



The State Medical Review Team: Supporting Staff Through Collaboration, Documentation, and Change

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Healthcare Eligibility and Access (HCEA) | State Medical Review Team (SMRT)

Agenda ¹

At the end of this session, you should have a better understanding of the following:

- Who is SMRT?
- How SMRT evaluates disability and what documentation matters
- What do the SMRT and Social Security disability processes look like?
- How supervisors and county teams can support a successful referral

We are here to spread awareness and knowledge related to SMRT Processes.
We cannot speak for the Social Security Administration or on behalf of DHS Policy.

Who is SMRT?

- Minnesota Department of Human Services – Healthcare Eligibility and Access.
- Group of professionals with specialized training and backgrounds who follow the Social Security Administration's criteria to determine disability for
 - people who apply for Medical Assistance (MA) and related programs – or-
 - people who need disability related services in other DHS programs –and-
 - Do not have a disability certification from SSA.
- SMRT exists parallel to the Social Security disability process, but a Social Security decision takes precedence over a SMRT decision.

2023 Statute Clarification and Legislative Changes

- March 1, 2023 – Clarification received that statute requires all disability certifications for the Developmental Disability (DD) waiver be issued by SSA or SMRT.

- No staff added

2023 Legislative Session:

- CADI Grown Forecast: (+7 FTEs)
- Elimination of Parental Fees, effective July 1, 2023 (+ 1 FTE)
 - Forecasted increase in SMRT referrals: 16%
 - Actual increase in SMRT referrals: 112.7% for TEFRA / 87.8% for Child Waivers
- Elimination of MA-EPD Asset Limit, effective January 1, 2024 (+ 2 FTEs)
 - Forecasted increase in SMRT referrals: 5%
 - Actual increase in SMRT referrals: 228.8%
- Implementation of Stakeholder Recommendations for Improving MA under the TEFRA Option (+1 FTE)

SMRT Historical Data

- March 1, 2023 – spike in referrals seen prior to legislative session ending; Applicants tracking the potential elimination of parental fees and MA-EPD asset limit began to apply.
- November 2023 – SMRT funding from 2023 session for additional staff available; hiring process started



SMRT legislative updates

Minnesota 2025-2026 Legislative Session passed provisions requiring:

- Medicaid providers with electronic medical records to allow SMRT to utilize the records for more efficient disability determinations, and
- Medicaid providers to accept electronic/digital signatures for authorization to release medical records to SMRT for disability determinations.

And

SMRT Expedited Disability Determinations

- Establishes expedite criteria in State Statute – Previously only in EPM
- Requires the formation of SMRT Expedite Unit
- Required to have the ability to utilize an electronic form and signature transmission service

Impact of SSA Decisions

- According to 42 CFR § 435.541, SMRT is bound by final medical disability determinations made by the Social Security Administration (SSA).
- If a person is denied by SSA for medical reasons and does not appeal the denial or is denied by an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ), that decision becomes final.
- SMRT cannot review referrals for people who have received a final medical denial from SSA, unless certain criteria are met.
- The blind or disabled basis of eligibility ends the last day of the month in which the SSA denial became final.

When SMRT Can Review After Final SSA Denial

- A person no longer meets SSI technical requirements but may meet Medicaid's.
- A SSA decision is pending or under appeal.
- A person reports new or worsening conditions after SSA's final decision.
- If less than 12 months have passed since final SSA denial, SSA must also have refused to reconsider or reopen.

SSA Scenario 1

The enrollee has never applied for Social Security Disability.

Can you submit a SMRT referral?

Yes

If the enrollee has never been medically denied by SSA,
SMRT can review.

SSA Scenario 2 ¹

The enrollee was denied by SSA on 9/5/2024 and did not appeal.
The enrollee reports that their denial was because of excess resources.
When the Financial Worker checks SMI, they see the denial code: N04.
A Google Search shows that N04 means they are ineligible because their non-excludable resources exceed the allowable Title XVI limits.

Can you submit a SMRT referral?

Yes

If the enrollee has never been medically denied by SSA,
SMRT can review.

SSA Scenario 3

The enrollee was denied by SSA on 1/25/2026 and filed their reconsideration appeal on 2/15/2026.

Can you submit a SMRT referral?

Yes

If the enrollee has an application or appeal pending with SSA, SMRT can review.

SSA Scenario 4

The enrollee was denied by SSA on was 1/12/2022 and did not appeal that decision.

Can you submit a SMRT referral?

Maybe

Lead agency staff must talk with the enrollee to learn more.

If the SSA final determination was **more than 12 months ago**, SMRT can only review if the enrollee alleges new or worsening conditions.

SSA Scenario 5

The enrollee was denied by SSA on 3/12/2026
and did not appeal that denial.

Can you submit a SMRT referral?

Maybe

Lead agency staff must talk with the enrollee to learn more.
If the SSA final determination was **less 12 months ago**, SMRT can only
review if the enrollee alleges new or worsening conditions **AND** SSA
refused to re-open or reconsider the previous denial.

SSA Scenario 6

The enrollee was previously certified by SMRT.
The certification period was 7/13/2023 – 7/31/2026.
The enrollee received a medical denial from SSA on 4/1/2025.

Can you submit a SMRT referral for a
Continuing Disability Review (CDR)?

No

A final denial from SSA is binding and SMRT cannot review as a CDR.

SSA Scenario 6: Part 2

The enrollee was previously certified by SMRT.
The certification period was 7/13/2023 – 7/31/2026.
The enrollee received a medical denial from SSA on 4/1/2025.

Can you submit a **new** SMRT referral?

Maybe

Lead agency staff must talk with the enrollee to learn more.
The criteria apply for new/worsening conditions and more or less than
12 months since the denial date.

Social Security Disability Programs

- **Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (RSDI, Title II)**

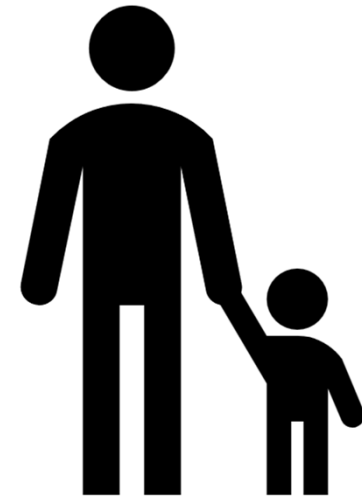
- For people who are "insured" through work history/FICA contributions (or certain family members)
- Benefit amount depends on how much you paid in to Social Security
- No asset/resource limit
- Eligibility depends on when your disability began

- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI, Title XVI)**

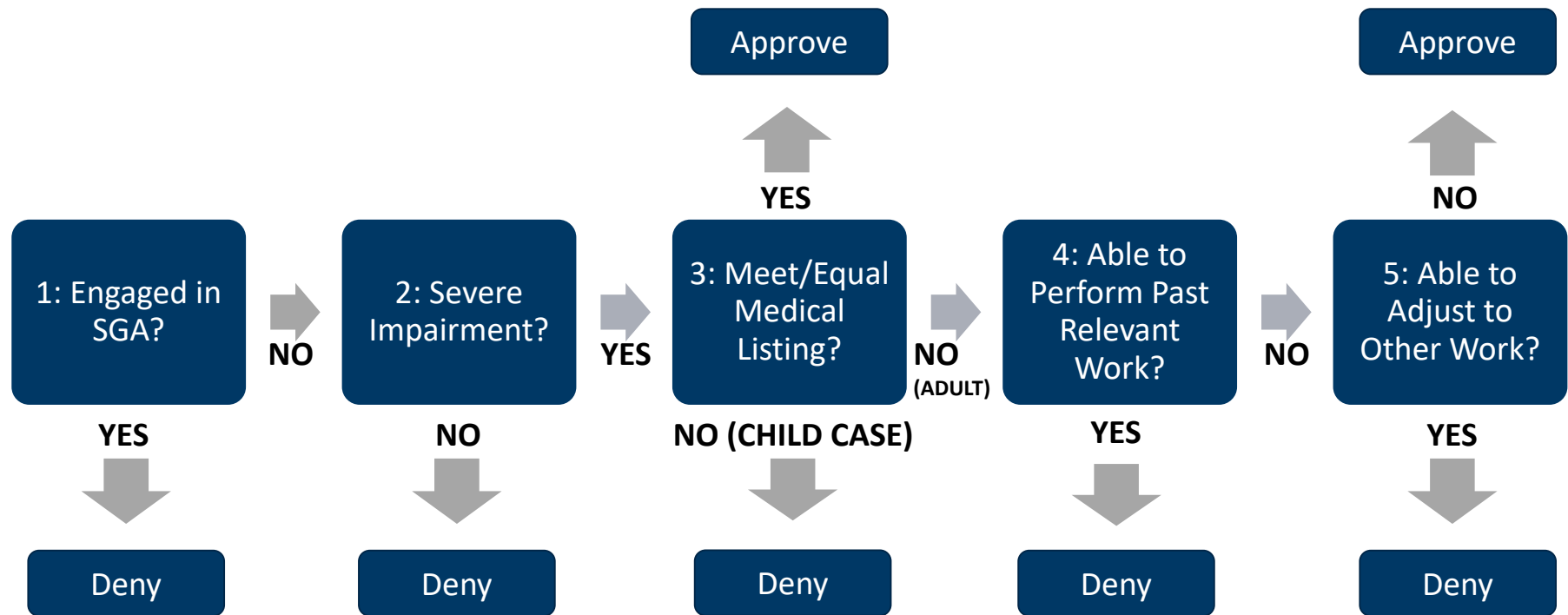
- For people who are disabled, elderly, or blind with very low income and few assets
- Monthly benefit is a fixed federal amount (plus a small state supplement)
- Strict asset/resource limit (\$2K individual, \$3K couple)
- Eligibility usually starts the first full month after applying

Definition of disability

- Children: The child has a physical or mental condition (or combination of conditions) that very seriously limits their activities and has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or longer or result in death.
- Adults: Inability to engage in substantial gainful activity by reason of medically determinable impairment that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or longer or result in death.



The 5-Step sequential evaluation process



Step 2 - Severe Impairment

- The limitation must be due to a medically determinable impairment or combination of impairments.
- The impairment must result in more than a minimal limitation in one's ability to work or perform daily activities.
- The impairment must be expected to last at least 12 months or result in death.
- The impairment must be diagnosed by an "Acceptable Medical Source".

[Cite: 20 CFR § 416.902](#)

Special considerations – drug or alcohol abuse

Individuals cannot be found disabled if drug or alcohol abuse (DAA) is a contributing factor material to the finding of disability ([SSR 13-2p](#)).

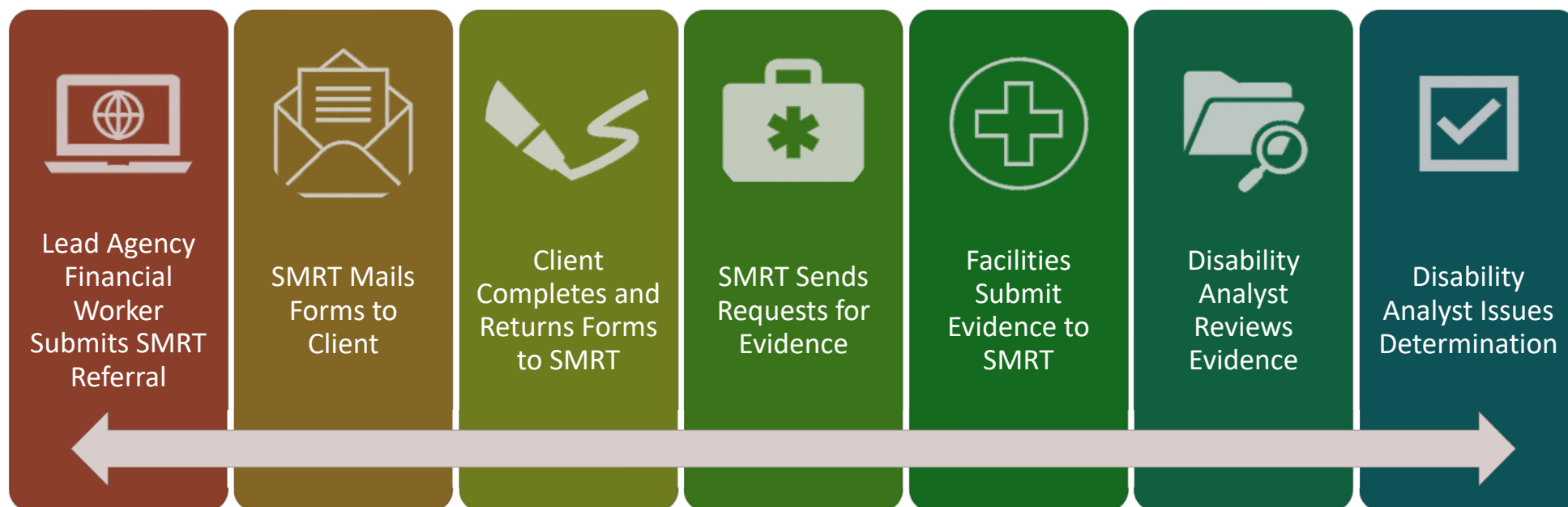
- The individual must be diagnosed as having a substance use disorder by an acceptable medical source – and –
- The evidence must support that they would improve to the point of non-disability in the absence of DAA.
- DAA materiality is only considered if an individual is found to be disabled considering all impairments, including DAA.

Special considerations – failure to follow prescribed treatment

Individuals cannot be found disabled if they fail to follow prescribed treatment that would be expected to restore their ability to engage in substantial gainful activity.

- The individual's own medical source must have prescribed the treatment.
- The record must show that the individual did not follow prescribed treatment.
- If the evidence supports that if the prescribed treatment was followed that the individual would improve to the point of non-disability, we must assess whether they have good cause for not following the prescribed treatment.

The SMRT Process



Expedited case referral criteria

SMRT expedites referrals under special circumstances. An expedited referral may be requested for:

- Individuals in a facility who cannot be discharged without home and community-based services, or long-term care supports in place; or
- Individuals experiencing life-threatening medical conditions requiring urgent access to treatment or prescription medication; or
- Individuals diagnosed with a condition listed on the Social Security Administration's [Compassionate Allowance List \(CAL\) \(POMS: DI 23022.080\)](#) and this condition is listed on the referral; or
- Children under the age of two (2) who have screened positive for a rare disease recognized by national medical registries or evidence-based standards.

Compassionate allowances

- The Compassionate Allowance List identifies conditions that both SMRT and Social Security can process faster.
- These conditions often meet the definition of disability with the diagnosis alone, such as:
 - Maple Syrup Urine Disease
 - Glutaric acidemia – Type II
 - Krabbe Disease
 - Mucopolysaccharidosis
 - Pompe Disease
 - Spinal Muscular Atrophy
 - Severe Combined Immunodeficiency

Presumptive disability determination

Enrollees can be approved before all medical evidence is received if the application supports a diagnosis that would have a very high likelihood of certification (i.e., Down syndrome, metastatic cancer, ALS).

- SMRT must receive a signed authorization to release protected health information before a presumptive finding of disability can be made.
- Supportive evidence must be received within 6 months of the application, or the case can be denied.

Certification periods

The length of disability certification is based on the likelihood of medical improvement.

Years	Likelihood of Improvement	Examples
1 year	Medical Improvement Expected	• Recent surgery or treatment with expected recovery • organ or stem cell transplants • low birth weight with no other complications
3 years	Medical Improvement Possible	• Autoimmune disorders with fluctuating severity • Depression or anxiety
7 years	Medical Improvement Not Expected	• Down Syndrome • Severe cerebral palsy • Spinal muscular atrophy

Per MN State Statute, TEFRA must be reviewed at least every 4 years.

Continuing disability reviews (CDRs)

- At the end of a SMRT certification period, the county requests a Continuing Disability Review if ongoing certification is needed:
 - Verify the enrollee is enrolled in a program that requires a CDR
 - Verify status of social security disability benefits
- If a person does not submit required paperwork to SMRT or is found to no longer meet disability criteria, their eligibility for a disabled basis and disability waiver ends.
 - If the person's referral was withdrawn for no forms, or they are found to no longer meet disability criteria the disability waiver must end.
 - The waiver cannot stay open during the redetermination under all bases for MA eligibility, even if the disabled basis remains open during that process.
- When a child turns 18, an **Age 18 Redetermination** referral to SMRT may be needed. This is not a CDR and is handled as a new case.
- The previous certification remains in effect while the CDR or Age 18 Redetermination is pending, even if the SMRT end date has passed.

What can delay the process?

- Delays in referral submission by county or tribal agency
- Incorrect or missing information on the referral
- Delays in enrollees providing forms or other needed information
- Slow response to records requests
- Need for consultative exam due to insufficient medical evidence

How you can help

- Encourage enrollees to respond to requests timely and follow their providers' recommendations.
- Use current forms from SMRT's official website: mn.gov/dhs/smrt
 - DHS-6124 SMRT Authorization to Release Protected Health Information is required on all SMRT referrals (New/CDR, Adult/Child)
 - Adult: 6125 (New Referrals) and 6125B (CDR Referrals)
 - Child: 6126 (New Referrals) and 6126B (CDR Referrals)
- Submit forms and/or records via the SMRT Document Portal.
- Even if records are submitted, a signed authorization can prevent delays.
- SMRT typically needs all records from the past year, including medical records, mental health therapy notes, and school documents like IEPs and evaluation reports.

SMRT Referral Outcomes

Fiscal Years 2023 – 2025

FY 2023

7,803

Total Referrals



Certified
5,194



Denied
564



Withdrawn
791



Pending*
1,254

Total outcomes (excludes pending)

6,549

FY 2024

14,412

Total Referrals



Certified
8,601



Denied
945



Withdrawn
1,145



Pending*
3,721

Total outcomes (excludes pending)

10,691

↑ 85% from FY2023

FY 2025

14,850

Total Referrals



Certified
8,919



Denied
1,014



Withdrawn
3,627



Pending*
1,290

Total outcomes (excludes pending)

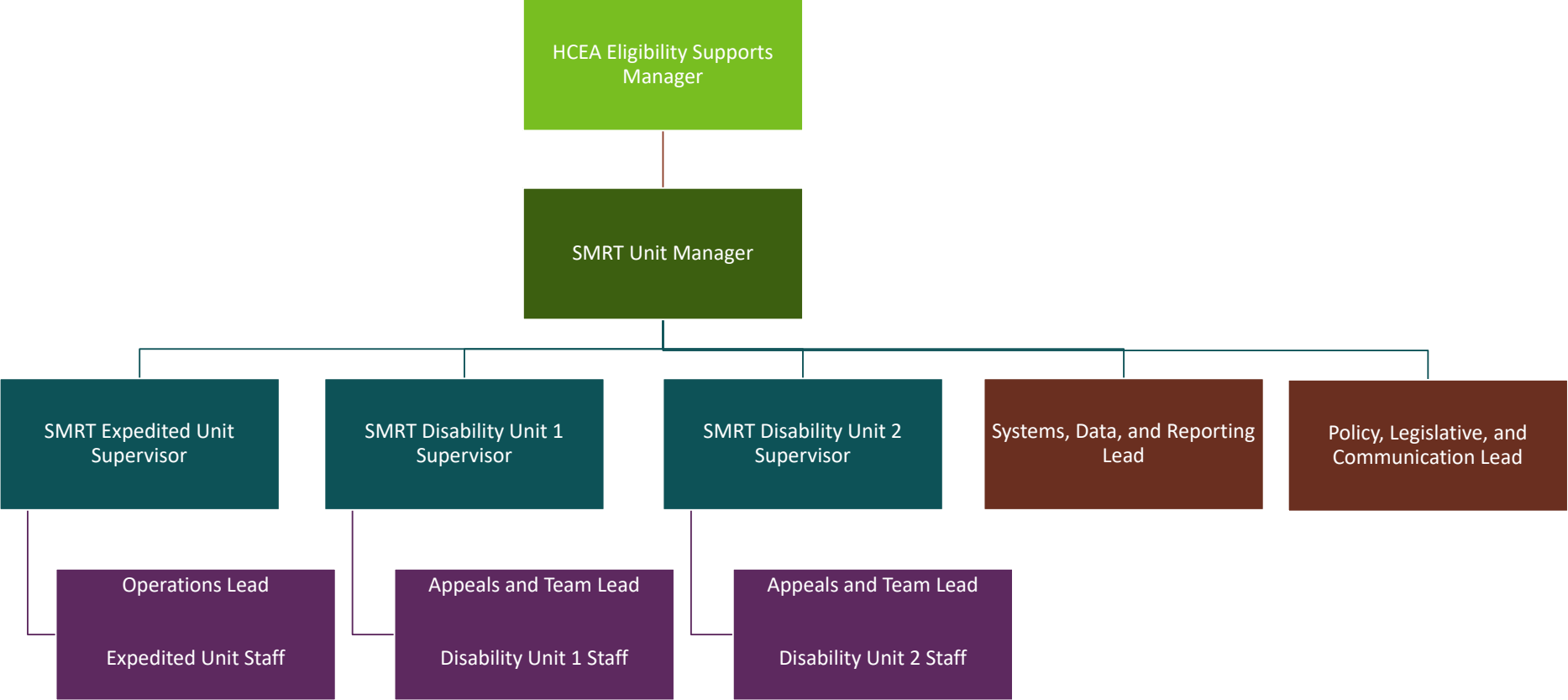
13,560

↑ 3% from FY2024



* Pending refers to referrals that were still under review at the time of data extraction and are not included in the outcome totals.

SMRT Org Structure



Growth and hiring

- SMRT was appropriated funding by the legislature for 15 additional staff to account for increased referrals anticipated in relation to H.R.1. work requirements 1
- SMRT staffing will increase from 39 to 54.
- Hiring efforts are in process for the following positions:
 - Referral Specialists – 7
 - Disability Analysts - 3
 - Leads – 2
 - Supervisors – 2
 - Unit Manager – 1

SMRT ISDS Training & Access

- SMRT hosts monthly training sessions for direct county or tribal employees who submit or need to monitor status of SMRT referrals in SMRT's ISDS case management system.
- A “Read Only Role” is available for staff with a need-to-know basis who are actively and routinely involved in SMRT cases.
Note: contracted staff and community partners are not eligible.
- New users must attend one ISDS training before gaining access and repeat the training every 2 years.
- Register for this training on TrainLink in the Health Care Learning Center by searching for “SMRT301” in the course catalog.

Checking Case Status in ISDS

SMRT Disability Determination PDC 231426 - Felton Lehman

[Edit...](#) [New SMRT Decision...](#) ...

 **SMRT Disability Determination PDC**
[Income Support IC - 231425](#)
Date Referral Received : 2/9/2023
PMI Number: 05408674
Requested Start Date: 2/1/2023
Program Type Applied For: MA for Employed Person with Disabilities (MA-EPD)
CDR Program Type Applied For:
Communication - Not Recorded

[Home](#) [Determinations](#) [Participants](#) [Contact](#) [Events](#) [Tasks](#) [Administration](#)

Case Status → 231426 | In Process
(0) Appeals

Case Owner →  Kim Novak

Home

Case Details

Decision ← **Check here for most recent SMRT decision information**
Decision Date ←
Certification Period ←
Denial Reason
Worksheet Received (Y/N) No **Inaccurate**
Authorization Received (Y/N) No
Additional Information Requested

SSI Recipient
RSDI Recipient
Service Agency Dakota County
Servicing Agency Worker
Referred By Kim Novak
Authorized Representative
Third Party Contact

Smart Panel

SMRT document portal

- The portal allows electronic document submission directly to SMRT's ISDS system.
- The portal site is form [8462 on edocs](#)
- SMRT is working with DocuSign to create electronic versions of our forms that can be completed and signed from any mobile device or computer!



State Medical Review Team

State Medical Review Team (SMRT)

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St. Paul, MN 55164-0248

Phone: 651-431-2493 or 800-235-7396

Fax: 651-431-7457 or 800-311-3137

Visit the [SMRT Website](#) for links to our forms
and more information



Additional resources

Social Security Administration

1-800-772-1213

www.ssa.gov

Disability Hub MN

866-333-2466

disabilityhubmn.org

Questions?



Thank you!

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