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Date: 9/23/2016 3:45:00 PM
Subject: Revised Medical Criteria for Evaluating Mental Disorders

Dear Colleague:

On Monday, September 26, Social Security will publish a final rule to update the criteria we use to evaluate mental disorders. This rule, “Revised Medical Criteria for Evaluating Mental Disorders,” is the most current criteria since 1985.

Upon publishing this final rule, our standards and terminology for evaluating claims involving mental health from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition — the mental health professional classification of mental disorders.

While updating this rule, the public had questions about our criteria for evaluating intellectual disabilities. People with intellectual disabilities experience deficits in intellectual functioning and lack many basic skills. We decided it was critical to ensure these individuals receive necessary assistance as soon as possible. We are updating the diagnostic and functional criteria for this disorder and are using IQ test score criteria that will allow us to determine if you may qualify for disability benefits based on an intellectual disability.

Besides reflecting comments from members of the public, the rule reflects the expertise of disability policy experts, psychiatric professionals, and vocational experts.

During the careful, considered process of updating the rule, we’ve engaged with stakeholders, including people with mental disorders, their family members; psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health treatment providers; and mental health advocates. We also solicited, responded to, and incorporated public comments, and considered recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences.

People with mental disorders are some of the most vulnerable members in our society, and we take our commitment to providing effective service and support seriously. Publishing this rule is just one way we’re meeting our priority to improve the lives of millions throughout life’s journey.

You can learn more about the rule [here](#).

Please help us spread the word about this important change. We appreciate everything you do to keep our programs and services strong.

Sincerely,

J. Jioni Palmer
Associate Commissioner for External Affairs
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