

Workers' Compensation Advisory Committee (WCAC) Meeting

Labor and Industries, Tumwater, WA

Meeting Notes

June 25, 2024

Hybrid: L&I HQ Auditorium and Zoom

Business Representatives:

Bob Battles, Association of Washington Business

Sheri Call, Washington Trucking Association

Jon DeVaney, Washington State Tree Fruit Association

Kelli Early, ESD113

Labor Representatives:

Joe Kendo, Washington State Labor Council

AJ Johnson, Washington State Council of Firefighters

Mark Riker, Washington State Labor Council

Brenda Wiest, Teamsters Local 117

Labor and Industries:

Joel Sacks, Director

Mike Ratko, Assistant Director for Insurance Services

Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals (BIIA):

Holly Kessler, Chair

Court Reporter:

Mary Fratella, Capitol Pacific Reporting

Recorder:

Cristina Gaffoglio

Guests: Aimee Borrego, Alicia Milani, Amanda Worrell, Amy Rhodes, Amy Updike, Amy Earley, Brenda Heilman, Cameron Van Dyck, Candice Bock, Carolyn Logue, Celia Nightingale, Cherell Fisher, Cheri Ward, Cherie Wagaman, Colleen Seed, James Cranall, Daniel Peveto, Darryl Vaughan, David Kennerud, Gary Franklin, Jen Chatwood, Jessica Gallardo, Jessica Nau, Ji Young Nam, John Meier, Herbert Atienza, Ian Payne, Jeanine Keeseey, Jeff Gosda, Jennifer Chatwood, Jennifer Jute, Jennifer Marcum, Jessica Gallardo, Jessica Nau, Joshua Ligosky, Julie Black, Kathy Petruzzelli, Kaylynn Wollen, Kaethe Long, Kim Wallace, Kristen McCoy, Kim Hurley, Kirsta Glenn, LaNae Lien, Lauren Gubbe, Leigh Haley, Lynda Ducharme, Maggie Leland, Maria McClain, Mark Phillips, Matt Doumitt, Matt Ross, Michael Harris, Morgan Harris, Niki Brent, Rachel Hamar, Regine Neiders, Rose Gundersen, Ryan Guppy, SanJeev Batta, Sarah Fishback-Duran, Sarah Jackson, Suzyn Daniel, Tammie Hetrick, Tammy Fellin, Thomas Feller, Wyndi Herrera, Xenophon Moniodis, Kris Tefft, Christine Brewer, Tim Church, Lloyd Brooks, Tiffany Loescher

Welcome and Introduction: Mike Ratko

The meeting began with a brief overview of the agenda and introductions of the committee members.

Mr. Ratko moved to approve the minutes from the March 28, 2024 meeting. There was no opposition to the motion. The minutes were approved.

Mr. Ratko introduced Xenofon Moniodis, Communications Consultant for Public Affairs, who presented the safety message.

General Updates: Mike Ratko, Karen Jost, Brenda Heilman, Amy Rhodes

Karen Jost gave a brief update on the pharmacy point-of-sale system. Explaining that after a two-month delay in billing, due to a cyber-attack on the 3rd party vendor's side, the system is back up and running. Currently, efforts are on their way to reimbursing workers for their prescriptions and having pharmacies issue their bills directly to the agency. If a worker is due for a reimbursement they can call or email the pharmacy provider hotline to get an update on their account.

Mr. Ratko gave an update on the Workers Compensation Systems Modernization project.

Ms. Heilman talked through slides 10-12, updating the audience that business, labor, and medical stakeholders were invited to listening sessions in May regarding Independent Medical Exam (IME) Recording. Also, informing the audience that the number of exams requested has been declining in the past few years as a result of prior legislation.

Mr. Ratko introduced Amy Rhodes who gave an update on the Vocational Provider Summit.

Ms. Rhodes explained how the Summit, which featured interactive discussions, engaging speakers, and case studies focused on overcoming barriers and maximizing opportunities in vocational recovery.

In the last part of the General Updates, Mr. Ratko showed a chart showing the increase in the staffing levels for Workers' Compensation Adjudicator employees.

Legislative implementation/status of agency request: Brenda Heilman

Ms. Heilman talked through slide 16 with updates on the three Workers' Compensation bills that were passed during the legislative session and two Proviso Funding bills.

PTSD Subcommittee/Updated data: Brenda Heilman and Dr. Jennifer Jutte

Ms. Heilman and Dr. Jutte talked through slides 18-34. Ms. Heilman explained that the purpose of the subcommittee is to review and advise the WCAC committee about best practices and policies for the prevention, treatment, Return to Work, and adjudication of post-traumatic stress disorder claims.

Brenda Wiest asked Dr. Jutte what the primary goal of the subcommittee is going forward regarding costs and how the provider network can keep up with the high demand for PTSD claims.

Dr. Jutte answered that the primary goal is to enhance the care and the delivery of that care to our injured workers in a worker-centric manner so that they can convalesce, return to work, and return to their communities. In addition, the goal is to identify gaps in our workers' compensation system in WA State and improve the access and quality of care for injured workers.

Ms. Heilman added that in 2023 a bill passed for psychologists to be attending providers on mental health only claims beginning July, 2025 and we're gearing up before that. So with the access to care issues, we hope to have more attending providers in our system and provide training to support them in that role.

Board of Industrial Insurance (BIIA) Update: Holly Kessler

Mr. Ratko introduced Holly Kessler, Chair for the Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals, who talked through slides 34-37.

Updates on the Centers of Occupational Health and Education (COHE): Morgan Wear

Mr. Wear talked through slides 38-56 explaining that the efforts of COHE is to collaborate with key stakeholders to co-design a health solution to prevent long-term disabilities. They are focused on assisting healthcare systems to best help injured workers in recovery.

Jon DeVaney asked Mr. Wear as COHE grows if the resources will remain adequate to have the same positive outcomes. Mr. Wear explained that they require a staffing ratio so that HSC's do not get overwhelmed with too many claims.

Operational Health Dashboard: Mike Ratko

Mr. Ratko presented the Operational Health Dashboard, slides 57-69.

Mr. DeVaney asked if there were any updates on the turnaround time between a position becoming vacant and getting filled, and is that changing over time. Mr. Ratko answered that it's

around a 45-day turnaround, but they are actively working with Human Resources to continue to streamline the process.

Industrial Insurance State Fund Financial Overview: Kim Hurley

Mr. Ratko introduced Kim Hurley, interim Chief Accounting Officer for Financial Services, who talked through slides 70-84, which provided the financial results for the fiscal year 2024 (July 2023– December 2023).

Closing Comments & Adjourn: Mike Ratko and Joel Sacks

Mr. Ratko and Mr. Sacks wanted to publicly thank Cheri Ward, who is retiring from being the Chief of Claims, for being such a hardworking and compassionate employee.

The recruitment process is underway, and the new Chief of Claims will be announced at the next meeting.

Mr. Ratko asked the committee to send him any topic ideas so they can be incorporated into future agendas.

Mr. Ratko thanked the presenters for their time and effort putting together their presentations. Meeting adjourned.