Final Rule, Revised Medical Criteria for Evaluating Mental Disorders

*Suggested Talking Points*

- On **January 17, 2017**, the Social Security Administration published a final rule, “Revised Medical Criteria for Evaluating Mental Disorders.” This regulation reflects the most comprehensive revision to the criteria we use to evaluate disability claims involving mental disorders since 1985.

- With the publication of this final rule, our standards for evaluating claims involving mental disorders reflect up-to-date standards and practices used in the mental health community. The final rule also brings Social Security's regulations up to date with current terminology and concepts used by professionals in the mental health community.

- The rule reflects information from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth edition (published in May 2013), which is the mental health profession’s current standard for classifying mental disorders.

- An area that generated significant public interest during this process, and one that we updated in this rule, is our criteria for evaluating intellectual disability. From childhood onward, people with intellectual disability experience deficits in intellectual functioning and lack many basic daily practical and social skills. We deemed it a critical priority to ensure these claimants received necessary assistance as soon as possible. To that end, in response to public comments from medical experts, we updated and re-organized the diagnostic and functional criteria for this disorder. We also established alternative IQ test score criteria that allows us to identify quickly claimants with intellectual disorder who may qualify for disability benefits.

- Besides reflecting comments from members of the public, the rule reflects the expertise of disability policy experts, adjudicators, psychiatric professionals, and vocational experts, who provided input at every phase of the rulemaking process.

- This final rule is the last step in a careful, considered process that began in 2003, when we published an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and continued in 2010, when we published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on this issue. From 2003 to the present, we engaged with stakeholders, including disability beneficiaries and their family members; psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health treatment providers; and advocacy groups for those with mental disorders. We also solicited, responded to, and incorporated public comments, and we considered an intellectual disability report we commissioned from the National Academy of Sciences.

- Members of the public with a mental disorder are some of our most vulnerable beneficiaries, and we take seriously our obligation to provide them with effective service and support. Publishing this rule is an important cornerstone of that effort.