

860 Medical and Occupational Health Services

861 Scope

861.1 Program Overview

The Postal Service is committed to a comprehensive National Medical and Occupational Health Program consisting of administrative functions, wellness initiatives, and other medically related activities designed to address the health and safety of employees in the workplace.

861.2 Mission

The mission of the National Medical and Occupational Health Program is to reinforce the relationship between health, productivity, and the achievement of the Postal Service's business goals. This is accomplished through the development of quality programs and policies designed to promote and maintain employee health and to help ensure a safe, healthful work environment.

The program's services include but are not limited to the following activities:

- a. Providing preventive medical programs in health counseling, education, and training.
- b. Managing the care of acutely ill or injured employees.
- c. Determining medical ability of applicants and employees to perform the functions of the job.
- d. Managing applicant and employee drug and alcohol testing programs.
- e. Managing compliance with the regulatory requirements of the Department of Transportation, Office of Worker's Compensation Programs, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and other entities for which program compliance is required.
- f. Managing the medical records of applicants and employees.
- g. Providing recommendations regarding physical capabilities, limitations, accommodation, and rehabilitation of disabled employees or applicants.
- h. Providing immunization services and participating in community health programs such as blood pressure, glaucoma, and diabetes assessments and blood bank programs.
- i. Assisting in the prevention of job-related injuries and illness.
- j. Collecting and analyzing epidemiologic data to detect statistical trends in occupational illness or injury.

861.3 Approach

The National Medical and Occupational Health Program presents a uniform approach throughout the Postal Service with respect to occupational health services and health-related activities.

862 Policies**862.1 General Policy**

It is the policy of the Postal Service to provide and maintain work environments that are conducive to and promote the good health and safety of all employees. To furnish the highest quality medical treatment for employees, many postal facilities have on-site health services offices staffed by postal occupational health nurses. These facilities, as well as facilities without on-site health services offices, are further supported by community-based contract medical facilities and providers.

862.2 Medical and Occupational Health Program Facilities**862.21 District Administrative Office**

A Medical and Occupational Health Program administrative office is an office staffed with one or more occupational health nurse administrators and support staff as needed. The role of this office is to administer the Medical and Occupational Health Program at the district level.

862.22 District Health Services Office

A Medical and Occupational Health Program health services office is a service office in a postal facility staffed with one or more career postal occupational health nurses who provide medical and medically related services within that facility. This office is managed by the occupational health nurse administrator who also has the responsibility for administering the National Medical and Occupational Health Program for the district.

862.23 Area Administrative Office

The Medical and Occupational Health Program area administrative office is responsible for the administration of the Medical and Occupational Health Program for the area. The office consists of the senior area medical director, the associate area medical directors, the area occupational health nurse administrator, and support staff.

863 Staffing and Functional Responsibilities**863.1 General**

Senior and associate area medical directors and area and district occupational health nurse administrators implement and manage the Medical and Occupational Health Program and are responsible for ensuring the highest level of service performance and for ensuring adequate medical staffing within their respective locales.

863.2 Staffing**863.21 General**

The Postal Service medical staffing consists of a national medical director, senior area medical directors, associate area medical directors, area and district occupational health nurse administrators, staff occupational health nurses, and community-based contract medical facilities, physicians, nurses, and consultants.

863.22 Qualifications

All physicians must have a current, unlimited license to practice medicine in a state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or a territory of the United States. All nurses must have a current registered nurse (RN) certification and certification in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). The full description of qualifications and requirements is found in the standard position descriptions.

863.3 Administrative and Functional Responsibilities**863.31 National Medical Director**

The national medical director:

- a. Plans and develops policy for the National Medical and Occupational Health program.
- b. Provides guidance to the area Human Resources managers and area medical directors.
- c. Evaluates the performance of all aspects of the National Medical and Occupational Health Program.

The national medical director is administratively responsible to the manager of Health and Resource Management.

863.32 Area Medical Directors

Senior area medical directors and associate area medical directors provide functional guidance in matters of policy and program requirements to district medical personnel and to postal management. They are also responsible for management of complex cases and issues.

863.33 Postal Physicians**863.331 Duty Assignments**

Full-time and part-time postal physicians' work must be performed on postal premises and under the direction of the Postal Service.

863.332 Work Schedules

As specified in 5 CFR 2635 (see ELM 662.1), an employee may not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for

employment, that conflict with official government duties and responsibilities. Work schedule requirements are as follows:

- a. Full-time postal physicians or medical directors are usually scheduled to work a minimum of 8 hours per day, 5 days per week.
- b. Part-time postal physicians or medical directors are usually scheduled to work a minimum of 20 hours per week. Except for occasional changes in the workload, this minimum should be observed. Consideration should be given by local management to the use of contract physician services if their requirements are generally less than 20 hours per week. Management and the part-time postal physician should establish a mutually agreeable work schedule.

863.333 **Duties**

Postal physicians perform the following duties:

- a. Manage professional medical and medically related services in the health services office.
- b. Provide treatment of employees who have been injured or who have become ill.
- c. Conduct physical examinations and review examinations performed by other physicians outside the Postal Service.
- d. In conjunction with the area medical director, issue standing orders for all the health services office nursing staff within their area of responsibility.
- e. Visit all health services offices in their assigned area at least every 3 months.
- f. Establish and act as custodian for all employee medical records within their area of responsibility.
- g. Make rounds on the workroom floor at regular intervals and evaluate working conditions to identify and recommend solutions to potential health and safety problems.
- h. Monitor the medical status of employees returned to duty through the rehabilitation program at intervals of 2 to 4 weeks or as indicated.
- i. Review all serious job-related injuries and fatalities to help determine if the employee's medical condition contributed to the injury or fatality (see 822.221).
- j. Work with the Human Resources staff and coordinate medical activity with safety and injury compensation staffs.
- k. Participate in management meetings, particularly those related to health, safety, and injury compensation.
- l. Serve as consultant or expert witness in administrative appeal proceedings, as required.
- m. In conjunction with an occupational health nurse administrator, medically assess reconsiderations of nonveterans and CPS disabled (30 percent or more) veterans' appeals.

863.34 Contract Physicians

Currently licensed physicians, under agreement with the Postal Service, are designated to perform specified medical services on a fee-for-service basis:

- a. Where there is no coverage by a postal physician.
- b. Where the postal physician is on leave.

863.35 Occupational Health Nurse Administrators

The occupational health nurse administrators are responsible for the administration of the National Medical and Occupational Health Program within their assigned locales. The duties include but are not limited to:

- a. Providing administrative and policy guidance to local management.
- b. Managing all aspects of health services office activity, including supervision of the staff occupational health nurses.
- c. Designing and implementing programs of preventive health education.
- d. Managing medical contract services and monitoring the quality of work provided by the contractors.
- e. Providing guidance to injury compensation specialists in work-related injury cases.
- f. Ensuring that resources are available for obtaining emergency medical care.
- g. Serving as medical record custodian for assigned locales.
- h. Generating qualitative and quantitative statistics and data.
- i. Providing statistical analysis of data relating to all elements of the National Medical and Occupational Health Program.
- j. Ensuring compliance with the regulatory requirements of the Department of Transportation, Office of Worker's Compensation Programs, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and other entities for which program compliance is required.
- k. Providing emergency care as needed.

863.36 Health Services Office Staff Nurses

Health services office occupational health nurses are functionally and administratively responsible to the district occupational health nurse administrator and to the district Human Resources manager. The duties of the occupational health nurses include but are not limited to:

- a. Providing professional nursing care to employees.
- b. Administering medications at the direction of a physician.
- c. Assisting postal physician in conducting examinations.
- d. Maintaining medical records.
- e. Counseling and referring employees to health-related programs.

(See Handbook EL-806, *Health and Medical Service*, and the standard position description for additional functional responsibilities and duties.)

864 Medical Assessments and Examinations**864.1 Applicant Medical Assessments and Employee Examinations**

It is mandatory that all applicants for career, temporary, or casual employment undergo a medical assessment before job placement. Employees who are converted to positions with different physical requirements than their present positions must first undergo medical assessments that may include the performance of a focused physical examination addressing those particular physical requirements. (See Handbook EL-312, section 57, for exceptions and scheduling procedures.)

Postal or contract physicians perform applicant examinations, when indicated, at a Postal Service health services office within reasonable commuting distance from the applicant's home or at the postal installation where employment is sought.

864.2 Determination of Suitability

See Handbook EL-312, chapter 5.

864.3 Fitness for Duty

See the corresponding management instruction for the specific procedures for fitness-for-duty examinations.

864.31 Purpose

The purpose of the Postal Service fitness-for-duty examination is to ascertain whether or not the employee is medically capable of meeting the requirements of his or her job.

864.32 Requesting Examination

Management can order fitness-for-duty examinations at any time and repeat them, as necessary, to safeguard the employee or coworker. Specific reasons for the fitness-for-duty should be stated by the requesting official.

In cases of occupational injury or illness, the district injury compensation control office may request an examination in the course of monitoring an injury compensation case (see 545.44).

864.33 Tests and Consultation

A specific medical test or consultation may be required in the judgment of the examining physician before rendering a decision on fitness for duty. The indications are documented as part of the report.

865 Return to Duty After Absence for Medical Reasons**865.1 Certification Required: All Bargaining Unit Employees and Those Nonbargaining Unit Employees Returning From Non-FMLA Absences**

Return-to-work clearance may be required for absences due to an illness, injury, outpatient medical procedure (surgical), or hospitalization when management has a reasonable belief, based upon reliable and objective information, that

- a. The employee may not be able to perform the essential functions of his/her position, or
- b. The employee may pose a direct threat to the health or safety of him/herself or others due to that medical condition.

In making this determination, management must consider the essential functions of the employee's job, the nature of the medical condition or procedure involved, guidance from the occupational health nurse administrator, occupational health nurse, and/or the Postal Service's physician regarding the condition or procedure involved, and any other reliable and objective information to make an individualized assessment whether there is a reason to require the return-to-work documentation.

865.2 Intermittent or Reduced Schedule Leave Under FMLA

In the case of bargaining unit employees using intermittent or reduced schedule leave for a condition covered under the FMLA, the occupational health nurse administrator, occupational health nurse, and/or the Postal Service's physician shall decide under what circumstances employees must submit return-to-work documentation for subsequent absences for that condition. Only the Postal Service's physician can make the final authorization for requiring return-to-work clearance after subsequent absences.

865.3 Nonbargaining Unit Employees Returning After FMLA Absence

To return to work from an FMLA-covered absence because of their own incapacitation, nonbargaining unit employees must provide certification from their health care provider that they are able to perform the essential functions of their positions with or without limitations (see ELM 515.56).

865.4 Documentation Required

All medical certifications must be detailed medical documentation and not simply a statement that an employee may return to work. There must be sufficient information to make a determination that the employee can perform the essential functions of his/her job, and do so without posing a hazard to self or others. In addition, the documentation must note whether there are any medical restrictions or limitations on the employee's ability to perform his/her job, and any symptoms that could create a job hazard for the

employee or other employees. The occupational health nurse administrator, occupational health nurse, or the Postal Service's physician evaluates the medical report and, when required, assists placing employees in jobs where they can perform effectively and safely.

865.5 **Assignments**

Installation heads may temporarily assign any employee returning to duty to a modified work assignment during the employee's rehabilitation/recovery period consistent with operational needs and obligations under any applicable collective bargaining agreement or federal law.

865.6 **Fitness for Duty Examinations**

If, after review of the documentation required in 865.4, the Postal Service's physician questions whether an employee can perform the essential functions of his/her position, or whether he/she poses a direct threat to the health or safety of him/herself or others, the physician may require the employee to undergo a fitness-for-duty examination.

866 **Medical Emergencies**

See also Handbook EL-806, *Health and Medical Service*, chapter 1.

866.1 **Requirement**

All health services offices must be prepared to respond to emergencies and to provide medical assistance as required.

866.2 **Emergency Procedures**

The recommended procedures for handling medical emergencies on postal premises are as follows:

- a. Notify the health services office.
- b. Notify security or other designee, who calls 911.
- c. Evaluate (nurse or doctor) to determine severity of injury or illness.
- d. Provide necessary first aid treatment.
- e. Notify postmaster, personnel officer, or senior official in charge.
- f. Transport the employee to hospital by most appropriate means if required.
- g. In non-work-related cases, consult the employee's physician after control of the emergency and before any other arrangements are made. If the physician is not available, transport the employee to the nearest hospital or hospital of choice.

866.3 **Posting Emergency Procedures**

Instructions to be followed in an emergency must be posted in health services offices and on bulletin boards at appropriate places throughout the facility.

867 **Rehabilitation After Work-Related Injury or Illness**

Through coordination with the injury compensation program, every effort must be made to return the employee with a work-related injury to duty by:

- a. Assessing the physical ability of an employee so that the employee can return to the workforce as a productive individual.
- b. Recommending assignments in which the pace and physical requirements minimize risk of reinjury.
- c. Consulting with the treating physician's professional medical staff to monitor, at regular intervals, the capabilities of employees with work-related injury or illness.
- d. Consulting when necessary with the appropriate specialists to resolve differences of opinion between the treating physician and the postal physician.

868 **General Procedures**

868.1 **Agreements**

868.11 **Special**

The national medical director is responsible for the medical specifications of contracts requiring periodic physical examinations for a special category of employees (e.g., PCES, postal inspectors) as required by management.

868.12 **Medical Surveillance and Surveys**

Exposure to toxic substances is identified and quantified by the district Human Resources manager, Safety, or senior safety specialist. The district occupational health nurse administrator or area medical director negotiates the surveillance. Such surveys must be coordinated with the senior area medical director. The district Human Resources manager implements appropriate action and notifies the area Human Resources manager.

868.13 **Contract Medical Agreement**

868.131 **Initiating Medical Agreements**

The following are the procedures for initiating medical agreements with contract physicians, clinics, or other health care providers:

- a. The district occupational health nurse administrator or area medical director recommends and renews all agreements using PS Form 7314, *Medical Agreement*.
- b. Management review of the contract is conducted by the district Human Resources manager. The area medical director approves the agreement as the contracting officer.
- c. A copy of the contract is kept by the district occupational health nurse administrator and area medical director, and copies are furnished to the contractor and to the district Human Resources manager.

Note: Part-time nurses who are covered under the Postal Service-NPPN Agreement must not be confused with nurses who are contracted using PS Form 7314. Contracts for nursing services must not violate provisions of the Postal Service-NPPN Agreement, Article 7.02. Medical services for on-the-job injuries or illnesses must comply with the provisions in 543. Medical services for customer-related accidents must comply with Handbook M-19, *Accident Investigation — Tort Claims*, 253.2.

868.132 **Certification for Payment of Invoices**

As invoices are received for contracted services, the district occupational health nurse administrator or area medical director or designee executes the following procedures before submitting invoices for payment processing:

- a. Verify that the specific services have been rendered and that the invoices are accurate.
- b. Review invoices to detect any inconsistencies such as double-billing (billing twice for the same service on separate invoices).
- c. Certify invoices by either stamping, typing, or handwriting on each *original invoice* the following information: (1) signature and title of the certifying official, (2) name of postal facility, (3) finance number, and (4) date that the services were rendered. A sample stamp reads: "I certify that the goods or services have been received and the invoice is correct and proper for payment."

868.133 **Payment — Statement of Account Offices**

The payment procedures are as follows:

- a. Forward certified invoices to the installation finance office for payment in accordance with local procedures and recording on PS Form 1555, *Statement of Account* (SOA).
- b. Forward copies of paid invoices to the district occupational health nurse administrator or designees for their files.
- c. Record payment for non-job-related medical services (such as routine medical examinations, nursing services, and first aid treatment that is not related to an on-the-job injury or illness) on the SOA using AIC 578.
- d. Record payment for job-related medical services (such as office visits, X-rays, lab work, pharmaceutical bills, and fitness-for-duty examinations that are required because of an on-the-job injury or illness) on the SOA using AIC 577.
- e. Note that payment for medical services for *customers involved in accidents* on or with Postal Service property is made only for the initial visit and record these payments on the SOA using AIC 597.

868.134 **Payment — Non-Statement of Account Offices**

For those postal installations that do not have a Statement of Account, the following payment procedures apply:

- a. Forward certified invoices to the installation finance office for recording and subsequent forwarding to the San Mateo Postal Data Center (94497-9133).

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- b. Send copies of invoices (certifying official) to the occupational health nurse administrator or area medical director or designees for their files.
- c. Charge payment for non-job-related medical services (such as routine medical examinations, nursing services, and first aid treatment that is not related to an on-the-job injury or illness) to General Ledger Account (GLA) 52428.
- d. Charge payment for medical services that are job-related (such as office visits, X-rays, lab work, pharmaceutical bills, and fitness-for-duty examinations that are required because of an on-the-job injury or illness) to GLA 52427.
- e. Charge payment for medical services for *customers involved in accidents* on or with Postal Service property (only for the initial visit) to GLA 55216.

Note: AICs 578, 577, and 597 automatically crosswalk to five-digit expense accounts 52428, 52427, and 55216, respectively, in the General Ledger.

Example: A sample payment log used for recording payment information follows:

Medical Payment Control Log — Calendar Year		
Name:		
Address:		
City:		
State:		
ZIP + 4:		
Social Security Number:		
Invoice Amount	Date Paid	Total Year to Date
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

868.14 Health Agreements

Health agreements are negotiated between the Postal Service and other federal agencies to provide medical services to those agencies at Postal Service facilities. The occupational health nurse administrator and facility manager are responsible for approving such agreements.

868.2 Malpractice

Malpractice insurance is not available for postal medical personnel. Representation in civil or criminal proceedings is provided in accordance with 668.1.

868.3 Preservation of Privacy

Preservation of the privacy of medical records is a direct responsibility of the postal physician or nurse (see Management Instruction EL-860-98-2, *Employee Medical Records*). In facilities where no medical personnel are assigned, the district occupational health nurse administrator arranges with the installation head to properly secure the medical records.

868.4 Medical Training

See 740.

868.41 Continuation of Training

The Postal Service authorizes training for employees to upgrade or maintain proficiency in their current positions. Continuing medical education by the following is encouraged:

- a. Attendance at seminars and medical meetings to improve the professional skills of occupational health nurse administrators, occupational health nurses, and medical directors.
- b. CPR training (with annual recertification) is required for all medical personnel, at Postal Service expense.

868.42 Requests for Training

Requests for medical training by medical personnel are to be submitted through the employee's supervisor to the appropriate approving official at the installation.

868.5 Conflict of Interest**868.51 Full-Time Medical Personnel**

The following provisions apply for full-time personnel:

- a. Full-time medical personnel must not accept any postal employee as a private patient. *Medical personnel* are defined as physicians, nurses, and other professional personnel. This rule applies to new patients and does not affect physician-patient relationships that were in existence prior to the issuance of this subchapter. The exception is where an existing private relationship creates an actual conflict of interest (see 662.1), in which case the relationship must be terminated.
- b. Postal physicians who are treating postal employees in the scope of their duties may not refer employees to their private practice or that of a relative.

868.52 Part-Time and Contract Medical Personnel

The following provisions apply for part-time personnel:

Part-time and contract medical personnel may treat postal employees privately within the bounds of the general ethical conduct standard (see 662.1) that provides that outside employment may not interfere with the

duties and responsibilities of Postal Service employment. Specifically, part-time or contract medical personnel may not:

- a. Coerce, solicit, or inhibit an employee from the free choice of physician in the treatment of an occupational injury or illness.
- b. Serve as the private physician to, or treat in private practice, postal employees sustaining occupational injuries or illness unless the physician is the physician of choice. Any treatment of an employee for an occupational injury or disease by a part-time or contract physician is, in all cases, considered to be performed within the scope of the physician's postal duties or pursuant to the terms of any contract with the Postal Service for up to two visits. If treatment of the medical condition goes beyond two visits, and if the injured employee selects the contract physician as "physician of choice," the contract physician then becomes the employee's physician and subject to OWCP's regulations rather than those of the Postal Service.
- c. Continue to treat postal employees for a non-job-related injury or illness when the employee initially sought treatment while the physician, nurse, etc., was acting in an official capacity with the Postal Service.

868.53 **Contract Medical Facilities and Providers**

The provisions described in 868.52 are also applicable to medical clinics or other similar facilities under contract with the Postal Service.

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