



OFFICE OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION PROGRAMS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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Claims for Mental Health and Emotional Conditions under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA)

Federal employees who sustain a mental health-related injury or illness in the course of their employment may be entitled to benefits under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA).

The Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, which administers the FECA program, provides Federal employees who sustain work-related injury or illness with benefits such as medical care, wage loss replacement, and help in returning to work. Our goal at OWCP is to provide the proper benefits as quickly as possible.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I file a FECA claim for a mental health or emotional condition?

Yes! If performance of work duties causes or aggravates a preexisting, mental health or emotional condition, a Federal employee may be entitled to benefits under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA).

What types of mental health or emotional conditions are covered?

Any specific mental health condition may be compensable under the FECA. Examples of mental health conditions include depression, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and opioid use disorders. To be accepted as a condition under the FECA, your condition must be diagnosed by an appropriate medical specialist.

Who can diagnose and treat a mental health or emotional condition?

Mental health or emotional conditions must be diagnosed by an appropriate specialist. A condition related single traumatic incident, or a series of incidents contained with a single work shift is classified as a **Traumatic Injury**. A condition resulting from a Traumatic Injury may be diagnosed by a licensed physician of any specialty.

An example of a Traumatic Injury would be a postal service mail carrier held up at gunpoint and asked to hand over a package they are about to deliver resulting in an emotional or mental health injury such as anxiety.

Injuries or conditions that result from actions, events or exposure stretching over more than one work shift are classified as **Occupational Diseases**. Due to the complex nature of Occupational Diseases, these claims must contain a diagnosis from a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist.

An example would be a nurse employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs who works multiple shifts during and due to an emergency situation and develops an emotional or mental health illness such as post-traumatic stress (PTSD).

Appropriate medical specialists do not include physicians' assistants; nurses; nurse practitioners and licensed social workers. These medical professionals may practice under the guidance of an appropriate medical specialist, but their findings are only valid as medical evidence under the FECA if their reports have been countersigned by an appropriate medical specialist.

Is a diagnosis all the medical information I need?

No. In addition to providing a valid diagnosis, your doctor must also provide a report that contains a complete and accurate history of your work exposure; a history of any previous emotional conditions and treatment you may have experienced; a detailed discussion of your physician's examination and findings; and an unequivocal opinion relating your diagnosed condition to your reported work exposure as supported by detailed medical rationale explaining how your work exposure caused or otherwise contributed to your diagnosed condition.

How do I file an emotional condition claim under FECA?

You can initiate the process by filing a claim form through [ECOMP](#); the claim will be sent to OWCP through your employer. For Traumatic Injuries you should file a [CA-1 Federal Notice of Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay/Compensation](#). For Occupational Diseases you should file a [CA-2 Notice of Occupational Disease and Claim for Compensation](#).

What other information will I need to provide to support my claim?

Your initial claim should contain or be accompanied by a complete statement identifying the exact nature of the work factors you believe to be responsible for the development of your condition. This should include specific examples to illustrate your claim and present OWCP with a full and clear idea as to what elements of your job have caused your mental or emotional condition.

Your statements alone will often not be sufficient to establish the facts of your claim. You may need to provide evidence that will corroborate your statement. That may include statements from other individuals who have actually witnessed the alleged events; emails exhibiting the alleged actions or behaviors; the results of any grievances or EEO complaints filed as a result of the alleged work events; or any other concrete documentation that will support the statements you've made.

What can cause a work-related emotional condition?

A work environment can have many factors that could potentially affect your mental health. Your reaction to a single traumatic event, such as an incident of workplace violence or a hostile confrontation may cause an emotional condition. Your condition could be caused by continued exposure to a form of harassment, abuse, or discrimination from an employer creating a hostile work environment. The cause of your condition doesn't need to have been something done deliberately or maliciously. It could just be your exposure or reaction to your typical working conditions or a regular hazard of your employment.

How do I know if I'm suffering from an emotional condition?

According to the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#), the following are examples of the types of symptoms you may encounter if you are experiencing an emotional condition:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little;
- Anger, feeling edgy or lashing out at others;
- Overwhelming sadness;
- Pulling away from people and things;

- Not connecting with others;
- Lack of energy or always feeling tired;
- Feeling like you have to keep busy;
- Having unexplained aches and pains, such as constant stomachaches or headaches;
- Feeling helpless or hopeless;
- Excessive smoking, drinking, or using drugs, including prescription medications;
- Worrying a lot of the time;
- feeling guilty but not sure why;
- Thinking of hurting or killing yourself or someone else;
- and Having difficulty readjusting to home or work life.

As you may notice, some of these symptoms overlap and others appear to contradict each other. Everyone's mental health is different and the symptoms you experience may not be the ones someone else with the same condition experiences. The important thing to note is that, if you believe that you are experiencing an emotional condition, you reach out to a medical professional as soon as possible to get the help you need.

What if my employer is the one causing me stress? How can I trust them to report my claim?

While it is possible that your employer may be the entity that's causing your mental or emotional stress, it is important to remember that you are protected from harassment and retaliation from your employer as a Federal employee. Your employer will have the right to review and respond to any allegations you make against them. Also, they are required by law to complete your claim form and forward it to OWCP for an independent and unbiased appraisal of the facts of your claim. Additionally, all Federal employees have the right to file a claim under the FECA by using ECOMP.

How can I treat a mental or emotional condition?

The [Department of Labor's website](#) offers advice on assessing and dealing with mental health in the workplace.

More information can also be found through the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#). There are many different avenues for assisting in your mental well-being; however, if you've been officially diagnosed by a physician, you should rely on the medical advice provided by your physician in treating your emotional condition.

Federal civilian employees can file a claim or manage an existing claim under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act [online using ECOMP](#) or by calling the FECA program at 202-513-6860.