

§ 10.424

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§ 10.424 May someone other than the beneficiary be designated to receive compensation payments?

A beneficiary may be incapable of managing or directing the management of his or her benefits because of a mental or physical disability, or because of legal incompetence, or because he or she is under 18 years of age. In this situation, absent the appointment of a guardian or other party to manage the financial affairs of the claimant by a court or administrative body authorized to do so, OWCP in its sole discretion may approve a person to serve as the representative payee for funds due the beneficiary.

§ 10.425 May compensation be claimed for periods of restorable leave?

The employee may claim compensation for periods of annual and sick leave which are restorable in accordance with the rules of the employing agency. Forms CA-7a and CA-7b are used for this purpose.

OVERPAYMENTS

§ 10.430 How does OWCP notify an individual of a payment made?

(a) In addition to providing narrative descriptions to recipients of benefits paid or payable, OWCP includes on each periodic check a clear indication of the period for which payment is being made. A form is sent to the recipient with each supplemental check which states the date and amount of the payment and the period for which payment is being made. For payments sent by electronic funds transfer (EFT), a notification of the date and amount of payment appears on the statement from the recipient's financial institution.

(b) By these means, OWCP puts the recipient on notice that a payment was made and the amount of the payment. If the amount received differs from the amount indicated on the written notice or bank statement, the recipient is responsible for notifying OWCP of the difference. Absent affirmative evidence to the contrary, the beneficiary will be presumed to have received the notice of payment, whether mailed or transmitted electronically.

§ 10.431 What does OWCP do when an overpayment is identified?

Before seeking to recover an overpayment or adjust benefits, OWCP will advise the beneficiary in writing that:

(a) The overpayment exists, and the amount of overpayment;

(b) A preliminary finding shows either that the individual was or was not at fault in the creation of the overpayment;

(c) He or she has the right to inspect and copy Government records relating to the overpayment; and

(d) He or she has the right to present evidence which challenges the fact or amount of the overpayment, and/or challenges the preliminary finding that he or she was at fault in the creation of the overpayment. He or she may also request that recovery of the overpayment be waived.

§ 10.432 How can an individual present evidence to OWCP in response to a preliminary notice of an overpayment?

The individual may present this evidence to OWCP in writing or at a pre-recoupment hearing. The evidence must be presented or the hearing requested within 30 days of the date of the written notice of overpayment. Failure to request the hearing within this 30-day time period shall constitute a waiver of that right.

§ 10.433 Under what circumstances can OWCP waive recovery of an overpayment?

(a) OWCP may consider waiving an overpayment only if the individual to whom it was made was not at fault in accepting or creating the overpayment. Each recipient of compensation benefits is responsible for taking all reasonable measures to ensure that payments he or she receives from OWCP are proper. The recipient must show good faith and exercise a high degree of care in reporting events which may affect entitlement to or the amount of benefits. A recipient who has done any of the following will be found to be at fault with respect to creating an overpayment:

(1) Made an incorrect statement as to a material fact which he or she knew or should have known to be incorrect; or

(2) Failed to provide information which he or she knew or should have known to be material; or

(3) Accepted a payment which he or she knew or should have known to be incorrect. (This provision applies only to the overpaid individual.)

(b) Whether or not OWCP determines that an individual was at fault with respect to the creation of an overpayment depends on the circumstances surrounding the overpayment. The degree of care expected may vary with the complexity of those circumstances and the individual's capacity to realize that he or she is being overpaid.

§ 10.434 If OWCP finds that the recipient of an overpayment was not at fault, what criteria are used to decide whether to waive recovery of it?

If OWCP finds that the recipient of an overpayment was not at fault, repayment will still be required unless:

(a) Adjustment or recovery of the overpayment would defeat the purpose of the FECA (see § 10.436), or

(b) Adjustment or recovery of the overpayment would be against equity and good conscience (see § 10.437).

§ 10.435 Is an individual responsible for an overpayment that resulted from an error made by OWCP or another Government agency?

(a) The fact that OWCP may have erred in making the overpayment, or that the overpayment may have resulted from an error by another Government agency, does not by itself relieve the individual who received the overpayment from liability for repayment if the individual also was at fault in accepting the overpayment.

(b) However, OWCP may find that the individual was not at fault if failure to report an event affecting compensation benefits, or acceptance of an incorrect payment, occurred because:

(1) The individual relied on misinformation given in writing by OWCP (or by another Government agency which he or she had reason to believe was connected with the administration of benefits) as to the interpretation of a pertinent provision of the FECA or its regulations; or

(2) OWCP erred in calculating cost-of-living increases, schedule award

length and/or percentage of impairment, or loss of wage-earning capacity.

§ 10.436 Under what circumstances would recovery of an overpayment defeat the purpose of the FECA?

Recovery of an overpayment will defeat the purpose of the FECA if such recovery would cause hardship to a currently or formerly entitled beneficiary because:

(a) The beneficiary from whom OWCP seeks recovery needs substantially all of his or her current income (including compensation benefits) to meet current ordinary and necessary living expenses; and

(b) The beneficiary's assets do not exceed a specified amount as determined by OWCP from data furnished by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. A higher amount is specified for a beneficiary with one or more dependents.

§ 10.437 Under what circumstances would recovery of an overpayment be against equity and good conscience?

(a) Recovery of an overpayment is considered to be against equity and good conscience when any individual who received an overpayment would experience severe financial hardship in attempting to repay the debt.

(b) Recovery of an overpayment is also considered to be against equity and good conscience when any individual, in reliance on such payments or on notice that such payments would be made, gives up a valuable right or changes his or her position for the worse. In making such a decision, OWCP does not consider the individual's current ability to repay the overpayment.

(1) To establish that a valuable right has been relinquished, it must be shown that the right was in fact valuable, that it cannot be regained, and that the action was based chiefly or solely in reliance on the payments or on the notice of payment. Donations to charitable causes or gratuitous transfers of funds to other individuals are not considered relinquishments of valuable rights.

(2) To establish that an individual's position has changed for the worse, it must be shown that the decision made would not otherwise have been made