



Claudio Gualtieri
Chair

PCA Workforce Council Meeting October 24, 2023

Council Members in Attendance: Claudio Gualtieri (Chair), Office of Policy and Management (OPM); Kathy Flaherty, CT Legal Rights Project (CLRP); William Halsey, Department of Social Services (DSS); Denise Paladino, Department of Developmental Services (DDS); Adam Prizio, Office of the Health Care Advocate (OHA); Margaret Shugrue, Parent; Fran Sinish, Parent

Others in Attendance: Rob Lewis, GT Independence, Melissa Morton, OPM, and Heather Ferguson-Hull, OPM (Council staff)

Call to order by Chair Claudio Gualtieri at 9:33 AM

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Gualtieri welcomed members and noted that Council meetings are recorded and posted on the Council's website.

2. Approval of Minutes from July 25, 2023 Meeting

Mr. Gualtieri asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Adam Prizio made the motion and Fran Sinish seconded. Mr. Gualtieri called for a voice vote. All in favor. The July minutes were approved.

3. Vote on 2024 Meeting Schedule

Mr. Gualtieri asked for a motion to approve the 2024 Workforce Council meeting schedule. He noted that the Council has historically met on the fourth Tuesdays of January, April, July, and October from 9:30-11:30 AM. He proposed that the Council maintain that meeting cadence going forward, and continue to hold the meetings via Teams, absent any objections. Kathy Flaherty made a motion to approve the 2024 meeting schedule. Bill Halsey seconded. Mr. Gualtieri called for a voice vote. All in favor. The 2024 meeting schedule was adopted.

4. Subcommittee Reports

a. Training Fund

Bill Halsey, Co-Chair of the Training Fund Committee, shared that DSS' meetings with the Training and Upgrading Fund (TUF) have been productive. They have committed to an increased meeting frequency, and are currently working on the amending DSS's contract with TUF. Mr. Halsey stated that they are developing a routine process for approving tuition reimbursements, including creating a list of pre-approved courses. He added that there have been very few denials of tuition reimbursement requests, no appeals of those denials, and that DSS expects to make payments to approved PCAs by April 2024, well before the end of the state fiscal year.



b. Labor Management

Mr. Gualtieri, Co-Chair of the Labor Management Committee (LMC) along with Diedre Murch, 1199, shared that although the LMC has historically not met while Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) negotiations are ongoing, the LMC recently met and quarterly meetings are being scheduled for 2024. He stated that it is beneficial for the Union and the Council to troubleshoot operational issues and to find synergistic opportunities in support of shared goals for self-directed services. Mr. Gualtieri also said that the Co-Chair structure will function similarly to other committees and councils, in that the Co-Chairs will alternate the running the meetings. He added that, in adhering to the CBA, the LMC members will receive the agenda seven days in advance, to ensure that the right people are in attendance, and that the meeting time is most productive. LMC members will receive calendar holds once the meeting dates are confirmed.

5. Update on Fiscal Intermediary (FI) Transition

Mr. Halsey shared that the transition to the new FI, GT Independence, is underway, and there is activity on many fronts. He stated that a formal announcement letter will be sent to Consumer-Employers and PCAs soon. He also said that they are actively engaging PCAs and Medicaid members in the transition process. Mr. Halsey noted that GT Independence is well-prepared for this transition, and that although it is a massive project, he is hopeful it will go well. Mr. Halsey said that there will be a pilot group to serve as beta testers who will be transitioned to GT independence in December. He introduced Rob Lewis, the National Director of Business Development for GT Independence.

Mr. Lewis said that he is excited to start the transition to GT Independence. He shared that 50 people will participate in the December pilot, to ensure that all relevant information, such as members' budgets and service authorizations, is linked accurately in their system. The goal of the pilot is to work out any kinks that there may be. Mr. Lewis added that starting in December, new consumers will be onboarded with GT Independence, so that they do not start with one of the current FIs, only to transition to GT Independence shortly thereafter. Mr. Lewis said that the transition for all program participants will occur over a three-month period, and the current deadline for GT Independence to fully take over FI duties is March 24, 2024. He shared that people will be given multiple ways to enroll, and the enrollment process will be similar to that of the previous FIs. Mr. Lewis said that GT Independence has experience with transitioning consumers and PCAs from one FI to their service and expects that CT PCAs will not experience any delays in payment.

Mr. Lewis stated that the goal of GT Independence is to remove barriers to self-directed services, and to that end, their technology is intuitive and easy to use. He said that they will be holding town halls and webinars to assist people with the transition, and that they want to be a collaborative partner with stakeholders. He added that the goal is to work with the State to ensure any data that is needed will be available. Mr. Halsey noted that GT Independence has agreed to attend other public meetings, such as meetings of the Long-Term Services and Supports Rebalancing Steering Committee, the Community First Choice Committee, and the



November meeting of the Medical Assistance Program Oversight Council (MAPOC). It was also noted that there will be a “meet and greet” with the beta testers.

Denise Paladino shared that the Workers’ Compensation policies that were purchased by Sunset Shores and Allied on behalf of Consumer-Employers will be transferred to GT Independence, as the current policies end on December 31, 2023. New enrollees will be on GT Independence’s Workers’ Compensation policy from the start of their participation in the PCA program. Ms. Paladino also said that DDS staff has been working with GTI Independence’s Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) system, and that they are very excited about it, as well as the GT Independence portal.

Mr. Gualtieri expressed his appreciation for GT Independence and shared that the Council is deeply invested in this partnership. He offered to attend MAPOC with GT Independence and also shared his optimism for timely payment to PCAs and reduced telephone wait times. Mr. Halsey noted that they have been honest with GT Independence in that there is a lot of work to do in this space, and that they hope to earn trust with the Union.

Ms. Morton asked if GT Independence will continue to use People’s Bank for payroll. Mr. Lewis replied that they use Key Bank, and that there is also an option for a no-fee payroll debit card that can be instantly loaded when needed. He added that in any circumstance in which a GT Independence payroll error results in a PCA incurring bank fees, that GT Independence reimburses the PCA for those fees.

6. Update on Labor Negotiations

Mr. Gualtieri said that agreement on a new contract has not yet been reached. He shared that the Council has put forward a fair proposal that accounts for the needs of Consumer-Employers and PCAs, and that honoring the principles of self-direction continues to serve as the Council’s North Star. Mr. Gualtieri noted that the Continuing Agreement is in place, which ensures there are no gaps in service and funding for PCA training. Mr. Gualtieri highlighted the current fiscal realities, including that mid-term budget adjustments will be made in the 2024 legislative session, and that there is less than \$11M remaining under the budget cap. He added that the legislature re-affirmed its commitment to the fiscal guardrails and to bond holders. Although the state has had short-term surpluses, the out-year deficits will make for a challenging legislative session.

7. Membership

Mr. Gualtieri stated that there are currently three vacancies on the Workforce Council, and he shared the requirements for each appointment and the name and title of the corresponding appointing authority. Mr. Gualtieri asked Council members to assist with outreach to identify other possible candidates, and to identify groups or organizations that may have names to suggest. Council members brainstormed some possible names of people and organizations, and Mr. Gualtieri asked Council members to send names of people who may be interested in being considered for nomination to Ms. Ferguson-Hull.



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Mr. Gualtieri also updated the Council on the status of the New Member Orientation packet, and he invited members to email testimony about their experience on the Council to Ms. Ferguson-Hull for inclusion in the packet. He said that he hopes that the Council can finalize approval for the New Member Orientation packet and Bylaws at the January 2024 Council meeting.

8. Other Business

No new topics were raised by Council members.

9. Public Comment

None offered.

10. Adjournment

Vote to Adjourn: Adam Prizio made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Bill Halsey seconded. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 10:12 AM.

Full meeting recording can be accessed here:

<https://youtu.be/PSKgq8dbhE8>