

² Appellant has a prior occupational disease claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx944 which was accepted for other tenosynovitis of hand and wrist, left.

occupational disease based on her description of the circumstances. Thus, OWCP converted her recurrence claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx944 to a new occupational disease claim, assigned OWCP File No. xxxxxx925.

By decision dated October 7, 2022, OWCP denied the present claim, finding that the evidence of record was insufficient to establish a diagnosed condition in connection with the accepted employment factors.

On October 17, 2022 appellant requested reconsideration.

By decision dated December 6, 2022, OWCP modified its prior decision, finding that appellant had established valid medical diagnosis of her bilateral hand conditions based upon a July 19, 2022 report from Dr. Michael McGrath, a specialist in orthopedic surgery. However, the claim remained denied, because the medical evidence of record was insufficient to establish causal relationship between her diagnosed bilateral hand conditions and the accepted employment factors.

The Board has duly considered this matter and finds that this case is not in posture for decision.

OWCP's procedures provide that cases should be administratively combined when correct adjudication of the issues depends on frequent cross-referencing between files.³ For example, if a new injury case is reported for an employee who previously filed an injury claim for a similar condition, doubling is required.⁴ Herein, appellant had a prior claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx944 for a left-hand condition. She subsequently filed a recurrence claim on July 14, 2022 which OWCP developed as a new occupational disease claim under the present claim, OWCP File No. xxxxxx925.

For a full and fair adjudication, the case must be remanded for OWCP to administratively combine the current case record, OWCP File No. xxxxxx925 with OWCP File No. xxxxxx944. On remand, OWCP shall review all relevant evidence to determine whether appellant has established that her diagnosed bilateral hand conditions are causally related to the accepted factors of her federal employment. Following this and other such further development as deemed necessary, it shall issue a *de novo* decision. Accordingly,

³ Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *File Maintenance and Management*, Chapter 2.400.8c (February 2000).

⁴ *Id.* See also *Order Remanding Case*, Docket No. 22-1293 (issued March 13, 2023); *S.G.*, Docket No. 21-0396 (issued September 27, 2021); *R.L.*, Docket No. 20-0901 (issued July 27, 2021); *M.E.*, Docket No. 21-0094 (issued May 27, 2021); *L.M.*, Docket No. 19-1490 (issued January 29, 2020); *L.H.*, Docket No 18-1777 (issued July 2, 2019).

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the December 6, 2022 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: September 13, 2023
Washington, DC

Alec J. Koromilas, Chief Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Patricia H. Fitzgerald, Deputy Chief Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

James D. McGinley, Alternate Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board