

§ 10.320

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reasons for desiring a change of physician.

(b) OWCP will approve the request if it determines that the reasons submitted are sufficient. Requests that are often approved include those for transfer of care from a general practitioner to a physician who specializes in treating conditions like the work-related one, or the need for a new physician when an employee has moved. The employer may not authorize a change of physicians.

DIRECTED MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS

§ 10.320 Can OWCP require an employee to be examined by another physician?

OWCP sometimes needs a second opinion from a medical specialist. The employee must submit to examination by a qualified physician as often and at such times and places as OWCP considers reasonably necessary. The employee may have a qualified physician, paid by him or her, present at such examination. However, the employee is not entitled to have anyone else present at the examination unless OWCP decides that exceptional circumstances exist. For example, where a hearing-impaired employee needs an interpreter, the presence of an interpreter would be allowed. Also, OWCP may send a case file for second opinion review where actual examination is not needed, or where the employee is deceased.

§ 10.321 What happens if the opinion of the physician selected by OWCP differs from the opinion of the physician selected by the employee?

(a) If one medical opinion holds more probative value, OWCP will base its determination of entitlement on that medical conclusion (see § 10.502). A difference in medical opinion sufficient to be considered a conflict occurs when two reports of virtually equal weight and rationale reach opposing conclusions (see *James P. Roberts, 31 ECAB 1010 (1980)*).

(b) If a conflict exists between the medical opinion of the employee's physician and the medical opinion of either a second opinion physician or an OWCP medical adviser or consultant, OWCP shall appoint a third physician

to make an examination (see § 10.502). This is called a referee examination. OWCP will select a physician who is qualified in the appropriate specialty and who has had no prior connection with the case. The employee is not entitled to have anyone present at the examination unless OWCP decides that exceptional circumstances exist. For example, where a hearing-impaired employee needs an interpreter, the presence of an interpreter would be allowed. Also, a case file may be sent for referee medical review where there is no need for an actual examination, or where the employee is deceased.

§ 10.322 Who pays for second opinion and referee examinations?

OWCP will pay second opinion and referee medical specialists directly. OWCP will reimburse the employee all necessary and reasonable expenses incident to such an examination, including transportation costs and actual wages lost for the time needed to submit to an examination required by OWCP.

§ 10.323 What are the penalties for failing to report for or obstructing a second opinion or referee examination?

If an employee refuses to submit to or in any way obstructs an examination required by OWCP, his or her right to compensation under the FECA is suspended until such refusal or obstruction stops. The action of the employee's representative is considered to be the action of the employee for purposes of this section. The employee will forfeit compensation otherwise paid or payable under the FECA for the period of the refusal or obstruction, and any compensation already paid for that period will be declared an overpayment and will be subject to recovery pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 8129.

§ 10.324 May an employer require an employee to undergo a physical examination in connection with a work-related injury?

The employer may have authority independent of the FECA to require the employee to undergo a medical examination to determine whether he or she meets the medical requirements of the position held or can perform the duties of that position. Nothing in the FECA