



SOCIAL SECURITY

Alan L. Cowles, M.D., Ph.D.
1121 Stoneridge Drive
Lawrence, Kansas 66049-4772

Dear Dr. Cowles:

The Deputy Commissioner for Operations requested that I respond to your letters dated October 23, 2008 and November 5, 2008. We do appreciate your input as well as that from other medical consultants in the disability program. As you know, the Social Security disability program is a complex program involving not only difficult medical issues, but also intricate program policies and guidelines. In some cases, the medical assessment by the medical or psychological consultant is only one of the findings on which the decision is based. Often times, the assessment must be weighed along with vocational and other disability-related factors, which require further discussion between the disability examiner and medical or psychological consultant.

In your November 5th letter you pointed out that technology exists for copying, modifying and deleting documents from the electronic folder. I am aware that this technology exists. However, an electronic audit trail is created whenever there is any change to the documents in the electronic folder. DDS and SSA management can track any such change if there are concerns with the integrity of a folder or particular document.

Due to your ongoing concern, I will share your feedback and questions with other components within the Social Security Administration. Again, thank you for your input.

Sincerely,

/s/

Ruby Burrell
Associate Commissioner
for Disability Determinations

cc:
Linda S. McMahon
Roger McDonnell