


APPENDIX B: AGENCY'S RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

U.S. Department of Labor

Office of Workers' Compensation Programs
Washington, DC 20210



MEMORANDUM FOR: ELLIOT P. LEWIS
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

FROM: JULIA K. HEARTHWAY 
Director, Office of Workers' Compensation Programs

SUBJECT: Office of Worker's Compensation Programs' Response to the
Office of the Inspector General's Audit of COVID-19 Claims
Processing in OWCP, Draft Report No. 19-20-004-04-001

The Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) has received the Office of Inspector General (OIG) Draft Report No. 19-20-004-04-001, "COVID-19: OWCP SHOULD CONTINUE TO CLOSELY MONITOR IMPACT ON CLAIMS PROCESSING" for review and response addressing the recommendations.

This Draft Report makes a total of five new recommendations, which are outlined below along with our responses:

1. **Recommendation:** DFEC should continue to monitor non-COVID claims for delays and other potential impacts, particularly for its opioid population who may be at risk while resources are re-allocated to focus on the program's response to COVID-19.

Management Response: OWCP agrees with this recommendation and will continue the appropriate monitoring.

2. **Recommendation:** DFEC should closely monitor any delays that occur in requesting FERS Offset Calculations from SSA for potential benefit overpayments to claimants as well as any impact a backlog could have on its ability to timely process claims.

Management Response: OWCP agrees with this recommendation and will continue the appropriate monitoring.

3. **Recommendation:** DCMWC should issue written guidance to clarify how authorization for rehabilitation services will be handled during the pandemic.

Management Response:

OWCP agrees with this recommendation and has already taken steps to give miners and health care professionals information on pulmonary rehabilitation services. On June 4, 2020, DCMWC issued BLBA Bulletin 20-02, Telemedicine for Routine Medical Services. <https://www.dol.gov/owcp/dcmwc/blba/indexes/BL20-02OCR.pdf>. The bulletin reinforced that physicians can continue to refer miners for pulmonary rehabilitation services. These services can be conducted at the miner's home or another place near the miner's location by a physician-directed registered nurse, physician assistant, advanced practice nurse practitioner, or respiratory therapist. Going forward, DCMWC will update the COVID-19 FAQs on its website and reach out to miners who were receiving pulmonary rehabilitation services prior to the COVID-19 outbreak to be sure they are informed about continued pulmonary rehabilitation care. DCMWC will also contact rehabilitation providers and provide them with a copy of the bulletin.

4. **Recommendation:** DEEOIC should continue to monitor delays and performance data for potential impact from the pandemic and, if needed, take appropriate action to mitigate that impact.

Management Response: OWCP agrees with this recommendation and will continue the appropriate monitoring.

5. **Recommendation:** DLHWC should continue to monitor disputes and controversies arising from COVID-19 claims and assess performance data for potential impact from the pandemic and, if needed, take appropriate action to mitigate that impact.

Management Response: OWCP agrees with this recommendation and will continue the appropriate monitoring.