

## **More on the Recent DARS Notification**

**By Ollie J. Seay, PhD**

The Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) recently sent out a letter informing psychologists of stepped up enforcement of federal rules related to the use of extenders. The letter, from Anne Panko, Directorate Manager of Medical Relations for DARS Disability Determination Services, informs psychologists performing Social Security disability determination evaluation that, as of March 1, 2010, the Mental Status Examination (MSE) portion of the examination must be completed by the licensed psychologist, not an extender or intern. Extenders and interns may continue to take histories and conduct other standardized tests. The letter indicates that it is not sufficient for the psychologist to just review and sign reports without personally meeting and evaluating the claimants.

Ms. Panko, in telephone and e-mail contacts, indicated that this issue came up when it was discovered that some psychologists were having extenders and interns conduct the complete evaluations and write up the reports, some reports were not signed by the psychologist, and some reports had no way to identify who did the testing. She indicated that the Policy Operations Manual System (POMS), the federal regulations used by the Social Security Administration (SSA), includes a licensed or certified psychologist as an "Acceptable Medical Source" but does not include extenders within the definition or anywhere in their policies. Her office's interpretation of the regulations, which is also in line with and supported by the SSA Regional Office is that, at minimum, the MSE portion of the evaluation must be performed by the licensed psychologist. The psychologist must sign the report, and, if the services of an intern or extender are utilized, their signature must also be included. She has provided her contact information as [anne.panko@ssa.gov](mailto:anne.panko@ssa.gov) or (512) 437-8645 for questions.

Please see SSA-POMS Disability Insurance (DI) Sections 22505.003B and 25205.005A for the definition of Acceptable Medical Source and Sections 22510.021 for Consultative Examination (CE) Report Content Guidelines - Mental Disorders at <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/poms.nsf/chapterlist!openview&restricttocategory=04> for more information.