

In a development letter dated June 16, 2025, OWCP informed appellant of the deficiencies of his claim. It advised him of the type of additional evidence needed and provided a questionnaire for his completion. OWCP afforded appellant 60 days to respond.

In an attending physician's report (Form OWCP-20) dated June 30, 2025, Ms. McDonald diagnosed PTSD, generalized anxiety disorder, and major depression. She opined that the May 6, 2025 incident "significantly aggravated [appellant's] combat-related PTSD." Ms. McDonald explained that his PTSD symptoms were manageable until the May 6, 2025 incident, which triggered symptoms, including hypervigilance, flashbacks, difficulty concentrating, nightmares, and isolation. She also noted that appellant missed several days from work due to psychiatric/mental health issues precipitated by the May 6, 2025 employment incident.

In a follow-up letter dated July 10, 2025, OWCP advised appellant that it had conducted an interim review, and the evidence remained insufficient to establish his claim. It noted that he had 60 days from the June 16, 2025 letter to submit the necessary evidence. OWCP further advised that if the evidence was not received during this time, it would issue a decision based on the evidence contained in the record.

OWCP thereafter received a copy of the June 30, 2025 Form CA-20, which had been co-signed on August 13, 2025 by Dr. Anne R. Wessel, a Board-certified psychiatrist.

By decision dated September 15, 2025, OWCP denied appellant's claim, finding that the evidence of record was insufficient to establish that the May 6, 2025 incident occurred, as alleged. Consequently, OWCP found that he had not met the requirements to establish an injury as defined by FECA.

On September 24, 2025 appellant requested reconsideration of OWCP's September 15, 2025 decision.

By decision dated December 23, 2025, OWCP modified the September 15, 2025 decision to find that appellant had established a compensable employment factor. However, the claim remained denied as the medical evidence of record was insufficient to establish causal relationship between appellant's diagnosed medical condition and the accepted compensable employment factor. OWCP noted that the medical evidence submitted by appellant was signed solely by Ms. McDonald, a licensed social worker, who is not a physician and whose medical findings and/or opinions did not suffice for purposes of establishing entitlement to FECA benefits.

The Board, having duly considered this matter, finds that the case is not in posture for decision.

In the case of *William A. Couch*,¹ the Board held that, when adjudicating a claim, OWCP is obligated to consider and address all evidence properly submitted by a claimant and received by OWCP before the final decision is issued.

In its December 23, 2025 decision, OWCP found that the medical evidence submitted by appellant was signed solely by Ms. McDonald, a licensed social worker. The case record,

¹ 41 ECAB 548, 553 (1990); see also *Order Remanding Case, A.B.*, Docket No. 22-0179 (issued June 28, 2022); *Order Remanding Case, S.H.*, Docket No. 19-1582 issued May 26, 2020); *R.D.*, Docket No. 17-1818 (issued April 3, 2018).

however, contains a Form CA-20, which was co-signed on August 13, 2025 by Dr. Wessel, a Board-certified psychiatrist. As OWCP did not consider or address this medical evidence of record, the OWCP failed to follow its procedures by not considering all relevant medical reports of record.²

As Board decisions are final with regard to the subject matter appealed, it is crucial that OWCP consider and address all relevant evidence received prior to the issuance of its final decision.³ On remand, OWCP shall review all evidence of record. Following this and other such further development as deemed necessary, it shall issue a *de novo* decision. Accordingly,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the December 23, 2025 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: April 15, 2026
Washington, DC

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

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

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

² OWCP's procedures provide that all evidence submitted should be reviewed and discussed in the decision. Evidence received following development that lacks probative value should also be acknowledged. Whenever possible, the evidence should be referenced by author and date. Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *Initial Denials*, Chapter 2.1401.5b(2) (November 2012).

³ See *A.P.*, Docket No. 25-0719 (issued November 17, 2025); *A.B.*, *supra* note 1; *C.S.*, Docket No. 18-1760 (issued November 25, 2019); *Yvette N. Davis*, 55 ECAB 475 (2004); see also *William A. Couch*, *supra* note 1.