

## Meeting notes: Workers' Compensation Insurers' Task Force

Date: March 20, 2024

Notes prepared by: Katrina Namad

Location: Hybrid – Minnesota Room (Department of Labor and Industry) and Webex

### Members present

Gary Westman, co-chair (remotely)

Lee Ingrassia, co-chair

John Wiatros

Lee Zeigler (remotely)

Michael Schneider (remotely)

Laura Mundt (remotely)

Robert Groscop (remotely)

Sara Groskreutz (remotely)

Sarah Hunter

Deb Norsten

### Members absent

Matthew Frasse

Natalie Haefner

Mike Johns

Stacy Kohlnhofer

Steve Patton

### DLI staff members present

Brian Mak

Chris Leifeld

Denise Holmes

Ethan Landy

Karen Kask-Meinke (remotely)

Katrina Namad

Melissa Parrish

Michelle Doheny

Donna Olson

April Del Castillo

Jessica Stimac

Joe Lolich

### Visitors present

None

## Agenda items

1. **Call to order** – the meeting was called to order by Co-chair Lee Ingrassia at 9:03 a.m. Roll call was taken.
2. **Assistant Commissioner Jessica Stimac** – introduced herself and said Chris Leifeld would talk about newly hired and retiring employees. She mentioned the Workers' Compensation Summit, which will be in late October, is currently in the planning stage. Stimac described the Workers' Compensation Advisory Council bill, House File 4661 and Senate File 4745, and its status at the Legislature.
3. **DLI staff update** – Chris Leifeld noted Caroline Terrio is a new supervisor in the Special Compensation Fund; she started in the position approximately two months ago. Leifeld introduced Joe Lolich, the new supervisor in Compliance, Records and Training (CRT), who is taking over after Ralph Hapness's retirement. Leifeld noted all the CRT supervisors are relatively new and the unit has had seven new staff members join during the past year.
4. **Business Technology Office (BTO) updates** – Michelle Doheny provided the update. She mentioned Mike Solheid has shifted to a new role, as a product owner, which is more of a leadership role in development and planning for development. BTO also hired a user researcher, Sarah Munson, who started about a month ago. BTO is now in the process of hiring a user interface designer who will work with the user researcher to turn ideas into actual technical changes. BTO also had an on-site developer

start at the end of last year and has three additional developers working as contractors, so the unit is really trying to beef up the developer side of things. BTO completed the “dot net” upgrade to Work Comp Campus. Now work has begun on the rest of the roadmap, with the first part related to how users see documents in Campus. Doheny also mentioned her team is taking a lead on planning on the Workers’ Compensation Summit, so if anyone has questions, they can reach out to her.

5. **New training modules coming** – Leifeld said the Workers’ Compensation Division is working on new modules. The final stages of work are happening on the “Denial of Primary Liability” module, but it’s not quite ready to share. He said these modules are a collaborative effort between BTO and CRT, led by Jo Burr (BTO) and Virginia Prax (CRT). Doheny said another module, not specific to CRT, about uploading documents in Campus has been completed. The videos get uploaded to YouTube. She advised to bookmark the DLI YouTube playlist, rather than the videos themselves, to be able to find the videos more easily. Denise Holmes said the “Denial of Primary Liability” module is a little bit longer and the next ones available should all be shorter.
6. **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) update** – Brian Mak gave an overview about what the unit does. Arbitrations and mediations resolve about 40% of disputes before they go to a decision and order. ADR also assists when people contact the Department of Labor and Industry and responds to their questions. ADR is not a legal aid clinic, but if someone calls with a question the staff members can educate the caller and let them know what their options are. ADR also does dispute certifications and administrative conferences. ADR staff members try to get people together timely, rather than having them wait a year and a half for a formal hearing. ADR also offers mediation services. Mak suggested insurers and third-party administrators get back to ADR as soon as possible related to dispute certifications, because ADR does not want to have to certify a dispute just because they cannot get in touch with an adjuster. Mak advised the Workers’ Compensation Insurers’ Task Force (WCITF) members to consider ways to use ADR for their benefit. All ADR mediators and arbitrators have gone through 30 hours of mediation training and all are well-versed in workers’ compensation issues. Services offered by ADR are free.
7. **Update about the Medical Services Review Board (MSRB) and the Rehabilitation Review Panel (RRP)** – Leifeld provided an update about RRP and its meeting Jan. 4. Two key issues were addressed. The first key issue was rehabilitation rulemaking, which Ethan Landy expanded upon at the WCITF meeting. The second key issue were presentations by Laura Hokeness of MASPPR and Kayleen Kickhafer of MARP, two rehabilitation provider professional groups, at the RRP meeting. They described their organizations and the challenges faced by the rehabilitation community and its service to the injured worker. Leifeld also provided an update regarding MSRB and its meeting Jan. 18. He said Emily Streier presented about the Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) study; he also noted there is a Department of Labor and Industry webpage dedicated to the study. Lisa Wichterman, DLI medical policy specialist, also led a discussion at the MSRB meeting about treatment parameters and the department’s work on updating them.
8. **Future agenda items** – please reach out to co-chairs Lee Ingrassia and Gary Westman with future agenda items.
9. **Next meeting** – the next meeting is May 15, 2024.

## Adjournment

Co-chair Ingrassia declared the meeting adjourned at 10:03 a.m.