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Office of the State Inspector General • Post Office Box 1151 • Richmond, VA 23218

News Release Contact:

Kathleen Shaw - (804) 625-3276
Email: kathleen.shaw@osig.virginia.gov

For Immediate Release: March 7, 2018

OSIG Audit Reveals High Turnover for Virginia's Disability Claims Workers

In a recent audit of the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services' (DARS) Disability Determination Services (DDS), the Virginia Office of the State Inspector General (OSIG) found the federally funded program had the second-highest turnover rate in its region and exceeded the national turnover rate in eight of the 10 years reviewed. This key finding raises concerns about the program's ability to keep pace with current and outstanding disability claims submitted by Virginia's citizens.

During federal fiscal years 2015 and 2016, Virginia DDS lost nearly 20 percent of its claims adjudicators at an estimated turnover cost of nearly \$1 million each year. In addition to the monetary loss, the exodus of experienced claims workers negatively impacted current staff, pressing them to juggle expanding workloads while training new hires.

"Although several factors have clearly contributed to the high turnover rate, OSIG identified equitable pay as an area for further study," said Acting State Inspector General Michael Westfall. The role of a claims adjudicator is described by management as "one of the most difficult to learn in the national economy," "extremely complex" and requiring "strict performance accountability," yet a 2016 ad listed minimum pay before benefits at \$34,286.

While audit results revealed Virginia DDS claims processing time and accuracy rates were not significantly different from neighboring states or the nation, OSIG recommends mitigating future risk by performing a compensation study to determine if current pay is internally equitable and externally competitive in the market. OSIG also recommends development of more interactive and comprehensive training programs for claims workers following a survey that showed nearly 32 percent of DDS workers felt their training did not prepare them for their job responsibilities.

DARS DDS leadership agreed with the five findings and recommendations outlined in OSIG's [audit report](#). "We sincerely appreciate the cooperation of DARS DDS leadership and staff during this audit, and believe we have uncovered important issues and offered recommendations that will ultimately lead to more effective and efficient processing of disability claims for Virginia's citizens," added Westfall.

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Established in 2012 to investigate fraud, waste and abuse in Virginia's executive branch of state government, the Office of the State Inspector General (OSIG) manages the State Fraud, Waste and Abuse Hotline; conducts investigations and performance audits of state agencies; provides training and standards for the commonwealth's internal audit divisions; and conducts inspections and reviews of behavioral health and developmental services facilities and programs. Additional information is available at www.osig.virginia.gov.