

Fast-Track (FT) Strategies for Disability Programs Around the World

IFDM Panel: “An Overview of Government Programs in Disability Management”

David Rajnes (ORDP/DPS)
Social Security Administration
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Topics to be Covered

- Research Objective
- US FT Processes as a Benchmark
- FT Processes in Selected Countries
- Methodology
- Comparing US with FT Experience Abroad
- Preliminary Findings for FT Policy

Research Objective

- **Identify & compare** experience of long-term public disability programs with FT features around the world
- **United States' FT processes as a benchmark**
 - Quick Disability Determination (QDD)
 - Compassionate Allowances (CAL)
 - Other processes (PD/PB, TERI, MC, EXR)
- Survey **other countries** with FT features

US FT Processes as a Benchmark

Electronic folder: Uses sophisticated **screening tool** for identification

Software allows rapid search of application and supporting documents

- Quick Disability Determination (QDD)
Likely cases identified with Predictive Model (PM) sent for quick processing that may enable claims to be approved more quickly; **likelihood score-probabilistic**
- Compassionate Allowances (CAL)
PM software searches applications for diseases and other medical conditions that, by their very nature, would qualify applicant for benefits based on minimal objective medical evidence; **not probabilistic**

Other Disability Processes (paper and electronic)

- Presumptive Disability/Presumptive Blindness (PD/PB) Cases
- Terminal Illness Procedures (TERI)
- Military Casualty Cases (MC)
- Expedited Reinstatement (EXR)

FT Processes in Selected Countries

- **Australia** Disability Support Pension (DSP)
- **Canada** Pension Plan (CPP) disability benefit
- **Israel** General Disability
- **United Kingdom** Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) & Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

Methodology

- Country sample drawn from OECD and participants in SSA-funded research
- Attempt to contact 24 countries from 2008
 - E-mailed form letter, disability group listserv postings, and professional contacts
 - Responses: 8 no, 6 yes, and 10 inconclusive
- Of the 6 favorable responses, 4 robust
- Comparison both qualitative & quantitative

Australia

Disability Support Pension (DPS) for permanent impairment

- **DPS Manifest Grant** (5 categories) now for fast-tracking claims, e.g., permanent blindness, terminal illness, etc.
- **New FT lists** introduced July 2010
 - SSA's list of 50 CAL conditions provided basis
- Tighter eligibility rules and revised impairment tables due in 2012

Canada

Canada Pension Plan (CPP) disability benefit

- Determination usually takes up to 4 months
- **Priority given terminally ill** applications which are reviewed w/in 48 hrs
- **Terminal Illness Application Pilot** assists applicants with documents prior to submission
- **Claim reapplication** put on “fast-track” status if the previous condition reappears following return to work and cessation of benefits

Israel

General Disability

- Based on **residency** from age 18 to retirement
- No contribution period required to qualify
- Eligibility for earners w/ lost earnings capacity (>50% generally but less required for low earners) and for non-working spouses
- **Green Route** for claimants w/ “severe” disability
 - 1990s government mandate that a decision be issued within 3 weeks from the date application submitted

United Kingdom

Disability **programs** with FT features

- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) - **contributory**
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) – **noncontributory**
- **Work assessment test** to prove incapacity for work
- FT of claims allowed under the following categories:
 - **Test waived** if claimant “deemed incapable of work” due to hospitalization or ongoing treatment (radiotherapy, renal failure, etc.)
 - **Exemption from testing** if terminal illness (death w/in 6 mo.), blindness, severe mental illness, etc.
 - **Exceptional circumstances** if life-threatening disease or medical evidence after testing indicates serious conditions (life-threatening, etc.)
- General disability application processing **target** of 35 days; fewer days with FT

Comparing US with FT Experience Abroad

- **Goals** of FT processes
- Characteristic FT **features**
 - Type of process (paper/electronic; screening method)
 - Procedural Issues (including technology)
 - Administrative aspects
- FT Process **similarities and differences**

Goals of FT Processes

- Accelerate processing of disability claims that appear to satisfy eligibility criteria and reduce delays that negatively impact families/individuals
- Improve quality and efficiency of disability determination process
- Manage disability caseload

Generalized Characteristics of FT Processes

- **Two types** (US benchmark)
 - 1) QDD likelihood (probability) scoring process using predictive modeling
 - 2) Search for pre-identified conditions
 - CAL (electronic folder) screening
 - Other (paper or electronic) cases flagged for fast-tracking
- **Procedural issues** in the determination process
 - Applicant's progression (step-by-step)
 - Integration of FT into overall process
 - Level of technology available to enable FT process
- **Administrative responsibility** for FT assessment/claim processing

FT Similarities/Differences Across Countries

- Electronic versus paper **process**
- **History** of implementing (reform or pilot)
- **Impairment lists** and updates
- **Targeted** (no. of) days to process applications and/or expedite claim
- **Administration** (centralized, public/private)

Preliminary Findings for FT Policy

- FT procedures are not widespread among public long-term disability programs for countries documented here:
 - Programs with FT procedures tend to single out many of the same medical conditions, emphasize similar operational guidelines, and target significantly decreasing processing times;
 - FT procedures generally affect a relatively small proportion of the overall disability applicant pool

Prelim Findings for Policy – cont'd

- Most countries included in this sample are seeking to expand their use of FT procedures through pending reforms or pilot projects;
- Cross-country fertilization of FT practices may occur, as documented in this research, when countries take into account the relevant experiences abroad