



Claudio Gualtieri
Chair

PCA Workforce Council Meeting July 23, 2024

Council Members in Attendance: Claudio Gualtieri (Chair), Office of Policy and Management (OPM); Kathy Flaherty, CT Legal Rights Project (CLRP); Eileen Healy, Independence Northwest; Nicholas Jerard, Department of Developmental Services (DDS); Michelle Johnson, Consumer Employer; Francis Sinish, Parent; Lucas Sundwall, Consumer Employer; Helen Taylor, Parent; Christine Weston, Department of Social Services (DSS)

Others in Attendance: Melissa Morton, OPM and Elyse Pearson, OPM

Called to order by Chair Claudio Gualtieri at 9:32 AM

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Gualtieri offered welcomed Council members and introduced the following new members. Michelle Johnson, Consumer-Employer and advocate, as appointed by Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff to represent the interests of consumers with developmental disabilities. Helen Taylor, a parent advocate, was appointed by House Speaker Matthew Ritter to represent the interests of consumers with developmental disabilities; I Nicholas Jerard, Chief Financial Officer, DDS, was appointed by DDS Commissioner Jordan Scheff to serve as the Commissioner's designee; and Christine Weston, Director, Community Options Unit at DSS, was appointed to serve as the DSS designee for DSS Commissioner Andrea Barton Reeves. e.

Mr. Gualtieri announced to members that his term as Chair of the PCA Workforce Council is coming to an end as of this meeting and that Christine Weston, DSS has been appointed by Governor Lamont to serve as Council Chair. Mr. Gualtieri shared that Ms. Weston has vast experience working on the implementation of community-based programs at DSS and was one of the staff involved in founding the Community First Choice (CFC) program at DSS. Mr. Gualtieri shared that in his experience working alongside Ms. Weston he has found her to be a true partner and champion for this work. Mr. Gualtieri expressed gratitude for having the opportunity to serve as Chairperson of the Council which allowed ho, to shape public policy and continue to delve into long-term services and supports and self-direction which is one of his passions.. Mr. Gualtieri expressed confidence in Ms. Weston's ability to assume this position and move the Council forward with great success, as she adds knowledge on the nuts and bolts of how to make the Council's work effective for both Consumer-Employers and Personal Care Attendant's (PCAs) who are so critical to the home care workforce.

Mr. Gualtieri acknowledged another Council member currently in transition starting with member, Eileen Healey. Ms. Healey's term saw the Council through two contract negotiations and the transition out of the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Healey's insight and calm demeanor were meaningful contributions to the Council. Ms. Healey expressed deep gratitude towards the Chair as well as Melissa Morton at OPM for her support and accessibility with navigating the Council and any other questions as they arise. Ms. Healey said that her time on the Council has been a great opportunity to learn and noted that the more you invest, the



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more you learn. Ms. Healey is preparing to retire in the next year and will devote her attention to preparing her organization for transition. She has truly appreciated her time on the Council.

2. Motion to Amend Order of the Agenda

Claudio Gualtieri asked for a motion to move the subcommittee reports to be immediately preceding “other business” and “public comments” to ensure the Council can get through priority items. Kathy Flaherty made a motion to move subcommittee reports to later in the agenda before “other business”. It was seconded by Nicholas Jerard. All in favor. Amended order of agenda items was adopted.

3. Approval of Minutes from April 23, 2024 Meeting

Kathy Flaherty made a motion to approve meeting minutes from April 23, 2024. Nicholas Jerard seconded the motion. No further discussion took place. All in favor. April 23, 2024 minutes are approved.

4. PCA Workforce Council Transition

Claudio Gualtieri provided a historical overview of OPMs involvement in the PCA Workforce Council sharing, since 2014, OPM has stepped in to provide a voice for trying to get the collective bargaining process for the PCA labor contract in order, establishing policy initiatives around collective bargaining, ensuring the collective bargaining agreement was resourced appropriately through coordination between OPM budget and the agencies responsible for the Medicaid programs, DSS and DDS. OPM also strove to ensure that all proposals put forward encouraged workforce participation and honored self-direction.

Mr. Gualtieri shared that the PCA Workforce is statutorily placed within in DSS, including all administrative and operational duties of the PCA Workforce Council. With the new three-year CBA in place, the transition to the new fiscal intermediary underway and Ms. Weston now in place as the Director of the Community Options Unit, it is the opportune time for the Council to transition to DSS and so that Ms. Weston can set the vision for how to support community options across Medicaid and state funded programs. Mr. Gualtieri explained that the daily operations of the Council will now fall under DSS. Since the agency holds the contract with the new FI they are already responsible for all grievance research, this transition simply allows for them to formally respond to grievances without having to go through OPM, creating efficiency. OPM will continue to provide lead negotiating functions through the Office of Labor Relations (OLR) when it is time to begin the next round of negotiations. The OPM team will continue to be available to DSS and DDS to provide guidance and assistance on negotiations by vetting proposals to raise any policy and budgetary considerations.

Melissa Morton provided additional information regarding OPM’s involvement and support with grievances and developing responses illuminating DSS’s role and responsibilities in this task and the benefit of transitioning the responsibility to them. Ms. Morton shared there will be little outward change in the grievance process other than, Ms. Weston will now sign the responses to the grievances as Chair of the Council. Ms. Morton reminded members that DSS already



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administers the contract with the 1199 Training and Upgrading Fund and serves as Co-Chair of the Training Fund subcommittee. Ms. Morton shared one outward change will Ms. Weston serving as Co-Chair of the Labor Management Committee now that she has assumed the role as Chair of the Workforce Council. Operations remain the same, only the chair changes.

5. Update on CBA Implementation and GTI Transition

Nick Jerard provided an update speaking on the first 90-day transition period to the new FI, GTI Independence (GTI). There are certain deliverables they focused on in the first 90-days and the post 90-day goal is to shift to more ongoing maintenance and process improvement work. Mr. Jerard acknowledged that there is still work to be done beyond this transition period, but there have also been many positive strides to note, including progress over the last month to better the system, and address the e various complaints and escalations that DSS, DDS and GTI have received.

Ms. Weston shared that DSS has been having several conversations with the GTI and has been staying on top of the concerns. One main priority has been ensuring the proper payments are being issued to PCAs. DSS is at a point where it is holding GTI and itself accountable and that concerns and complaints have been tracked and grouped by theme. This oversight methodology is helpful when mitigating concerns and issues as they arise. Ms. Weston expressed appreciation for the collaboration with DDS and the Department on Aging and Disability Service (ADS) while working through this transition.

Ms. Flaherty asked what the major themes in terms of the challenges are and whether there is anything the Council can do to help solve them. Ms. Weston shared there are some antiquated case management systems that are not connecting properly, staying on hold when onboarding a new hire, the portal hasn't been dynamic and useful as it could be (e.g., expanding utilization from dollars to hours to ensure proper usage.) User feedback and discussion has been instrumental in identifying and addressing issues regarding system usage such as, the need to create a functionality that converts a budget amount to the equivalent service hours. Ms. Weston expressed her appreciation to the Council for their continued feedback and encourages people to continue to share their concerns as it only contributes to improved communication and identification of needed improvements.

Ms. Weston also shared the Waterbury, Connecticut hub for GTI will assist with mitigating complaints. The FI is currently training and working with their Connecticut-based team to assist with receiving calls which should alleviate much of the confusion as calls from the users may currently be routed to GTI call centers throughout the country causing some confusion as out-of-state GTI employees may not understand the specifics of Connecticut's Medicaid program. Every state's Medicaid program is different.

Claudio Gualtieri shared that the responsibilities given to the new FI were enormous with a CBA that provided new benefits that had never been part of the prior FI contracts. Mr. Gualtieri emphasized the ability of GTI to complete tasks that the previous Fis were unable to accomplish years prior. Grievances, call times, and other areas continue to come down, at this time it would



be meaningful to continue to work with the FI as they make a concerted effort to make changes to address the concerns that are brought to them. Mr. Gualtieri encouraged space and time to allow the FI to continue to demonstrate their capabilities before making judgement about their work.

Eileen Healy asked how DSS is addressing concerns with GT Independence regarding its role in Money Follows the Person (MFP). Ms. Weston noted she is aware of this and requested discussion outside of this meeting to further explore the topic.

6. Subcommittee Reports

- a. Training Fund Committee: Melissa Morton informed members that the last meeting was cancelled and is in the process of being rescheduled. Ms. Morton shared a perennial issue with the new hire orientation has again been raised. 1199 Training and Upgrading Fund (TUF) trainers have reportedly been informing PCAs during new hire orientation what tasks they can and cannot do in terms of service provision to their Consumer-Employer. Ms. Morton immediately contacted Steve Bender and Christina Fitzpatrick from TUF and copied Diedre Murch at 1199, reminding them that Consumer-Employers are the employer of record and that they direct the activities of the worker. Ms. Morton requested of the following corrective action be taken by TUF: (1) contact the trainers and remind them consumers are the employer of record and that trainers should not be addressing what tasks PCAs can and cannot provide and to send a copy of the email to her, and (2) allow for Consumer-Employers which wish to share their experience to attend the next Training Fund Committee meeting. Christina Fitzpatrick provided a timely response and agreed that trainers should not be addressing job duties. She issued an email to her trainers and sent a copy of the email to Ms. Morton. TUF also agreed that Consumer-Employers wishing to share their stories may attend the next Fund Committee meeting. Christine Weston will inform subcommittee members of the reschedule date for the next meeting once set.
- b. Ms. Morton encouraged council members to join new hire orientations to audit. All meetings are virtual, and the Zoom login will be circulated the council as the Council should know how PCAs are being trained. Ms. Morton instructed to put WFC in the front of your name, we do have to announce we are participating as a member of the council, especially if you are on the training fund committee.
- c. Labor Management Committee: Ms. Morton shared there is work being done related to the GT Independence transition. Much of the discussion has been around paid time off (PTO) balances and dues collections including report transmittals and the omission of members from dues collection. Some PTO confusion may be caused by the fact that DDS has always had PTO and the PTO added as part of the collective bargaining agreement is a separate bucket in addition to the existing DDS PTO. PTO rates of pay are causing confusion for some who do not understand the PTO pay rate is a weighted average. Helen Taylor encouraged the Council and state agencies to share these updates via a newsletter, in an act of



- transparency to help consumers and families so that they are not dealing with the unknown. Knowing issues are identified and being worked on can go a long way in calming worry.
- d. New Member Orientation: Melissa. Morton shared that the PCA Workforce Council New Member Orientation was used to onboard members Michelle Johnson and Helen Taylor and with DSS staff to aid in the transition of the Council. Ms. Morton thanked the subcommittee for completing this valuable resource.
 - e. Bylaws Committee: Ms. Morton shared that the bylaws need to be revised to reflect the transition of the Council from OPM to DSS before it can go to a vote by the Council.

7. Other Business

There was new business presented at this time.

8. Public Comment

Maryann Colon a current PCA for family member, expressed concerns with GT Independence, including difficulty with payment, and clocking in and out of the app. Her family member requires 2:1 staffing and has difficulty tracking on the app and ensuring staff are clocking in while physically with the consumer. Maryann Colon expressed significant concern with this transition and stress over not being able to see when workers clock-in so that she can be assured her family member's needed supports have arrived.

Patty Ellis, PCA working for Mary -Ann Langton read a statement written by Ms. Langton stating her concerns about the PCA New Hire Orientation provided by TUF. She shared that a former PCA refused to complete needed tasks that were outlined in the job description when she was hired after the PCA attended the new hire orientation. The worker told Ms. Langton that the trainer said he did not have to perform those duties. Ms. Langton requested review of the PCA new hire orientation and appreciated the proactive support from Ms. Morton. Ms. Langton encouraged the Council to review the New Hire Orientation to ensure employees are being trained appropriately.

Helen Taylor, speaking as a member of the public, raised concerns with virtual support and socialization and if GTI could be allowed to provide payment for this remote support.

Sheila Mulvey expressed disappointment that the new hire orientation is presenting similar problems as when she was a member of the Council. As a former member she has experienced these same conversations and issues and the Council worked very hard to alleviate them. She has suggested for years that the union switch off with the Council so that they do not present first at every orientation. They set an unhelpful tone. Also, still finding with her new staff that after orientation the PCAs have little understanding who their employer is, and think is GTI or the State and it continues to present challenges to the people who are the employers of record.



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Elaine Kolb shared regards to those leaving the Council and reminded members that this year marks the 34th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and encourages unity regarding advocacy. She noted she demonstrated and was arrested to get its passage and engaged members in a song of unity.

Cathy Ludlum expressed her support with others as there is confusion at times and reiterated the need to clarify who are the employers. Ms. Ludlum also echoed the need to provide written communication on various topics to Consumer-Employers to provide clarification.

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Nicholas Jerard and seconded by Eileen Healy. The meeting adjourned at 10:43 AM.

Full meeting recoding can be accessed here:

<https://youtu.be/1nI3dA6CYRE>