



***Retirement and Insurance Service  
Benefits Administration Letter***

Number: 99-109

Date: September 21, 1999

**Subject: Federal Employees Retirement Disability and Social Security Pilot Project**

**Background:** The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Social Security Administration (SSA) and several agencies are working together on a test project to provide better customer service for Federal employees applying for both Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and SSA disability benefits. This test project is called "FEDMER" – **Federal Medical Evidence of Record**.

The rules for qualifying for FERS and Social Security Disability Insurance differ, but both programs require that decisions be based on medical evidence of record or -- or MER – submitted by the employee's medical provider.

Although Federal agency staff work closely with applicants to make sure OPM has all the medical and other information needed for a FERS decision there is no current process to share this information with SSA staff. SSA, therefore, routinely asks applicants and medical providers for the same MER that OPM already has. This has confused and frustrated everyone involved -- applicants, medical evidence providers and agency staffs.

In the FEDMER test project, MER and other claims-related documents provided by the applicant and medical provider will be sent directly to OPM and then automatically on to SSA. This will ease the burden on the applicant and the medical provider and improve the SSA process as well. The end result should be that applicants are likely to receive a decision from SSA sooner and be more satisfied with the process.

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*Civil Service  
Retirement  
System*

*Federal Employees  
Group Life  
Insurance*

*Federal Employees  
Health Benefits  
Program*

*Federal Employees  
Retirement  
System*

**Pilot**

**Area :** All Federal employees who live in the States of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia are covered by the pilot.

**Why**

**Participate:** Improved customer service is the number one reason to participate in FEDMER. Some of the ways the employee's application process will be streamlined are:

- The employee will apply for both SSA and FERS benefits at their agency.
- Communications between OPM, SSA and the agencies will be improved. One benefit will be to minimize the number of denied applications because of gainful employment as defined by Social Security.
- OPM and SSA will share medical evidence so that the employee does not have to obtain duplicate original documentation. SSA will receive medical evidence faster because they currently do not request medical evidence with the initial application.
- When SSA makes its decision, OPM will receive a copy of the decision letter. If the retiree qualifies for SSA disability benefits, OPM will be able to adjust the FERS annuity more quickly.

**Agency**

**Participation:** Currently the participating agencies are Department of Defense, Department of Labor, Department of Interior, United States Postal Service, Department of Energy, Social Security Administration, Office of Personnel Management, Consumer Product Safety Commission, Department of Justice, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Department of Agriculture, and the Internal Revenue Service.

We encourage all agencies to participate in FEDMER. If your agency would like to participate or become more involved in FEDMER, please contact Karen McManus of the Agency Services Division at 202-606-0788 or [kemcmanu@opm.gov](mailto:kemcmanu@opm.gov)

**Support from  
OPM:**

We will provide training for the FEDMER project. We will work with you on doing training sessions at your agency or at OPM. We are also building a web site to support agencies and provide information to employees. Please contact please contact Karen McManus of the Agency Services Division at 202-606-0788 or [kemcmanu@opm.gov](mailto:kemcmanu@opm.gov) to schedule training.

The FEDMER web site will be available soon. Check the Agency Services Division home page [www.opm.gov/asd](http://www.opm.gov/asd) for FEDMER updates.



Mary M. Sugar, Chief  
Agency Services Division  
Retirement and Insurance Service