

conditions and the accepted employment injury. OWCP subsequently received additional medical evidence in support of the request for expansion and on December 19, 2018 appellant requested reconsideration.² By decision dated April 2, 2019, OWCP denied modification of its July 25, 2018 decision.³

The Board, having duly considered the matter, finds that this case is not in posture for decision. Appellant has a prior claim for a November 21, 2005 traumatic injury, assigned OWCP File No. xxxxxx817. That claim was accepted for lumbar and thoracic back sprains. OWCP's procedures provide that cases should be administratively combined when correct adjudication depends on cross-referencing between files and when two or more injuries occur to the same part of the body.⁴ As the instant claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx772 and the claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx817 both involve injuries to appellant's back/shoulder, these claims must be administratively combined for a full and fair adjudication of her present claim. This will allow OWCP to consider all relevant claim files and accompanying evidence in developing appellant's request to expand the acceptance of her claim to include the additional conditions of left middle finger contusion, lumbosacral arthritis, cervical arthritis, lumbar DDD, spondylolisthesis at L4-L5, lumbar radiculopathy, and right shoulder bursitis.

Accordingly, the Board will remand the case to OWCP to administratively combine OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx772 and 817. Additional OWCP files involving appellant's back and/or shoulder, if any, should also be administratively combined with the aforementioned OWCP files. Following this and other such further development as deemed necessary, OWCP shall issue a *de novo* merit decision.

² Appellant had also requested payment of wage-loss compensation, which OWCP denied on September 28, 2018. OWCP, however, has not issued a new decision regarding appellant's request for reconsideration of the September 28, 2018 decision.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *File Maintenance and Management*, Chapter 2.400.8(c) (February 2000); *see also S.D.*, Docket No. 19-0590 (issued August 28, 2020).

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the April 2, 2019 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside and this case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: October 15, 2020
Washington, DC

Janice B. Askin, Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Patricia H. Fitzgerald, Alternate Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Valerie D. Evans-Harrell, Alternate Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board