

1. Purpose and Scope. This chapter provides an overview of field station functions and operations. Field Stations are staffed full-time or part-time, and allow the Program to perform outreach where the coal mining population is not in close proximity to a District Office.

2. Filing and Processing of Claims. In administering the Black Lung Benefits Act, each field station shall:

- a. Accept individual claims.
- b. Examine and review the initial claim application for accuracy, completeness, or other deficiencies.
- c. Assist claimants in completing initial claim application and correcting any deficiencies.
- d. Assist claimants in developing evidence necessary for processing claims.
- e. Package and forward claims to the appropriate district office (DO) for processing.
- f. Assist claimant in preparation and submission of Form OWCP -957 (Claimant Reimbursement Voucher) and the OWCP-915 to the District Office.

3. Technical Advice and Guidance.

- a. Assist Callers and Visitors. Determine actions to be taken or the information or advice to be given to the claimant or beneficiary.
- b. Advise claimant of rights and benefits allowable under the law.
- c. Answer written and face-to-face inquiries about general or specific aspects on the program or individual claims.
- d. Offer assistance in post-entitlement claims, such as the completion of the annual benefits questionnaire (CM-929), representative payee issues, responses to overpayment actions, and medical treatment problems.

4. Field Station Support Functions include:

- a. Preparing letters and memorandums for the claimant's signature when claimant desires or needs to cite or amplify unusual aspects of the case.
- b. Maintaining files on program policy and procedures, operating instructions, travel, etc. The FS should maintain a supply of all forms used in filing claims and be equipped to access the Automated Support Package for claims information whenever possible.

5. Public Information/Community Liaison. Field Station personnel:

- a. Participate in meetings and distribute DCMWC forms, pamphlets, DOL press releases, and other information on the DCMWC to local groups in their areas of geographic jurisdiction.
- b. Maintain liaison with SSA and state compensation offices in the area serviced to coordinate information concerning claims taking and processing.