exceptions.

### Our Recommendation

SSA should identify and correct the cause of the MIRS exception coding issues so the Agency will have accurate information on how often the exceptions are used.

SSA agreed with the recommendation.