

Retro Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting

Labor and Industries, Tumwater, WA

Meeting Minutes

10/31/2024

Virtual (Zoom)

Trade Association Representatives:

Lauren Gubbe, Associated General Contractors

Victoria Montrose, Washington Hospitality Association

Tim Lundin, Archbright

Maria McClain, Association of Washington Business

Rose Gundersen, Washington Retail Association

Individual Firm Representatives:

Tom Walrath, T.E. Walrath Trucking, Inc.

John Cichosz, DJ's Electrical

Labor and Industries:

Jessica Nau, Retrospective Rating Program Manager, *Committee Chair*

Court Reporter:

Sue Garcia, Capitol Pacific Reporting

Recorder:

Melissa Morales (*present*)

Guests: Abigail Potter, Alicia Milani, Alicia Sanchez, Amber Fillmore, Amy Fregia, Andy Nicholas, Andy Shelton, Ashtyn Baker, Bambi Sotak, Ben Bower, Beth Hurley, Bill Vasek, Bobbie Hanna, Brandon Dion, Brian Ducey, Casey Sparber, Cherell Fisher, Chris Ristine, Cindy Kropp, Collin Head, Dan Beaty, Dan Plunkett, Debra Brown, Dee Millard, Diane Doherty, Dominique Damian, Emily Gillis, Eric Wood, Greg Kabacy, Herbert Atienza, Ian Payne, Jeaneil Brown, Jeanine Keeseey, Jenn Kavanaugh, Jennifer Aldrich, Jessica Bass, Joseph Conner, Joshua Ligosky, Julie Black, Julie Osterberg, Karen Jost, Ken Smith, Kevin McDaniel, Kevin Neubauer, Kirsta Glenn, Kirsten Todd, Kris Johnson, Krista Main, Lisa Sullivan, Lori Gruber, Lynda Ducharme, Makkena Lauer, Maria McClain, Mark Marinig, Matt Tafoya, Megan Bjornberg, Melissa Morales, Melissa Shannon, Michelle O'Brien, Mike Williams, Nichole Runnels, Rachelle Bohler, Rondi Thorp, Ruark Bohonos, Ryan Moore, Sarah Fishback, Sarah Jackson, Sarah Wheeler, Shannon Elliott, Sheila Parker, Si Sarton, Stacie Neiswanger, Tara Withrow, Trish Guadagnoli, Vanessa Hughes

Welcome and Introductions: Jessica Nau

The meeting began with Ms. Nau asking for committee members introductions and reviewing the agenda.

Safety Message: Bobbie Hanna

Ms. Hanna presented slides 5-9.

Due to the chances of a child being hit by a car on Halloween night doubling, **Ms. Hanna shared** a reminder for both parents and children to wear reflective gear or carry a flashlight while motorists should watch more carefully for small children and enter/exit more slowly. **Ms. Hanna warned** of intoxicated drivers as well as asking inexperienced drivers to stay off the roads.

Ms. Nau announced Kirsta Glenn's replacement of Brenda Heilman as the new Deputy Assistant Director.

Legislative Updates: Kirsta Glenn

Ms. Glenn presented slides 10-12.

In regards to House Bill (HB) 1197 from the 2023 legislation session about adding psychologists as attending providers, **Ms. Glenn stated** that the project team is working on business processes, rulemaking and provider readiness including outreach and training with an effective date of July 2025.

Ms. Glenn continued to discuss HB 1927 that reduces the number of days that a worker's temporary disability must continue to receive industrial insurance compensation on the date of injury as well as a three-day period following injury with completion of system edits, resources being up to date, and staff being fully trained.

As for HB 2127 concerning return to work incentives, **Ms. Glenn shared**, the increase in payments for employers as well as a new funding stream to pay for skill-enhancement training – with equipment and software provided for adult basic education and “English as a second language” course - is set to begin January 1, 2025 for any worker who has qualifying vocational referral.

Ms. Glenn discussed HB 2382 that covers death benefits for transportation network companies where there is not a lot of details yet, as the report is not due until July 2029.

As for the two proviso fundings, **Ms. Glenn continued**, one was \$200,000 to set up a new light-duty offer complaint process and report is due to legislature in June 2025 while the other is a \$400,000 contract to assess PTSD workers' comp policies and claims with work set to start in early November.

Ms. Glenn moved on to the four 2025 legislation request topics including the aforementioned light-duty complaint office and a vocational reemployment pilot to help workers return to work when they cannot medically return to their previously held job that will run from 2027 to 2030.

Maria McClain asked via Zoom chat “How is this different than the help they receive now?” **Ms. Glenn explained** that, similar to Option 2 but with additional services available, this pilot would be available prior to the determination if they were eligible for the formal employer-based retraining benefit.

Ms. Glenn continued on to the third legislation request topic regarding labor law enforcement whereas L&I is listed as a limited enforcement agency while also not granting new enforcement authority to help inspectors gain access where they were previously denied.

Ms. Glenn finished the final topic that would update Title 49 to standardize the administrative processes so that wage and hour enforcement will be done under the same statutes for consistency.

Ms. Glenn presented the six proposed decision packages beginning with the continuation of modernizing the workers-comp system, reducing caseloads through additional claim management resources, adding additional staff due to an increase in workload requirements, maintaining service needs of the limited-English-proficiency customers, increase collections programming staff to maintain BLA workload, and new training of fire-resistant materials for certification.

Rose Gunderson shared her surprise of the light-duty complaint office being one of the requests considering her discussions with Tim (Lundin) about a legislative proposal that the complaints office has not serviced from the four different proposals discussed with the business community. **Ms. Glenn responded** that Brenda Heilman could go into more detail for Rose and would take it as feedback but that to her understanding, the request is a continuation of the office that was set up with proviso funding.

“Is LNI still 85% funded by premiums?” **Lauren Gubbe asked via Zoom chat.** **Ms. Glenn responded** via chat that according to the 2024 draft of Your Premium Dollars at Work, benefits paid are 79% of premium.

Maria McClain asked via chat, “Examples of Claims Management resources?” **Cherell Fisher shared** that the claims management resources are for additional claim managers and support staff.

Ms. Gubbe asked via Zoom chat “What is your target case load for claims managers?” Ms. Fisher answered that with the industry standard being around 150; they hope to achieve lower numbers than where they are which is currently around 235 for the average caseload.

WA Stay at Work (WSAW) Updates/Clarification: Michelle O’Brien

Ms. O’Brien presented slides 13-19.

Ms. O’Brien started by reminding everyone of the retirement of Lori Butterfield, the Stay at Work supervisor, that recruitment will begin in November with a start date of December 16th while Sandee Mills has been leading both her Outreach team as well as the Stay at Work team.

Ms. O’Brien shared an update on the backlog of reimbursements with the team currently working on July requests due to an increase in applications from 80 to 130-140 per week after a media campaign from 2 years ago increased employer participation. **Ms. O’Brien continued** that they have since hired a project manager and business analyst as well as started working with the internal-audit program to streamline their processes.

Ms. O'Brien showed the adjudicators' process of requesting information and following up with the employer as long and complicated. **Ms. O'Brien shared** that starting in December, the plan is to start a pilot to process the backlog of paperwork by the intake specialists and volunteers from other programs to bring a more finished package to the adjudicators for review.

"Expect technology improvement for apps?" **Maria McClain asked via Zoom chat.** In regards to the E-Stay system customers use to submit their applications, **Ms. O'Brien answered**, they have several service requests in and much of the technology side will soon be addressed as a WCA was promoted that has heard and experienced all the challenges the program faces. Currently being implemented by developers, **Ms. O'Brien continued** on to Senate House Bill 2127 and the ability to contact third party representatives for input on usability early next year.

Ms. O'Brien shared the hybrid public hearing for Substitute House Bill 2127 scheduled for November 12th at 10:00 AM at the LNI Tumwater office and welcomes the public for both oral and written testimonies until COB that day. **Ms. O'Brien continued** about the new increased incentives for wages, expenses, tools, clothes and training for all claims with a date of injury of 1/1/25 or after that will be implemented with some internal and external process and programming changes to ease administrative strain.

Ms. O'Brien presented the 2025 proposed rate hearing dates with a hybrid meeting held on October 28th, an in-person meeting being held on October 29th in Spokane, WA and the final rates to be adopted on November 26, 2024. **Ms. O'Brien continued** to share that over 225,000 notices will be sent out on December 6, 2024 – all details can be found on the LNI website and your account manager can provide ERCs for individual employers.

Lauren Gubbe asked via Zoom chat "Do you know if the Department has ever subsidized other risk classes besides what is proposed this year as a subsidization of rate increase for firefighters due to the increase in PTSD pensions valued up to 3 to 4 million each? It is a concern and unprecedented approach to our knowledge. The concern also is other risk classes coming forward in future for this?... and as other risk classes have absorbed their own higher risk classes all along... it would be a deviation from experience rating". **Ms. O'Brien replied** that Jo Anne Attwood is checking with the actuaries to be sure they are not missing of the risk classifications and will get back to Lauren at a later date with that information.

Bill Vasek added that for rate stability, it is common Department practice to cap increases for risk classes with a plus or minus 25% rate cap above the overall rate increase with the Director of LNI implementing a 15% cap if it is due to an internal change or new law.

Rose Gunderson shared via Zoom chat "I'm going to share my main point at the rate hearing - transparency as to the extent of subsidization for any risk classes would be appreciated." **Ms. Gunderson added** to her inquiry that the equity in the contingency fund is funded by employer and worker contributions so if some receive more subsidies than others do, there should be some transparency on where the equity is going much like there was with the supplemental pensions equitable structure chart.

Ms. Gunderson asked if the 15% decrease in (risk class rate cap) substitution was completed and when did the director of LNI, Joel Sacks, make that decision?

Lauren Gubbe replied via Zoom chat “The concern is there is no end in sight for PTSD pensions in other words, these will increase. These are expanding to other industries...” **and asked** “Can we get prior examples...it just helps with our understanding”. **Mr. Vasek shared** that he was unsure of the exact date but has been implemented for some time now and will provide the date and some examples to Ms. Gunderson and Ms. Gubbe after the meeting.

Light Duty Complaint Resolution Office: Cherell Fisher

Ms. Fisher began with the benefits of light-duty work for both workers and employers, however, some jobs that are offered are considered unfair or not valid by the worker. **Ms. Fisher continued** that the legislature approved proviso funding for a complaint-resolution office, available September 3, 2024 – June 30, 2025, that is resolving transitional and permanent job offer disagreements for both state fund and self-insurance claims. **Ms. Fisher shared** that the legislative report showing the volume of complaints, resolutions outcomes, and trends will be submitted June 30, 2025.

Ms. Fisher presented the current stats of the new complaint-resolution office with 34 of 54 state-funded complaints completed and of the 34 completed, 14 were found valid and 20 were found not valid. As of October 28, 2024, **Ms. Fisher shared** that four self-insurance complaints have been received and are in process but do take longer due to wait times on receiving files from the employer.

“Examples of why they may not be valid?” **Ms. McClain asked via Zoom chat.** **Ms. Fisher provided** reasons for jobs being not valid as being outside the worker’s restrictions or the AP did not approve the job duties, unreasonable commute or start date, uncommunicated offers and unavailable jobs, work shift change, or the job not being at the employer’s place of business.

Ms. Fisher continued on to the guidelines being used for the new complaint-resolution office such as RCW 51.32.090, INTERIM POLICY 5.15 which covers adjudicating transitional job offers and eligibility for time-loss compensation and loss of earning power benefits; INTERIM Policy 6.50 which covers determining the validity of a job offered by the employer of record; and INTERIM Policy 5.18 which covers adjudicating eligibility for compensation benefits or valid job offers after plan development eligibility has been determined.

Ms. McClain asked via Zoom chat, “These are determined by claim adjudicators, correct? Are any of these complaints coming from Claimant Attorneys?” **Ms. Fisher answered** that yes claim adjudicators determine the guidelines and that they have received some complaints and assume they are from the attorneys assigned to the claims. **Ms. Fisher shared** that these complaints are staffed with an SME group, a claims legal representative, a representative from the dispute-resolution office, a vocational-services specialist and expert adjudicators.

Chris Ristine asked via Zoom chat “Will claim managers still be making an initial determination on job offer validity? If so, if a claim manager determines a job offer is not valid, do employers and/or their representatives, as a customer of the Department; have the ability to request a review by the light duty office reviewers?” **Ms. Fisher responded** that every complaint with a job offer would automatically go through the light-duty complaint resolution office when there is an issue.

“What is the reason why LNI is wanting to make this perm?” **Ms. McClain asked via Zoom chat.** Ms. Fisher replied that the stakeholders appreciate the light-duty resolution office and believe there is a benefit to it.

Ms. Gunderson asked via Zoom chat “Does every decision come with an explanation such as the factors considered in “unreasonable” commute or “unmeaningful?” Ms. Fisher answered that yes, for every decision, there is a letter sent and a RLOG created in the claim log that explains the reason for the decision and the office also takes calls for any further explanation.

Ms. Gunderson referred to Maria’s question about making the office permanent due to stakeholder benefit and asked which stakeholders from the business community Kirsta Glenn was referring to that were a part of the decision packet process, as she had not heard of the proposal to continue the office before today. **Ms. Gunderson also asked** for clarification on the stakeholding process. **Ms. Fisher responded** that it was more of a Department belief that the stakeholders would appreciate the benefits of the office based on the conversations in the beginning when the office was forming and receiving proviso funding.

Ms. Gunderson asked to confirm that it was indeed L&I internal staff that believed it was a good thing to continue and there was no stakeholding that took place. **Ms. Fisher confirmed** this to be true and that claims staff appreciate it with their high caseloads and being able to depend on the office to resolve referrals.

Rondi Thorp, WSAJ Committee Chair, added that she has provided input in full support because she believed it is important to the injured workers due to an abuse of some light-duty job offers being invalid in the past. **Ms. Gunderson shared** her confusion on if a stakeholding process did in fact exist and if so, why the business community was not involved.

Ms. Nau captured Ms. Gunderson’s concerns and shared that she would be happy to bring it back to discuss at a future meeting.

Ms. Fisher continued that there was talks with the stakeholders in small groups where Rose was involved in one meeting with Brenda Heilman and her that covered the details of the office but did not cover the funding of the office past June 30th.

Ms. Gubbe added that she was also not included in the stakeholding process.

Jenn Kavanaugh, BIAW, asked via Zoom chat “Are the letters issued by the light duty complaint office appealable?”

“Is there an effective date for these reviews, i.e., if the office was implemented effective on or about 9/3/2024, are they able to look at job offers issued prior to that date?” **Chris Ristine asked via Zoom chat.** **Ms. Fisher confirmed that** some reviews were issued prior to that date if it was close to the date and was unresolved.

“Can I assume your decision can be taken to the board if we disagree?” **Ms. McClain asked via Zoom chat.** **Ms. Fisher confirmed** that decision can be protested and appealed.

Megan Bjornberg asked via Zoom chat “What is considered a fairly short period of time?” Ms. Fisher answered that it is the goal to have each complaint resolved within 10 business days, if possible.

Ms. Bjornberg continued by asking via Zoom chat “What is considered a fairly short period of time regarding complaints received on JOs offered prior to the (light-duty resolution office) LDCRO being implemented?” **Ms. Fisher answered** that before the office was implemented, the claims managers were handling these complaints, so there is not much data available.

Beth Hurley referred to Ms. Bjornberg’s question via chat regarding what exactly is the short amount of time, prior to the office opening, that they would take complaints and also how they are looking at each one and making a judgement call based on the circumstances and where it is in the process. **Ms. Fisher inquired with Ms. Hurley** that the office took a view that the job offer had been issued at least 30 days prior to the office opening. **Ms. Hurley confirmed** that some complaints have some parts that date back to 2023 or before but most are from after the office opening date.

Mr. Ristine asked via Zoom chat “Will we be receiving updated statistics at each RAC meeting?” **Mike Williams, LNI responded** via Zoom chat that he would take this back as a topic for future RAC meetings.

Lauren Gubbe noted via Zoom chat “Good information, thanks so much. We would also like to see report when it is prepared for legislature.”

Rose Gunderson asked via Zoom chat, “Do complaints delay the (light-duty) LD start date?” **Ms. Fisher answered** that no the complaint should not delay the start date as the worker would start the job or a stop time loss is completed the day before the light-duty start date, if they’re requesting time off. **Ms. Fisher continued** that a new start date would be issued if the job offer was found not valid and the employer fixed what was causing the job offer to be not valid.

Mr. Ristine noted via Zoom chat “The only one we have had was in reference to a job offered back in April 2024, with no dispute indicated until late August 2024. We were told they did, however, never received a letter. I can send the details to you later. Thank you!” **Ms. Fisher stated** Mike would collect this one for now and get back to Mr. Ristine but was almost certain the office would take it.

“For future reports on this unit,” **Ms. Gunderson asked via Zoom chat**, “would you also share the data of how many of those complaints have an attorney?” Ms. Fisher shared that they can look into doing that.

Ms. Thorp asked via Zoom chat, “If a light duty job offer was not legal, ie, exceeded restrictions, not approved by the AP the worker should not have to start a light duty job.” **Ms. Fisher shared** that it is up to the worker to make that decision on if they start the light-duty job or not.

Ms. Gunderson asked for clarification on whether a complaint delays the beginning of the light-duty job offer providing an example of a complaint being filed today and a job is offered effective tomorrow, could the job still be stopped if found not valid. **Ms. Fisher confirmed** that they have not changed the process of stopping time loss but there is a more consistent and timely review of the decisions with no delay in start dates due to complaints from workers who have the responsibility of accepting the job or not.

Ms. McClain asked via Zoom chat “How is this communicated to the worker?” **Ms. Hurley answered** that they are not providing communication to the worker directly about the complaint received or reminding them of the firm start date, however, the claims managers are still their point of contact as well as their lawyer or employer for any concerns and questions.

Ms. McClain added “Will the office allow small employers to provide menial tasks if that is all they have to offer or will this be considered invalid? Some workers don't like these tasks, but doesn't mean they don't provide value or help the worker stay working. Thanks!” **via Zoom chat. Ms. Nau shared** that she would take these and all other questions concerning light-duty work and Ms. Fisher can respond at a later date.

Retro Trends: Bill Vasek

Mr. Vasek presented slides 26-72.

Mr. Vasek began by stating that these slides show a new accident year being added and one being taken off with consistent trends such as safety and claim frequency, time-loss duration, Stay at Work and KOS (Kept on Salary), 12 month active time-loss, TPD pension frequency and experience factor affecting Retro firms over a long period of time.

Showing a difference in fatalities claims frequencies between the non-Retro and Retro groups over 12 years, **Mr. Vasek shared** the data is divided by \$100M of premiums at 2024 rate levels and shows Retro had a 45% lower fatality claim frequency (average being 50%) in 10 out of 12 of the years.

Mr. Vasek showed a graph depicting very little change in the lost-time frequency – minus COVID claims – per million dollars of premiums at the 2024 rate levels and an experience factor of 1.0 from 2012 to 2023.

Lauren Gubbe asked via Zoom chat “If I am reading this correctly, premium in retro is now 34.5%?” Mr. Vasek confirmed that yes, the premium rate in Retro from 2020 to 2023 was 34.5%. Ms. Gubbe also added “We'd like to see 2019-2024 data for pensions. Thanks so much!”

Mr. Vasek continued to share the next graph that showed the Total Permanent Disability (TPD) pension frequency from 2012-2018 as decreasing and will eventually flatten out or increase due to more TPD pensions being allowed for the years after 2018.

“Do we have more recent year's pensions?” **Maria McClain asked via Zoom chat. Mr. Vasek confirmed** he did have more recent years and uses more mature years when more claim pensions were allowed, however, the median time to file a TPD pension is seven years making the credibility of the of the comparison not very good.

Jessica Nau added that there have been some requests for some analysis done on pensions with Mr. Vasek and his team, which is slated for the March 2025 RAC meeting, so any questions regarding this matter, can be directed to the Retro team. **Mike Williams added via Zoom chat** “We will also be covering more on pensions in our Q1 2025 RAC meeting.”

Mr. Vasek shared the reminder that lost-time claims emerge quickly but the median allowance of time for total permanent disability pensions is seven years from the date of injury hence why the recent years are not shown here.

Ms. Gunderson shared that she has been watching the WCAC long-term-disability chart and report and it has shown increases in the TPD and asked if this increase is due to what Mr. Vasek and his team are seeing in the long-term disability upward trend. **Mr. Vasek clarified** that the decline is really a distortion – could be flat or increasing – and that, even though it is easy to show for the entire department, the prediction for those accident years is hard to show Retro versus non-Retro.

Lauren Gubbe asked via Zoom chat “Given rates increase due to pensions this year; can you give us preliminary 2019-2024 data with the caveat it is not mature and will be updated?” **Mr. Vasek answered** that he did have the 2019-2024 data – a small number of claims, which make it not credible, however, he would get that data to her after the meeting.

Mr. Vasek continued on to time-loss duration trends – strongly influenced by the Stay at Work program and increased usage of KOS but also include partial days for LEP claims - where KOS claims are counted as lost-time claims in the denominator but do not generate any time loss.

Mr. Vasek shared a graph showing the Retro vs Non-Retro average time-loss capped at 16 years with a decrease due to reform in 2011 and an increase starting in 2018 and the difference remaining flat in the last few years.

Mr. Vasek shared a graph showing the Retro usage of the Stay at Work (SAW) program has increased by about 50% since 2016 listed by the year of the accident, not the year of payment of SAW.

Ms. McClain added via Zoom chat “Be interested to know if this is correlating with the IME legislative changes of recording. Increased time loss” **Mr. Vasek shared** that he does not think the KOS correlates with the IME legislation but that the increased time loss is a possibility due to IME legislation events that took place in 2018.

Ms. Gunderson shared that she heard a comment about the number of IME decreasing in recent years and would like to get some data. **Mr. Vasek confirmed** he had this data and would share with Ms. Gunderson.

Mr. Vasek shared another graph depicting the other major factor in the difference between Retro and Non-Retro time-loss duration as the increasing use of KOS on the non-Retro side. **Mr. Vasek showed that** the higher percentage of increase for the Retro side started in 2010 but starts to flatten out or decrease by 2023.

Mr. Vasek continued on to the graph showing the difference in experience factors for Retro vs Non-Retro with a trend of Retro firms having lower experience mod than non-Retro groups since 2017. **Mr. Vasek warns** the Retro group to avoid using only experience factor and loss ratio for their underwriting.

Ms. Gubbe shared that she believes that time-loss duration will increase due to delays in medical diagnosis/treatment and PPD (permanent partial disability) payments because ARNP (advanced registered nurse practitioner) and PAs (physician assistant) are being used as consultants since they are unable to complete an IME. Ms. Gubbe continued to share that the problem lies in that there is no

uniform criteria on claims to answer all the questions on the case so some forms have no actionable medical information or are scheduled with a non-MD-type specialist. Ms. Gubbe added that they have asked L&I to provide letters for the consultations with the proper IME-type questions, however, some MDs do not want to rate. PPD which causes delays in PPD payments of 11 months or more.

Ken Smith asked via Zoom chat “Has there been consideration for AMEs? Agreed medical evaluations(ors)? AMEs were used in California WC claims (many years ago).” Ms. Nau offered to take his question back to the Retro claims partners for answers to be shared at a later date.

RAC Workgroup Updates: Jessica Nau & Rachelle Bohler

Ms. Nau presented slides 73-76.

Ms. Nau shared that the common ownership workgroup is still in motion with a submitted proposal to the Department with the requested AG opinion received and being worked on internally with hopes for resolution by March 2025.

Ms. Bohler presented slides 77-78.

Ms. Bohler shared that the most recent version of the Business and Industry Category Guide was published to our website as of December 2023 with annual reviews scheduled for February and updates by April.

RAC Operational Updates: Jessica Nau & Rachelle Bohler

Ms. Bohler presented slides 79-82.

Ms. Bohler shared the enrollment team updates with July enrollment being a little behind than planned but all packets will be sent out by September 12th.

Ms. Bohler continued that for October enrollment, the tentative timeline shows the target completion date to be November 15th, however, the Enrollment team completed October enrollment on October 30th.

Ms. Bohler presented the Enrollment Outside Of Enrollment (EOOE) stats over the last six months with the 30-day timeframe for multiple requests not being met, however, they are back on track after July and October enrollment being completed and being fully staffed again.

Ms. Nau presented slides 83-87.

Ms. Nau announced Taja Blackhorn’s return to Retro from her yearlong DJA role.

Ms. Nau presented the July adjustment protest stats with 277 total claims reviewed – a very large increase over last year - 78 granted(28%), 108 denied(39%) and 91(33%) are still pending and a total of \$3,554,980 in total refund money.

Ms. Nau presented the October adjustment protest stats with 34 claims so far – 8 granted (24%), 11 denied (32%) and 15 pending (44%) – and a total of \$207,152 in refunds with more to review.

Ms. Nau shared the updates of the Retro and Employer Services merger that took place in May 2024, which has allowed Retro and Employer Services to better align processes and communication between departments while retaining tenured staff and provide promotional opportunities for Mike Williams and Rachelle Bohler to take over some of the day-to-day operational tasks.

Ms. Nau noted the opportunities for staff to cross-train with other programs – with the Stay at Work program already being helped by some Retro staff on application processing and reimbursement requests.

Ms. Nau continued to share how the Admin team is working on the strategic planning of priorities as a program and within each team as they continue to operate at a reduced-capacity state and allow for more work-life balance while finding ways to bridge the gap between Retro and Employer Services operational differences or overlapping processes.

Ms. Bohler provided a great example of cross-training by how some accounts are assigned a risk class that goes along with the Retro group you are assigned to, however, the employer never reports any hours in that specific risk class. **Ms. Bohler shared** that Retro will check with the AM and make sure the class was assigned for administrative purposes only and therefore, would not require the subaccount to enroll.

Ms. O'Brien seconded Jessica's sentiments for how well the merger is going and how proud she is of everyone pitching in to help with back logs and find and fix those gaps in the process together.

Many kudos and thank yous in the Zoom chat added here.

Meeting adjourned.