

² 5 U.S.C. § 8101 *et seq.*

ISSUE

The issue is whether OWCP properly denied appellant's request for reconsideration, finding that it was untimely filed and failed to demonstrate clear evidence of error.

FACTUAL HISTORY

This case has previously been before the Board.³ The facts and circumstances of the case as set forth in the Board's prior order are incorporated herein by reference. The relevant facts are as follows.

On May 13, 2016 appellant, then a 52-year-old attorney, filed an occupational disease claim (Form CA-2) alleging that she sustained adjustment disorder, chronic insomnia, sleep deprivation, elevated blood pressure, difficulty concentrating, and anxiety due to factors of her federal employment.⁴ Specifically, she attributed her condition to the discontinuation of her reasonable accommodations, which caused a significant exacerbation of her conditions, all of which negatively impacted the control of her diabetes. Appellant noted that she first became aware of her claimed condition on February 12, 2014, and first realized its relation to her federal employment on April 27, 2016. She stopped work on May 13, 2016. On the reverse side of the form, L.G., appellant's supervisor, controverted the claim and attached a statement.

In a May 17, 2016 statement, L.G. indicated that on April 21, 2016 she conducted a mid-year review with appellant and informed her that she was no longer eligible to participate in the employing establishment's telework program due to her performance deficiencies, which resulted in multiple complaints received due to her non-responsiveness to requests. She noted that appellant responded that she was allowed to telework as a reasonable accommodation. L.G. maintained, however, that there was no formal agreement to telework as a reasonable accommodation. She advised that appellant had an informal arrangement of a later reporting time due to her medical condition of insomnia. L.G. maintained that she had a supervisory right to address appellant's performance issues by taking the discretionary administrative action of removing her from the telework program.

In a May 23, 2016 letter, the employing establishment controverted appellant's claim. It attached a copy of appellant's telework agreement, signed on May 11, 2015.

In a May 25, 2016 statement, L.G. indicated that on April 7, 2016 she informed appellant, as her newly assigned supervisor, that she needed to submit medical evidence to support the late start time, which had been approved as a reasonable accommodation by her prior supervisor. She advised that after informing appellant on April 21, 2016 that she could no longer telework due to

³ *Order Remanding Case*, Docket No. 24-0044 (issued April 22, 2024).

⁴ OWCP assigned the present claim OWCP File No. xxxxxx515. The record reflects that on May 14, 2016 appellant filed a traumatic injury claim (Form CA-1), assigned OWCP File No. xxxxxx112, wherein she alleged that on May 13, 2016 she sustained an emotional/stress-related condition while in the performance of duty. On August 31, 2018 she filed a Form CA-2, assigned OWCP File No. xxxxxx776, wherein she claimed that by May 13, 2016 she had sustained an emotional/stress-related condition due to factors of her federal employment. OWCP File No. xxxxxx112 and OWCP File No. xxxxxx776 have not been administratively combined by OWCP with OWCP File No. xxxxxx515.

performance issues, she authorized her to use leave on the two days per week she formerly teleworked.

On May 31, 2016 OWCP received a May 2, 2016 attending physician's report (Form CA-20) wherein Dr. Paul M. Wilson, Board-certified in family medicine, advised that appellant's adjustment disorder, insomnia, and hypertension were related to job stress.

In a June 15, 2016 development letter, OWCP informed appellant of the deficiencies of her claim. It advised her of the type of factual and medical evidence needed and provided a questionnaire for her completion. OWCP afforded appellant 30 days to respond.

In a July 14, 2016 response to OWCP's development letter, appellant further discussed the factors that she considered to have caused her medical condition. She maintained that on April 21, 2016 the employing establishment made an improper unilateral decision to terminate her reasonable accommodations, including teleworking two days per week and having a delayed morning start time. Appellant claimed that management imposed an arbitrary deadline of April 21, 2016 to submit medical evidence in support of reasonable accommodations and failed to explain how delaying termination of her telework would adversely affect the employing establishment. She indicated that the employing establishment assigned her more cases/projects with essentially immediate completion deadlines even after she advised that she needed to review evidence, engage in witness preparation, and draft memoranda and pleadings for an upcoming trial. Appellant asserted that she could not complete these tasks by the allotted three-day deadline, particularly since she would be on leave for two of those days. She indicated that on April 21, 2016 L.G. improperly ceased assigning her cases relating to the Office of Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for the stated reason of poor performance. Appellant asserted that on the same date L.G. incorrectly advised her that she was not meeting her performance standards with respect to filing dispositive motions within 180 days, closing cases with payouts of less than \$5,000.00, and completing other work tasks. She asserted that she had been assigned more than her fair share of advice-related assignments that took time away from working on Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) cases, and she disputed L.G.'s claim that she did not respond in a timely manner to inquiries from an EEOC administrative judge. Appellant indicated that she was subjected to further stress by attending hearings from May 9 through 13, 2016 for her own EEOC claim. She asserted that in mid-May 2016 L.G. lied about her intention to reinstate her reasonable accommodations regarding telework and a late starting time. Appellant alleged that since 2009 she had experienced a substantial increase in the number of cases assigned to her and in the complexity of those cases, accompanied by a decrease in assistance from support staff, including paralegals.

Appellant submitted additional medical evidence including a November 6, 2014 report of Dr. Wilson, June 15 and September 28, 2016 reports of Linda Berg-Cross, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist, and an October 12, 2016 report of Dr. Daniel Gozzi, a Board-certified endocrinologist.

Appellant also submitted administrative documents from her late-April 2016 request for reasonable accommodations. These documents included an April 22, 2016 e-mail wherein L.G. indicated that appellant had performance problems with respect to closing cases within 180 days

and other matters. L.G. advised that, to help appellant's performance, she would temporarily refrain from assigning her OSHA cases.

By decision dated November 18, 2016, OWCP denied appellant's claim, finding that she had not established a compensable employment factor. Therefore, it concluded that the requirements had not been met to establish an emotional/stress-related condition in the performance of duty.

Appellant timely requested an oral hearing before a representative of OWCP's Branch of Hearings and Review.

Appellant submitted lists regarding work assignments, including a chart delineating how many work assignments she had pending as of September 22, 2015 in the categories of advice-related assignments and those relating to cases before district courts and administrative bodies (EEOC, MSPB, and OSHA). This chart listed 9 advice-related assignments, as well as 39 active and 9 inactive assignments relating to district court and administrative cases. Appellant also submitted e-mails, many of which were sent to or from L.G., regarding cases that had been assigned to her and actions she had taken on them.

A hearing was held on May 31, 2017.

In a June 27, 2017 statement, L.G. indicated that employing establishment attorneys spent the majority of their time representing the employing establishment in litigation proceedings before federal district courts and administrative bodies such as the EEOC, MSPB, and OSHA. Attorneys also handled advice-related matters, including providing verbal or written counsel to employing establishment managers, which typically only required 10 minutes to an hour of work per matter. L.G.'s statement included charts provided by the employing establishment regarding the work assignments of six attorneys, including appellant, and she explained that the total number of matters assigned to appellant was not indicative of the amount of work she had to perform relative to her colleagues. She noted that the nature and complexity of the assignments had to be examined, and she maintained that appellant was not assigned the most complex and time-consuming litigation cases. L.G. explained that the charts reflected that appellant received a disproportionate number of advice-related assignments relative to litigation assignments during the period in question. She advised that for the period September 1 through December 31, 2015 appellant received the same or lesser number of litigation assignments than other attorneys. L.G. asserted that the charts did not demonstrate that appellant was overburdened with assignments relative to L.R. as appellant had six litigation assignments for the period September 1 through December 31, 2015 and L.R. had eight litigation assignments for the same period. Moreover, appellant had 4 litigation assignments for the period January 1 through May 5, 2016, the fewest of any attorney, and L.R. had 14 litigation assignments for the same period. L.G. acknowledged that appellant was the only attorney that handled OSHA matters, but she noted that these cases constituted a very small part of the office's practice.

L.G. indicated that appellant could make requests directly to her for paralegal assistance with such "substantive" matters as drafting discovery documents, researching, and organizing files, and that she could make requests directly to a paralegal for assistance with "non-substantive" matters such as requesting personnel records and other documents. She noted that there were two

paralegals assigned to support the attorneys during the period appellant identified, *i.e.*, early-2016. L.G. indicated that appellant had expressed a preference for one paralegal over the other, and chose to complete work tasks herself when advised that the attorneys could not choose a particular paralegal. She indicated that, with respect to events on or about March 21, 2016, appellant advised that S.T., one of the two paralegals, was unable to complete work for her because she had been redirected to perform work for L.R. instead. L.G. explained that on the day prior to appellant's expected return to work, S.T. advised that she did not have time to complete both appellant's and L.R.'s assignments as she had been working on L.R.'s discovery assignment during the week. She advised that she told S.T. to contact appellant and L.R. about filing an extension. Appellant responded that an extension could not be requested and she then completed the work tasks herself. L.G. asserted that appellant should have been issued disciplinary actions but instead, from February to March 2016, she conducted case reviews with her to discuss the status of her cases. She advised that several times appellant either did not know the case status or had incorrectly entered data in the case database. L.G. indicated that appellant was placed on a success improvement plan (SIP) after she returned to duty in 2017, and that a supervisory attorney at the U.S. Attorney's Office requested that the employing establishment no longer assign appellant any cases within their district.

On July 10, 2017 OWCP received additional e-mails regarding appellant's work assignments, and medical evidence, including a September 28, 2016 report of Dr. Berg-Cross and an April 17, 2017 report of Shawn Schmitt, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist.

By decision dated October 26, 2017, OWCP's hearing representative set aside the November 18, 2016 decision and remanded the case for further development. She found that although appellant had not established any compensable factors of employment, additional development was required pertaining to appellant's allegations of overwork due to being assigned a greater workload than the other attorneys in her office.

In a March 15, 2018 statement, L.G. indicated that appellant received 19 advice-related assignments for the period September 1 through December 31, 2015, and 7 advice-related assignments for the period January 28 through February 28, 2016. She maintained that the amount of time required to address the advice-related assignments for either period would not exceed the average amount of time required to manage one case before a district court or an administrative body.

By *de novo* decision dated April 25, 2018, OWCP denied appellant's emotional/stress-related condition, finding that she did not establish a compensable employment factor.

On May 23, 2018 appellant requested a telephonic hearing before a representative of OWCP's Branch of Hearings and Review. At the hearing held on November 16, 2018 she further testified regarding her workload and maintained that L.G. had mischaracterized the level of her workload.

Appellant submitted additional evidence, including an August 3, 2018 report of Dr. Ieon L. Dawson, a Board-certified cardiologist, and a September 10, 2018 report of Ena Watson, a licensed clinical social worker.

By decision dated February 25, 2019, OWCP's hearing representative affirmed the April 25, 2018 decision.

On February 7, 2020 appellant requested reconsideration of the February 25, 2019 decision.

In a January 2, 2020 statement, appellant indicated that she stopped work on May 13, 2016 when she suffered a mental breakdown due to work-related stress and was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and worsened diabetes, hypertension, and insomnia. She asserted that when she returned to work months later, she continued to suffer from these conditions due to management's refusal to adhere to her recommended medical restrictions. Appellant noted that all her psychological and physical conditions stemmed from the actions of L.G. in 2016. She advised that since January 2008 she had represented the employing establishment in proceedings before federal district courts and administrative bodies (including the EEOC, MSPB, and OSHA) and had provided legal advice to clients of the employing establishment. Appellant asserted that, during the period January through May 2016, the volume of the work assigned to her doubled from the preceding level, thereby causing a disparity in her workload relative to the other attorneys in her office. During this period, she faced more challenges than the other attorneys with respect to her appearances in administrative and district court matters, and with respect to the deadlines for completing discovery and filing motions. Appellant indicated that the cases she was assigned had "imminent deadlines" and that she was not afforded paralegal support. She maintained that L.G. always denied her request for the services of S.T., who had the most advanced skills of the two paralegals in her office, but repeatedly allowed L.R. to use S.T.'s services. Appellant indicated that S.T. worked long hours drafting legal motions for L.R., and that L.R. would typically sign her name to the motions and take credit for completing them. She asserted that shortly after L.G. granted L.R. paralegal assistance on March 28, 2016, L.R. left work to plan a party to celebrate L.G.'s promotion.

By decision dated May 7, 2020, OWCP denied appellant's request for reconsideration of the merits of her claim, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 8128(a).

On October 19, 2020 the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) approved appellant's application for disability retirement.

On June 13, 2023 appellant requested reconsideration.

In a June 12, 2023 statement, appellant asserted that L.G. had knowledge of the reasonable accommodations and medical restrictions granted for her medical conditions of PTSD, insomnia, and diabetes, but improperly terminated the reasonable accommodations and failed to abide by the medical restrictions. She indicated that when L.G. began her tenure in January 2016 she assigned appellant's a disproportionate number of EEOC cases at a time when five district court cases required her attention. Appellant asserted that L.G. provided paralegal support to L.R. and the other attorneys, but discriminated against her by never approving her requests for paralegal support. Consequently, she had to work an average of 9 to 11 hours per day. Appellant asserted that in January 2017 L.G. retaliated against her for filing EEOC complaints by improperly placing her on an unwarranted SIP and removing her from working on OSHA cases and advice-related assignments. She indicated that she later successfully completed a SIP and asserted that during a

November 21, 2017 performance review L.G. told her that the issuance of the SIP was the equivalent of a “warning” that she would be terminated if she ever failed to meet her performance goals in the future.

Appellant indicated that on December 4, 2017 several case assignments were transferred from L.R. to her, and that L.R. deliberately prevented her from electronically accessing the files for the cases. When she finally gained access to the files on December 21, 2017, she discovered that they contained little to no useful information for managing the cases. Appellant asserted that in late-December 2017 L.G. failed to provide her with adequate information to handle a case before a federal district court in Virginia. She asserted that L.R.’s failure to properly handle two EEOC cases that had been transferred to her made it impossible for her to meet January 2018 deadlines for filings in those cases. Appellant indicated that, beginning in February 2018, she worked with a mentally unstable party to an MSPB claim who subjected her to threatening and “weird” telephone calls and voice mails, some which consisted of the sounds of gunfire, screaming, and groans. She also indicated that L.G. failed to protect her from an Assistant U.S. Attorney who unfairly verbally abused her regarding her work product. Appellant noted that on August 2, 2018 she suffered a panic attack after L.G. forced her to prove she had performed the tasks listed on a work assignment printout and indicated that by mid-September 2018 she had become non-functional and could barely perform the necessary actions of daily living.

By decision dated June 27, 2023, OWCP denied appellant’s request for reconsideration, finding that it was untimely filed and failed to demonstrate clear evidence of error.

Appellant, through counsel, appealed OWCP’s June 27, 2023 decision to the Board.

By order remanding case dated April 22, 2024,⁵ the Board set aside OWCP’s June 27, 2023 decision and remanded the case for findings of fact and a statement of reasons, to be followed by an appropriate decision on appellant’s reconsideration request.

By decision dated June 25, 2024, OWCP denied appellant’s request for reconsideration, finding that it was untimely filed and failed to demonstrate clear evidence of error. It provided a discussion of her claimed employment factors and discussed the evidence/argument she submitted in connection with her untimely reconsideration request.

LEGAL PRECEDENT

Pursuant to section 8128(a) of FECA, OWCP has the discretion to reopen a case for further merit review.⁶ This discretionary authority, however, is subject to certain restrictions. For instance, a request for reconsideration must be received within one year of the date of OWCP’s decision for which review is sought.⁷ Timeliness is determined by the document receipt date of the request for reconsideration as indicated by the received date in the Integrated Federal

⁵ *Supra* note 3.

⁶ 5 U.S.C. § 8128(a); *see also* A.B., Docket No. 19-1539 (issued January 27, 2020); W.C., 59 ECAB 372 (2008).

⁷ 20 C.F.R. § 10.607(a).

Employees' Compensation System (iFECS).⁸ Imposition of this one-year filing limitation does not constitute an abuse of discretion.⁹

OWCP may not deny a request for reconsideration solely because it was untimely filed. When a claimant's request for reconsideration is untimely filed, it must nevertheless undertake a limited review to determine whether it demonstrates clear evidence of error.¹⁰ If a request for reconsideration demonstrates clear evidence of error, OWCP will reopen the case for merit review.¹¹

To demonstrate clear evidence of error, a claimant must submit evidence relevant to the issue which was decided by OWCP.¹² The evidence must be positive, precise, and explicit and must manifest on its face that OWCP committed an error.¹³ Evidence that does not raise a substantial question concerning the correctness of OWCP's February 25, 2019 decision is insufficient to demonstrate clear evidence of error.¹⁴ It is not enough merely to show that the evidence could be construed so as to produce a contrary conclusion. This entails a limited review by OWCP of how the evidence submitted with the request for reconsideration bears on the evidence previously of record and whether the new evidence demonstrates clear error on the part of OWCP.¹⁵

OWCP's procedures note that the term clear evidence of error is intended to represent a difficult standard.¹⁶ The claimant must present evidence which on its face shows that OWCP made an error.¹⁷ Evidence such as a detailed, well-rationalized medical report which, if submitted before the denial was issued, would have created a conflict in medical opinion requiring further

⁸ Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *Reconsiderations*, Chapter 2.1602.4(b) (September 2020).

⁹ *S.M.*, Docket No. 25-0215 (issued April 4, 2025); *G.G.*, Docket No. 18-1072 (issued January 7, 2019); *E.R.*, Docket No. 09-0599 (issued June 3, 2009); *Leon D. Faidley, Jr.*, 41 ECAB 104 (1989).

¹⁰ *See* 20 C.F.R. § 10.607(b); *M.H.*, Docket No. 18-0623 (issued October 4, 2018); *Charles J. Prudencio*, 41 ECAB 499 (1990).

¹¹ *T.N.*, Docket No. 22-0560 (issued April 24, 2025); *L.C.*, Docket No. 18-1407 (issued February 14, 2019); *M.L.*, Docket No. 09-0956 (issued April 15, 2010). *See also* 20 C.F.R. § 10.607(b).

¹² *A.A.*, Docket No. 19-1219 (issued December 10, 2019); *J.F.*, Docket No. 18-1802 (issued May 20, 2019); *J.D.*, Docket No. 16-1767 (issued January 12, 2017); *Dean D. Beets*, 43 ECAB 1153 (1992).

¹³ *J.D.*, Docket No. 19-1836 (issued April 6, 2020); *Leone N. Travis*, 43 ECAB 227 (1999).

¹⁴ *S.W.*, Docket No. 18-0126 (issued May 14, 2019); *Robert G. Burns*, 57 ECAB 657 (2006).

¹⁵ *S.K.*, Docket No. 25-0347 (issued April 4, 2025); *T.N.*, Docket No. 18-1613 (issued April 29, 2020).

¹⁶ *See supra* note 8 at Chapter 2.1602.5(a) (September 2020); *see also J.S.*, Docket No. 16-1240 (issued December 1, 2016).

¹⁷ *K.W.*, Docket No. 19-1808 (issued April 2, 2020).

development, is not clear evidence of error.¹⁸ The Board makes an independent determination of whether a claimant has demonstrated clear evidence of error on the part of OWCP.¹⁹

ANALYSIS

The Board finds that OWCP properly denied appellant's request for reconsideration as it was untimely filed and failed to demonstrate clear evidence of error.

As noted above, a request for reconsideration must be received within one year of the date of the last merit decision for which review is sought.²⁰ As appellant's request for reconsideration was not received by OWCP until June 13, 2023, more than one year after issuance of its February 25, 2019 merit decision, it was untimely filed. Consequently, she must demonstrate clear evidence of error by OWCP in its February 25, 2019 decision.

In a January 2, 2020 statement, appellant argued that her psychological and physical conditions stemmed from the actions of L.G., her immediate supervisor. She asserted that, during the period January through May 2016, the volume of the work assigned to her doubled from the preceding level, thereby causing a disparity in her workload relative to the other attorneys in her office. During this period, appellant faced more challenges than the other attorneys with respect to her appearances in administrative and district court matters, and with respect to the deadlines for completing discovery and filing motions. She indicated that the cases she was assigned had "imminent deadlines" and that she was never afforded support by paralegals. Appellant maintained that L.G. always denied her requests for the services of S.T., who had the most advanced skills of the two paralegals in her office, but repeatedly allowed L.R. to use S.T.'s services.

In a June 12, 2023 statement, appellant argued that L.G. improperly terminated her reasonable accommodations and failed to abide by her medical restrictions. She asserted that in January 2017 L.G. improperly placed her on a SIP and removed her from working on OSHA cases and advice-related assignments. Appellant asserted that during a November 21, 2017 performance review L.G. threatened her with termination if she ever failed to meet her performance goals in the future. She discussed difficulties she encountered in December 2017 and January 2018 while working on case assignments that were transferred from L.R. to her. Appellant indicated that, beginning in February 2018, she worked with a mentally unstable party to an MSPB claim who subjected her to threatening and "weird" telephone calls and voice mails. She asserted that L.G. failed to protect her from an Assistant U.S. Attorney who unfairly verbally abused her. Appellant noted that on August 2, 2018 she suffered a panic attack after L.G. forced her to prove she had performed the tasks listed on a work assignment printout.

The Board finds, however, that appellant's above-noted arguments do not raise a substantial question as to the correctness of OWCP's February 25, 2019 decision, which found

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *D.S.*, Docket No. 17-0407 (issued May 24, 2017).

²⁰ *See supra* note 8.

that appellant did not establish a compensable employment factor.²¹ As noted, clear evidence of error is intended to represent a difficult standard.²² It is not enough to show that evidence could be construed so as to produce a contrary conclusion. Instead, the evidence must raise a substantial question as to the correctness of OWCP's decision.²³ However, appellant's arguments do not raise a substantial question as to the correctness of OWCP's decision.

In connection with her untimely reconsideration request, appellant submitted an April 25, 2017 report wherein Ms. Watson, a licensed clinical social worker, discussed her claimed work stressors and detailed her symptoms of exhaustion, irritability, and distraction. She also submitted a June 7, 2017 document in which the employing establishment indicated that she had been granted permission to delay her start time at work by two hours and to work at home for two or three days per week. In an October 19, 2020 document, OPM approved appellant's application for disability retirement after her termination by the employing establishment. However, the Board has reviewed these documents and finds that they do not establish a compensable employment factor or otherwise demonstrate clear evidence of error in OWCP's February 25, 2019 decision.

For these reasons, the evidence/argument appellant submitted on reconsideration does not demonstrate on its face that OWCP committed error when it found in its February 25, 2019 decision that she did not meet her burden of proof to establish an emotional/stress-related condition.²⁴ Therefore, OWCP properly denied appellant's June 13, 2023 request for reconsideration of the merits of her claim as it was untimely filed and failed to demonstrate clear evidence of error.

CONCLUSION

The Board finds that OWCP properly denied appellant's request for reconsideration of the merits of her claim, finding that it was untimely filed and failed to demonstrate clear evidence of error.

²¹ See *supra* notes 15 and 17.

²² See *supra* note 18.

²³ See *supra* note 16.

²⁴ See *S.F.*, Docket No. 09-0270 (issued August 26, 2009).

ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the June 25, 2024 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is affirmed.

Issued: May 22, 2025
Washington, DC

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

Janice B. Askin, Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

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