

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Disability Determination Services

Reference:	VA DDS Leadership DARS Leadership DARS HR Division	Date:	Re-issued 06/10/2025	Category:	Administrative
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VIRGINIA DDS SALARY MODEL

VA DDS Leadership, in conjunction with DARS Leadership and the DARS HR Division, created a Virginia DDS Salary Model for the following reasons:

1. Recruitment. The model provides an attractive starting salary for new employees allowing the Virginia DDS to be competitive with equivalent federal jobs. This will be particularly helpful for analyst recruitment, which is an area of high turnover in DDSs nationwide.
2. Retention. The model acknowledges and rewards our employees' years of experience and competency-based advancements based on a step model. This model will benefit all our employees but is targeted to ensure retention at the analyst through supervisory levels.
3. Transparency. The model provides a salary framework for most positions within the Virginia DDS, allowing employees to understand how salaries are structured and to ensure fairness and continued alignment within position work titles.

This Salary Model provides a Salary Framework based on two criteria: Position Grade (PG) and Step Levels.

Position Grades (PG)

The DDS Salary Model includes seven position grades, covering a vast majority of position work titles within the Virginia DDS. The PG is established based on the level of difficulty, responsibility, and qualifications required.

Position Grade	Position Work Titles
A	Admin Assistant, Case Control, CE Scheduler, Fiscal Tech, PRO Tech, Reception, Support Tech/Unit Aide, Travel/Admin Assistant, Vendor File Maintenance Tech.
B1	Trainee 1 Analysts.
B2	Trainee 2 Analysts, Program Specialist - Medical Services Team.
C	Junior Analysts.
D	Journey Analysts, Special Projects Assistant.
E	Senior Analysts, CDR Specialists, Case Consultants, Disability Hearings Officers, QA Reviewers, QA Auditor, CDI Lead Investigative Analyst, and Budget Operations Specialist.
F	Supervisors, Operations Managers, PROs, IT Specialists, Training/Development Specialists, DDS Talent Acquisition Specialist, DCPS Specialist, Medical Services Team Leader, Operations Coordinator.

All other position work titles do not have a specific PG and are not part of the DDS Salary Model. The salaries for other position work titles are determined by considering alignment with others in the DDS Division and equivalent counterparts in the other Divisions of the DARS Agency.

Step Levels within each Position Grade (PG)

Step levels represent an employee's level of experience within a specific Position Grade/Role at the DDS. A new employee is usually hired at step one. Step increases are periodic increases in an employee's rate of pay from one step of the PG to the next higher step of that PG.

Step increases improve retention by ensuring that all employees are appropriately compensated for learning new skills/updated processes within a position at the DDS. Employees can project how their salaries will progress over time with continued experience in a position.

Step Level	Time in Step Level (to advance to next Step)	Years of Experience in Position/Position Grade
1	1 year	0 years up to and including 1 year
2	1 year	2 years
3	1 year	3 years
4	2 years	4 – 5 years
5	2 years	6 – 7 years
6	2 years	8 – 9 years
7	3 years	10 – 12 years
8	3 years	13 – 15 years
9	3 years	16 – 18 years
10	N/A (no steps past 10)	19 or more years

Beginning in August 2024, Step Levels for each employee will be reviewed/re-calculated annually. Any salary changes based on that annual review will go into effect in October. Step levels will be calculated based on *years only*.

For most analyst positions (Trainee 1 through Journey), we will be using the current year minus the starting year as a Trainee to figure step levels.

- For example, Johnny is a Journey analyst and began working at the DDS in 2019 as a Trainee 1. For the 2024 annual review, we will figure Johnny's step level by subtracting 2019 from 2024. Johnny would have 5 years at the DDS as an analyst, so he would be at step 4.

For other positions, we will be using the current year minus the starting year *in the PG* to figure step levels.

- Example 1: Elvis is a fiscal tech who started with the DDS in 2013. For the 2024 annual review, we will figure Elvis' step level by subtracting 2013 from 2024. Elvis would have 11 years in that role/PG, so he would be at step 7.
- Example 2: Fabio is a line unit supervisor who started with the DDS as an analyst in 2015. He became a line supervisor in 2021. For the 2024 annual review, we will figure Fabio's step level by subtracting 2021 from 2024. Fabio would have 3 years in that role/PG, so he would be at step 3.

If an individual has prior experience in a role at a higher PG level than his current role, that time would be added to the individual's time in current position to establish the appropriate step level.

DDS Salary Framework

The frameworks below include the 3% salary increase for state employees effective 06/10/2025.

Virginia Residents (excluding Northern Virginia Residents) and Out-of-State Residents would receive salaries based on the corresponding PG and Step Level noted in the table below.

PG	DDS SALARY FRAMEWORK - EFFECTIVE 06/10/25									
	STEP LEVEL									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A	48034	49636	51237	52839	54440	56042	57643	59245	60847	62448
B1	54106	55729	57401	59124	60898	62726	64608	66547	68544	70601
B2	55729	57401	59124	60899	62726	64608	66547	68543	70600	72718
C	60417	62319	64267	66215	68162	70110	72059	74007	75954	77930
D	64190	66330	68469	70608	72748	74887	77026	79166	81305	83444
E	76938	79502	82067	84631	87197	89761	92325	94890	97454	100019
F	91489	94538	97588	100637	103686	106736	109785	112835	115884	118933

Salaries for Northern Virginia Residents will be increased by 15% to account for the Northern Virginia Pay Differential, as noted in the chart below.

PG	DDS SALARY FRAMEWORK - NORTHERN VIRGINIA - EFFECTIVE 06/10/25									
	STEP LEVEL									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A	55239	57082	58922	60764	62606	64448	66291	68131	69974	71816
B1	62222	64088	66011	67993	70034	72135	74299	76530	78825	81190
B2	64089	66012	67992	70034	72135	74299	76530	78825	81190	83625
C	69479	71667	73907	76147	78387	80627	82868	85108	87347	89619
D	73819	76278	78739	81200	83660	86120	88581	91041	93500	95961
E	88478	91427	94377	97326	100276	103224	106174	109123	112072	115022
F	105212	108719	112225	115733	119240	122746	126253	129760	133267	136773

If an individual is already receiving a salary higher than the framework indicates, that individual's salary will not be reduced. That individual's salary will be considered for step increases in the future.

If an individual receives a promotion or advances to the Senior Analyst level through competency but Step 1 of that PG level is lower than the individual's current salary at the lower PG level, the individual will receive step level increases that will raise his/her salary to be *no less than* 3% higher than his/her current salary. Any employee moving up in grade will never have his/her pay decreased and will have greater earning potential as time progresses.

- Here is an example: Waylon has been a Journey analyst for 10 years. He is making \$77,026 per year (PG-D, Step 7). Waylon applies for and receives a promotion to QA Reviewer. The starting salary for a QA Reviewer would usually be \$76,938 (PG-E, Step 1). However, we will not decrease Waylon's pay when he goes to a higher PG level. Waylon's current salary with a 3% increase would be \$79,337. Waylon's salary would be \$79,502 (PG-E, Step 2). Waylon will then continue to receive step increases as usual.

The salary amounts in the DDS Salary Framework table above will be reviewed annually. Salary amounts in the Framework may increase as funding permits and based on state increases and to ensure that the Virginia DDS continues to remain competitive with equivalent federal jobs.

Competency-Based Advancement

The DDS requires that analysts reach at least Junior level status to remain an analyst at the DDS. DDS Leadership understands that additional learning that takes place at the Junior level (i.e. caseload management) is crucial to advancing to the Journey level. Because of this, an analyst through the Journey level will receive all of the time in the analyst role when figuring his step level.

There is a significant difference in the role expectations and salaries at the different step levels between PG-D to PG-E. If an analyst chooses to advance to the Senior level, he will *usually* begin step levels over at Step 1 the PG-E level, but there will be exceptions to this rule. If the individual's salary is already higher than the salary for PG-E, Step 1, then the 3% rule applies. The individual's new step level would be based on a new salary that is no less than a 3% increase in his/her current salary. Any employee moving up in grade will never have his/her pay decreased and will have greater earning potential as time progresses.

Model/Framework Examples

Support:

Madonna is hired as a new Unit Tech, making \$48,034 per year (PG-A, Step 1).

Shakira is a CE Scheduler and has been working in this position at the DDS for 2 years. She will be making \$49,636 per year (PG-A, Step 2). Next year, Shakira will have 3 years of experience as a CE Scheduler. She will then be making \$51,237 (PG-A, Step 3).

Denzel is a Fiscal Tech and has been working in this position at the DDS for 12 years. He will be making \$57,643 per year (PG-A, Step 7). Next year, Denzel will have 13 years of experience as a fiscal tech. He will then be making \$59,245 per year (PG-A, Step 8).

Analysts:

Beyonce is hired as a new Trainee 1 Analyst, making \$54,106 per year (PG-B1, Step 1).

Garth is a Junior Analyst and has been working as an analyst at the DDS for 3 years. He will be making \$64,267 per year (PG-C, Step 3).

Zendaya is a Journey Analyst and has been working as an analyst at the DDS for 10 years. She will be making \$77,026 per year (PG-D, Step 7). If Zendaya remains in the Journey Analyst position for 6 more years (total experience is 16 years as an analyst), she would then be making \$81,305 per year (PG-D, Step 9).

Adele is a Senior Analyst and has been working as an analyst at the DDS for 13 years. She became a Senior Analyst 6 years ago. She will be making \$87,197 per year (PG-E, Step 5). Although Adele has been at the DDS for 13 years (usually a Step 8), she has 6 years of experience at the Senior Analyst level – which places her at a Step 5. If Adele remains in the Senior analyst position for 4 more years (total experience is 10 years as a Senior Analyst), she would then be making \$92,325 per year (PG-E, Step 7).

Supervisors:

Keanu is a Training Unit Supervisor. He started working at the DDS as an analyst 10 years ago. He became a Training Unit Supervisor 4 years ago. Keanu will be making \$100,637 per year (PG-F, Step 4). Although Keanu has been at the DDS for 10 years (usually a Step 7), he only has 4 years of experience at the supervisor/PG-F level – which places him at a Step 4.

Rihanna is an Office Manager. She started working at the DDS as an analyst 8 years ago. She became an Office Manager 3 years ago. Rihanna will be making \$97,588 (PG-F, Step 3). Although Rihanna has been at the DDS for 8 years (usually a Step 6), she only has 3 years of experience at the PG-F level – which places her at a Step 3.

Cher is a Line Unit Supervisor. She started working at the DDS as an analyst 16 years ago. She became an Office Manager 10 years ago and a Line Unit Supervisor 3 years ago. Cher will be making \$112,835 (PG-F, Step 8). Although Cher has been at the DDS for 16 years (usually a Step 9), she has 13 years of experience at the supervisor/PG-F level – which places her at a Step 8.

Competency-Based Advancement Example: Progression from Trainee 1 to Trainee 2

Selena was hired as a Trainee 1, making \$54,106 per year (PG-B1, Step 1). Selena becomes a Trainee 2 after being at the DDS for 14 months. Her Position Grade will change from a PG-B1 to a PG-B2. Selena will be making \$55,279 per year (PG-B2, Step 1).

Competency-based Advancement Example: Progression from Trainee 2 to Junior

Justin was hired as a Trainee 1 and became a Trainee 2 after being at the DDS for 14 months. As a Trainee 2, his salary was \$55,279 per year (PG-B2, Step 1). Justin becomes a Junior analyst after being at the DDS for 2 years. His Position Grade will change from a PG-B2 to a PG-C. Justin will be making \$62,319 per year (PG-C, Step 2).

Competency-Based Advancement Example: Progression from Junior to Journey

Usher has been working as an analyst at the DDS for 4 years. He is a Junior Analyst, making \$66,215 per year (PG-C, Step 4). He passes competency testing to reach the Journey Analyst level. At the Journey level, he makes \$70,608 per year (PG-D, Step 4).

Competency-Based Advancement Example: Progression from Journey to Senior

Beck has been working as an analyst at the DDS for 16 years. He is currently a Journey Analyst, making \$81,305 per year (PG-D, Step 9). He passes competency testing to reach the Senior Analyst level. A new Senior Analyst would *usually* make \$76,938 per year (PG-E, Step 1). However, the model indicates that salaries for employees moving up in grade levels will not decrease. Beck's current salary with a 3% increase would be \$83,744. Beck's starting salary as a Senior Analyst would be \$84,631 (PG-E, Step 4). Beck will then continue to receive step increases as usual.

Demotion Example: Senior Analyst to Journey Analyst

Oprah has been working as an analyst at the DDS for 16 years. She has been a Senior Analyst for 10 years, making \$92,325 per year (PG-E, Step 7). She decides to voluntarily demote to a Journey Analyst position. She will have 16 years of experience as an analyst at that time. She would then be making \$81,305 per year (PG-D, Step 9).

Demotion Example: Journey Analyst to Unit Tech

Dolly has been working as an analyst at the DDS for 4 years. She is a Journey Analyst, making \$70,608 per year (PG-D, Step 4). She decides to voluntarily demote to a Unit Tech position. She would then be making \$52,839 per year (PG-A, Step 4).

Salary Model Q&As

1. **Question:** What happens if an analyst goes up in PGs (like to CC or Supervisor) and then comes back down to an analyst position?

Answer: For *general guidance*, if an individual goes down in PGs, he/she keeps all of his/her time in step levels. If an analyst goes up in PGs, he/she will keep all of his/her time in step levels up through the Journey level. For individuals in PG-E or PG-F positions, his/her step level will be determined by any previous time spent at that PG or above. There may be exceptions to this guidance.

For promotional opportunities (i.e. someone obtaining a position through a competitive process like CC, CDR specialist, QA reviewer, or supervisor): If the individual promoted already makes more than the first step of that PG level, he/she will receive a salary that is no less than a 3% increase over his/her current salary. One example is: A newly hired supervisor worked for the DDS for 15 years, 10 of those years as a Senior Analyst. In this example, if the supervisor started out at PG-F, Step 1, he/she would be making less as a supervisor (F1 or \$91,489) than he/she did as a senior analyst (E7 or \$92,325). The supervisor's new step level would be based on a new salary that is no less than a 3% increase in his/her current salary. A 3% increase would raise the current salary to \$95,095. So, the supervisor would start at F3, or \$97,588. The bottom line is that any employee moving up in grade will never have their pay decreased and will have greater earning potential as time progresses.

2. **Question:** If an analyst has past experience in what would be a higher PG, moves to a lower PG, and then moves back up to the higher PG, could we use the previous higher PG time to determine step level? An example would be: Bono worked as an analyst for 4 years, making it to Journey level, and then as a case consultant for 4 years. He then stepped back down to a journey analyst position for 2 years. If Bono were to become a case consultant again (or a senior analyst), would his previous 4 years as a CC be considered in his step level when he goes back up to that PG?

Answer: Yes. See Question #1 for general guidance.

- Bono worked as an analyst for 4 years, making it to Journey level. At the end of that time, he would be a D4, making \$70,608.
- He was promoted to a CC position for 4 years. He started the CC position at E1, making \$76,938 (more than he was making as a D4). After 4 years working as a CC, he would be an E4, making \$84,631.
- He demoted to a Journey Analyst position. At the time of demotion, he would be an D6 (8 prior years at PG-D level or above), making \$74,887. He remained a Journey Analyst for 2 years. At the end of that time, he would be a D7 (10 prior years at the PG-D level or above), making \$77,026.
- He became a Senior Analyst and would again be an E4 (4 prior years at the PG-E level), making \$84,631.

3. **Question:** If an analyst has past experience in a higher PG and moves to a lower PG, will the time in a higher PG be included in the analyst's current step level? An example would be: Pink worked as an analyst for 5 years and was promoted to a case consultant. She worked in that role for 5 years and was promoted to a supervisor position for 5 years. She then stepped down to a Senior analyst position. What would be her step level?

Answer: Her step level would be D9. See Question #1 for general guidance.

- Pink worked as an analyst for 6 years, making it to Journey Level. At the end of that time, she would be a D5, making \$72,748.
- She was then promoted to CC and worked in that role for 5 years. At the end of that time, she would be an E4, making \$84,631.
- She was then promoted to supervisor. She started the supervisor position at F1, making \$91,489 (more than she was making as an E4). She worked in that role for 5 years. At the end of that time, she would be an F4, making \$100,637.
- She stepped down to a Senior Analyst position. Her step level would be E7 (10 prior years at PG-E or above), making \$92,325.

4. **Question:** How will you look at salary if a senior analyst applies to be a CC? Since the senior analyst is at the same PG as the CC, would this person see any salary increase? Here's an example: Cardi B has been working at DDS for 6 years. She is a journey analyst making \$72,748 (PG-D, Step 5). She passes competency to reach the Senior Analyst level. At Senior Analyst, she makes \$76,938 (PG-E, Step 1). If she decided to apply for a CC position (which is at the same PG as a Senior Analyst), how would her salary be determined?

Answer: Because the move from an analyst to a CC position is a promotional opportunity and part of a competitive process, DDS Leadership would look at Cardi B's salary and apply the 3% rule. If Cardi B has been a senior analyst less than a year (so still at PG-E, Step 1), we would determine her step based on a salary that is *no less than* 3% more than her current salary. A 3% increase in her current salary would be \$79,246. Cardi B's step when promoted to CC would go up one so she would be at PG-E, Step 2, making \$79,502.

5. **Question:** For the Step Level example, would this only go by the years of experience an examiner has working in the current office or the years of experience overall? Since I transferred from a different state, would those years have any bearing?

Answer: Specific situations like this would be discussed by DDS Leadership. Since this salary model is based on VA DDS *situations only*, a determination would need to be made whether or not prior service at another DDS is relevant to the model. Leadership would consider several factors, including (but not limited to): (1) how much time was spent at a different DDS; (2) what positions were held in the other DDS; (3) what skills were learned at the other DDS; (4) how close was the other state's DDS process to the Virginia DDS business process; (5) how much training/development was needed to ensure this individual was performing in a similar manner in VA DDS as other individuals in the same role who did not work at another DDS previously.

6. **Question:** For the annual step-level reviews, how will you be calculating the number of years? The SOP indicates that the step level reviews will occur every August and increases will go into effect in November. If I became a supervisor in September 2018, how will my service be calculated in the August 2025 review?

Answer: Under the current model for this year *and* when we begin the annual reviews, we will be looking at “time in the role/PG” based on the *year only*.

We decided to go this route for a few reasons:

- It’s the same method used by DARS when determining service awards AND
- It will be much easier to calculate information based on year only and not getting into months/days. If we got that far down in the weeds, the annual review could take several months.

So, for the step level review in 2025: $2025 - 2018 = 7$ years. So, this individual would be at step level 5 during the 2025 review.

7. **Question:** If an analyst left the agency in the past, but decides to come back, how will their salary be determined? Will they be given their past experience for placement in the new salary model?

Answer: Specific situations like this would be discussed by DDS Leadership. Credit for past DDS experience will depend on various factors including, but not limited to, how much time the individual was with the agency, how long it’s been since they left, etc. If they weren’t at the DDS for very long (i.e. didn’t have time to learn the job) or left a long time ago, we would need to re-train (based on new policies, case processing system, business processes, etc.), so they may not get full credit for previous time. This would be determined on a case-by-case basis.