

Location	Zoom
Time	10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Attendees	Employee’s Interests Representative: Joe Kendo Employee’s Interests Representative: Marilyn Watkins Employee’s Interests Representative: Samantha Grad Employer’s Interests Representative: Bob Battles Employer’s Interests Representative: Tammie Hetrick Paid Family and Medical Leave Act Ombuds: Edsonya Charles Employer’s Interests Representative: Julia Gorton Employer’s Interests Representative: Christine Brewer Employee’s Interests Representative: Maggie Humphreys
Guests	Trey Reckling Nick Demerice
Members Absent	Bob Battles Tammie Hetrick
Scribe	Liz Merrick/Amelia Holl

Introductions - Members to introduced themselves.

Approve August Meeting Minutes – Minutes to be sent out and reviewed at October’s meeting.

Agenda:

- **Communications Engagement – Presented by Nick Demerice, ESD Public Affairs Director**
 - ESD’s goal and approach is to engage with the right people at the right time
 - We intend to use our partnerships to help get critical and important information out broadly.
 - What tools do they need to get the information out at the right time? We are actively engaging our partners to help answer this.
 - We want to create a more service delivery environment
 - Equitable access is at the center of our approach. We keep this in the forefront when strategizing about communications.
 - Questions we need to answer:
 - How do we engage you (advisory committee) around Communications?
 - What are the major strategies of PFML and how do we engage with all of you?
 - What are the communications channels and how do we get people engaged?
 - Looking to you (Advisory Committee) to amplify messages

Feedback from the committee:

- Identify where the gaps are to amplify the work, amplify messages to reach out to members
- Accessibility; Committee members see the department is continuing to make progress in this area but there is still much work to be done. There is still a lack of transparency for customers in departments processes.
- Mass communication is critical
- Consistency (messages) and transparency is critical
- Language access across agency is a critical need. The committee recognizes and appreciates the program's efforts and commitment to continued improvement in this area.
- There is a lack of clarity around the ability in taking leave and how it interplays with FMLA
Communication meetings, like some members of the committee and their communications staff used to have with the program's communications staff, are needed for collaboration. Nick committed to come and talk to a larger strategic level
- What mechanisms and processes are in place to solicit businesses?
- ESD commitment: We value and solicit feedback and we will act on it. We conduct customer interviews, surveys, and usability studies frequently. Recently did a survey on phone tree redesign options to incorporate WA Cares Fund, and did one-on-one interviews and usability testing with employers and TPAs on premiums and wage reporting functionality as we work to build out WA Cares Fund.

➤ **Employer compliance**

- Reasons for compliance are to:
 - Ensure employers are following state laws, regulations, and policies
 - Ensure the program trust is maintained and protected
 - Ensure all premiums are withheld correctly and remitted accurately
 - Allow for the detection of error trends and identifies potential training needs
- We work with employer on:
 - Consulting – conference and conciliation efforts, Voluntary Plan applications & renewals, education
 - Assurance - auditing
 - Partners – employer investigations (damages) and appeals
- Current employer compliance work:
 - Conference and conciliation, working with Employers on either missing or incomplete wage reports, missing premiums, or unreconciled accounts
 - Audits Includes general employer audits for compliance with PFML requires as well as Specific Voluntary plan employer audits to make sure they are complying with wage reporting and premium collection and also paying benefits correctly under their voluntary plan.
 - Referrals and complaints.
 - We get referrals from our specialists as they are working benefit applications and providing customer service.
 - We also get formal complaints filed by employees against their employers.
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- CBA provisions/verification process – We have a fact-finding process in place as it relates to benefit applications where we fact find with both the Employee and Employer for the relevant information and then make a determination on benefits.

Question from the committee:

Do the determination letters include the reason someone is denied? Answer: Yes, every determination letter has a reason why they were denied.

➤ **Operations Hiring to respond to customer needs**

- Our need for additional hires is to:
 - Keep up with application volume and projected volume
 - Improve customer service
 - Increase our support function and add required staffing
- Presented the hiring numbers for the last few months, which was mostly focused on filling vacant positions and hiring resulting from the last legislative session.
- Future hiring:
 - We will be adding staff to our customer service functions over the next few months. This includes both PFML specialist positions and some new customer service positions. Presented on an overview of these positions.
 - Adding the new CSS2 positions to help improve basic customer service, including phones and emails (help improve customer times)
 - Goals: Improve our phone service by adding more staff to try and answer all call that come into the queue and see how it improves phone metrics and we will continue to monitor and try and improve
 - Secure messaging went live this week which we think will improve customer service and reduce the need to call.
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 - Additional staffing in our support and compliance functions as well.
- Contingency plans in place for staff loss as a result of vaccine mandate.

➤ **1073 & 5097**

- 5097 - Expansion of family member (44 claims have been approved)
- 1073 – 468 approved claims approved, 1.5 million dollars going out

October agenda items

Agenda topics:

1. Upcoming Legislative session
2. Rates discussion (authority under statute)
3. Family bonding category data (balance on medical/family)
4. Ombuds Report

Open comment and adjourn

Next Meeting: Thursday, October 21 @ 9:00 am | This meeting will be held via ZOOM only