

Meeting:	Paid Leave Oregon Advisory Committee				
Date/time:	December 6, 2023				
Location:	Microsoft Teams				
Attendees:	P (Present) A (Absent) S (sent sub)				
	Facilitator: Karen Madden Humelbaugh Scribe: Rebecca Royer				
Members		Staff		Guest	
P	Karen Madden Humelbaugh	P	Mackenzie Jones		
P	David Gerstenfeld	A	Shannon Ball		
A	Jeannine Beatrice	P	Juan Serratos		
P	Amanda Dalton (employers)	A	Danielle Willey		
A	Jenny Dresler (employers)	P	Michele Schwartz		
A	Eric Hunter (employers)	P	Angela Yeager		
P	JaJetta Dumdi (employers)	S	Kelley Ofoni		
P	Catie Theisen (employees)				
P	Courtney Veronneau (employees)				
P	Anna Richards Roberts (employees)				
P	Odalis Aguilar-Aguilar (employees)				

Agenda

Docket #	Topic	Purpose	Presenter
1.0	Welcome	Inform	Karen Madden Humelbaugh &
1.1	Member Roundtable		David Gerstenfeld
1.2	Agency Updates		
1.3	Approval of Sept, Oct & Nov Meeting Notes		

Linda Herrera and Eva Rippeteau have stepped down from the Advisory Committee. Two new members, Anna Roberts, SEIU Local 49 and Odalis Aguilar-Aguilar, Oregon AFSME, join as employee representatives.

David Gerstenfeld shared agency updates. The Unemployment Insurance (UI) program is experiencing the consistent seasonal increase in people filing claims and are experiencing an increase of claims filed now compared to this time last year. The Federal funding for the agency is continuing to decrease. The agency only about one third of the staff they had last year which in turn means service levels have dropped. While they are still doing better than the national customer service averages, they are still not where they'd like to be. They plan to do more work with the legislature in February to request supplemental state funding. The Workforce Operations team is in the planning stages for modernizing their system. As with any IT projects for the state, the project will have robust state oversight. Prior to beginning the procurement process, the agency needs approval from part of the legislature and the State's Chief Information Officer.

JaJetta Dumdi asked if the agency foresees any impact from the UI Modernization project on Paid Leave Oregon. David shared there are potential indirect impacts, but don't foresee many. The Paid Leave and UI program will both use the same technology infrastructure which means there will be a period of time between now and a couple months post go-live in which they will be able to make very minimal changes to the Frances system. The Paid Leave team and UI team have been working closely through the planning stages and will continue to have ongoing discussion as the UI Benefits Modernization goes live.

No meeting notes from committee members. Notes from the September, October and November meetings have been approved.

2.0	Customer Care, Outreach & Communication Updates	Inform	Michele Schwartz & Angela Yeager
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Michele Schwartz shared updates from the Customer Care and Outreach team. The Outreach team is working closely with several state agencies, both by providing trainings for their staff as well as coordinating trainings with them to provide others. The team is currently participating in the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) Roadshow when and where they are able. They are dedicated to providing outreach to first responders such as healthcare providers and administrators and have a training scheduled with Oregon State Police. They are also continuing non-profit, community-based, culturally specific outreach with both in-person and virtual events.

Angela Yeager shared updates from the Communications team. Communications staff are working on batches of updates to all employer-facing documents on the website, and making changes on the website for new rules that go into effect in January such as adding bias crimes to the safe leave. They recently launched a new “What to Expect” page on the website which provides information on what happens after customer applies for benefits. The communications team has continued to receive and respond to media requests.

3.0	Policy & Program Support Updates	Inform	Kelley Ofoni
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Kaitlynn Chritton provided updates for the Policy & Program Support team.

Employer Programs: The team is continuing to support self-employed individuals who are wanting to sign up for Paid Leave coverage, employers, and insurance carriers with equivalent plan applications and questions, and small employers applying for assistance grants. The team is also continuing to support all employer related benefits questions, calls and emails.

Appeals: The appeals referred out our first appeal to the Office of Administrative Hearings on November 17th, and as of today the full appeals team is trained on the formal appeals process for future appeals as well. There are 15 other appeals identified at this point that will likely be referred for hearing in the coming weeks.

Compliance: The compliance team is working on a focused project reviewing a body of claims for accuracy in processing, processing escalated claims, and learning how to process all types of claims. They have begun to build out the standards and processes for program quality assurance and compliance monitoring moving forward.

Policy Team: The policy team is focused on preparing policy guidance and continuing rule development. The team is finalizing the Batch 9 rules, which will become effective January 1, 2024. The team is currently drafting the administrative rules for Batch 10, and hope to have a Rulemaking Advisory Committee in early January, 2024. The current timeline for Batch 10 rules has Batch 10 becoming final in April, 2024.

Anna Roberts asked what themes are included in the Batch 10 rules. These rules include updates to multiple current rules related to OFLA, as well as new rules relating to OFLA.

Legislative Updates: the agency and the Paid Leave program are anticipating short session will be busy. The agency is not submitting any bills related to Paid Leave but have been told that a couple bills will be put forward related to the program.

4.0	Benefits Updates	Inform	Danielle Willey
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Karen Humelbaugh acknowledged that the program has received some negative media attention recently. At the time of the November Advisory Committee meeting, the team had processed about 55% of claims. At this time, they have processed about 77%. Processing time is averaging about 27 days. The team has seen a lot of fraudulent activity that increased workload and also acknowledges the importance of the Identity Verification process. Unfortunately, that process can sometimes cause delays because some information needs to be sent through mail, and the identity verification process can re-initiate if a customer makes changes to their name, bank account or other vital account information.

The team has been implementing multiple improvements to address inquiries from customers and making changes to ensure they are reducing the hold times on the phones. Many of the calls the program is receiving have been related to checking for a status update on a claim, which means that the main focus of the team right now is processing the oldest claims. They have seen a decrease in the number of claims submitted per week.

Anna Roberts asked if the requirements around the timing of applying for benefits was written into statute or law. The team is fairly certain this is a rule.

Anna Roberts asked if a supervisor provides incorrect information about the program that in turn causes an individual to miss deadlines for applying for Paid Leave, would that individual have rights to appeal? The program does have the ability to accept late applications for good cause, up to one year.

Courtney Veronneau asked for clarifications regarding the average processing time of claims. Looking at claims submitted since the go-live, the average processing time since go-live is around 27 days. However, looking at more recent claim submissions the average processing time has been closer to 14-17 days.

Courtney Veronneau asked if any appeals were related to equivalent plans. They have received complaints from individuals regarding the decision made by their equivalent plan employer, however, majority of these are not ready to go through the process with the Paid Leave program and are being provided with the steps they need to take to file the dispute first with their employer. Many of the appeal requests the program has received are not actually turning in to official appeals because staff are able to assist the customer.

Courtney Veronneau mentioned that some folks asking their medical providers to fill out a serious health condition verification form are getting charged for the paperwork. This is a common practice for medical practices and is on the list of potential rules to look at for adjustments in the future.

5.0

Additional Program Updates

Inform

Karen Madden Humelbaugh

Karen Humelbaugh shared a few additional updates related to the trust fund. The forecasting for Quarter 1 and 2 were very close to the actual received contributions. Quarter 3 contributions are slightly lower than was forecasted, however the program is still collecting outstanding invoicing and reconciliation. They anticipate being able to present better data in January.
