



Claudio Gualtieri
Chair

PCA Workforce Council Meeting July 25, 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); Eileen Healy, Independence Northwest; Denise Paladino, Department of Developmental Services (DDS); Adam Prizio, Office of the Health Care Advocate (OHA); Margaret Shugrue-Szymanski, Parent; Fran Sinish, Parent

Others in Attendance: Heidi Henaire, Department of Aging and Disability Services; Heather Ferguson-Hull, OPM (Council staff)

Call to order by Chair Claudio Gualtieri at 9:31 AM

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Gualtieri offered words of welcome and previewed the meeting agenda.

2. Approval of Minutes from April 25, 2023, Meeting

Mr. Gualtieri asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Fran Sinish made the motion. Kathy Flaherty seconded. Eileen Healy asked for clarification on the status of her attendance. After the meeting, Ms. Ferguson-Hull confirmed that she was not in attendance. Mr. Gualtieri called for a voice vote. All in favor. Ms. Healy abstained.

3. Subcommittee Reports

a. Training Fund

William Halsey, subcommittee chair, stated that DSS has been working with the Training Fund, and that Amendment 7 of the contract was finalized at the end of June. They are now working on Amendment 8. Mr. Halsey noted that they are meeting on a monthly basis, and they have established a more routine meeting cadence. He said that they are ensuring that DSS is compliant with the contract, and that they are ensuring there are no delays in reviewing courses that the Union has submitted for tuition reimbursement. Mr. Halsey shared that Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) classes are routinely approved and that other classes are being identified for pre-established approval.

Mr. Gualtieri shared his appreciation for Mr. Halsey's work, and the importance of ensuring that tuition-reimbursable courses are grounded in the CMS Core Competencies. Mr. Halsey thanked Denise Paladino for her partnership in this work.

b. New Member Orientation – Review of Draft Materials

Ms. Healy presented an overview of the draft orientation manual and thanked the subcommittee for the collaboration. She invited Council members to provide feedback during the meeting or follow up by email with additional comments.



Mr. Gualtieri shared that he had given feedback to Ms. Ferguson-Hull to share with the subcommittee. He stated that the manual will be beneficial to new Council members, as well as serve as an effective recruitment tool. Mr. Gualtieri said that he thought it would be useful for legislators with appointing authority, to assist them in identifying possible new members that would be a good fit for the Council. He noted that he found the section on commonly used acronyms to be particularly helpful, and he suggested that hyperlinks to additional information sources be added to each acronym. Mr. Gualtieri added that he likes the idea of adding a welcome letter from the Chair, and he encouraged current Council members to share written personal testimony about their experiences serving on the Council for inclusion in the manual. Ms. Healy and Ms. Ferguson-Hull shared their appreciation of the members of the subcommittee.

c. Bylaws

Ms. Flaherty thanked the Bylaws subcommittee for their team effort, and she shared that the draft bylaws are in the review process at OPM. She said she hopes that there will be a vote on the bylaws at the October 2023 Council meeting.

4. Update on CBA Implementation – Health Care Premium Assistance (HCPA)

Ms. Ferguson-Hull shared that this is a new benefit, that the first round of payments went out in March, and that there was a Stipulated Agreement to accept additional applications until April 7, 2023. She said that the deadline for the next round of applications is August 21, 2023, and HCPA payments will be made no later than September 16, 2023. She added that the Council sought feedback from multiple sources, including the Fiscal Intermediaries and Access Health CT (AHCT) to improve the communications and the process. Ms. Ferguson-Hull also thanked AHCT for their support including offering a one-time Special Enrollment Period to PCAs from March 15-May 15, 2023. AHCT continues to maintain a dedicated phone line for PCAs.

Ms. Healy asked how many PCAs had received HCPA payments, and Ms. Ferguson-Hull answered that there were 123 payments made.

Mr. Halsey said that the updated communications to PCAs and Consumer-Employers were translated into Spanish.,

Margaret Shugrue-Szymanski noted that it would be good to publicly share the success of this program, and she asked how many PCAs had enrolled in HUSKY or CoveredCT as a result of the HCPA application process. Mr. Halsey replied that it is not clear how that information could be identified, but that he would look into it. Mr. Gualtieri shared that the Council has recently purchased a subscription to Constant Contact to facilitate communications between the Council and Consumer-Employers. He said that a calendar of messaging would be built out, and communications about HCPA would be included after the second round of payments have been made in September.

Ms. Paladino shared that DDS has a dedicated HCPA page on its website, and that information about HCPA has been posted on DDS' Facebook page. She added that she has received many emails about this benefit, and that DDS is able to use its structure of Case Managers to do direct outreach to Consumer-Employers as well.



5. Update on Labor Negotiations

Mr. Gualtieri shared that negotiations for a Successor Agreement are ongoing. A Continuing Agreement was signed by the Union and the Council on June 30, 2023, to keep the primary provisions of the current CBA in effect until negotiations are brought to a conclusion.

6. Membership Update

Mr. Gualtieri stated that there are two vacancies on the Council, and that one nomination is pending. Follow-up has been done with the appointing authority. He reminded Council members to please recommend possible new members for consideration at any time.

7. Other Business

Mr. Gualtieri called upon Fran Sinish. She noted that there had been discussion during prior meetings regarding resuming holding annual in-person Consumer-Employer forums, and she asked Council members if there was interest in doing so. Ms. Paladino agreed that these forums have been of great benefit, and it is helpful to increase access to resources for Consumer-Employers. She added that it will take significant planning and lead time, and she expressed support for the idea. Ms. Paladino noted that it will be important to identify a central location for the forum and an optimal time of year to hold it, and she suggested that a forum planning subcommittee be formed.

When asked about available funding for a forum, Mr. Gualtieri replied that Council members had expressed discomfort with an in-person forum the last time this was discussed, due to the ongoing impact of COVID. He added that funds for outreach from the last fiscal year were used to purchase the subscription to Constant Contact, and that new funds would need to be requested, perhaps as a budget option, if Council members wished to host a forum in the future. Ms. Ferguson-Hull said she would assist with establishing a subcommittee, and asked Council members to let her know if they are interested in serving on it. She added that it is important to be planful, and that it would be of great benefit to have the new Fiscal Intermediary (FI) attend.

Mr. Gualtieri suggested that at the next Council meeting, it would be beneficial to share a quick legislative recap regarding issues that affect PCAs, including the HUSKY C expansion and the PCA Career Pathways program that is being established at DSS.

Ms. Healy asked if there was an update on when the new FI would be in place. Mr. Halsey provided a brief status update on the contract with the new FI and the next steps in the process.

Ms. Flaherty shared that some members of the disability community had hoped to attend today's meeting, and that she had been asked to remind members of the Council that the next day, July 26th, is the 33rd anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). She added that PCAs enable many people with disabilities to live more independently.

8. Public Comment

None offered.



Claudio Gualtieri
Chair

9. Adjournment

Mr. Gualtieri asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Healy made the motion and Mr. Prizio seconded it. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 10:18 AM.

Full meeting recording can be accessed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eaw5sVslg1A>