Acumen Questions for May MA21 and June SDAB Meetings

1) One of the big selling points for Acumen was more efficient and quicker onboarding of new employees through Acumen's paperless process.
    a. What happened to that online paperless process?
    b. When will onboarding times be shortened?

    Acumen is actively rolling out DocuSign which will significantly reduce errors and simplify the onboarding process.

2) Questions were raised at the last SDAB meeting about Acumen's Workers Compensation and Unemployment Insurance rates being significantly higher than PPL's. A couple of SDAB members sent follow up questions on these topics after the SDAB meeting. These higher costs directly impact participant's services. Why are the payroll costs that Acumen passes along to participants so much higher than PPL's?

    SUTA and Workers Comp are influenced by several factors that are not dictated by DDS or Acumen and are subject to annual review and updating.

    SUTA rate difference:
    - The Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) determines required contributions by subject Employers
    - DUA has increased the current newly subject employer contribution rate, and uses an experience rating to calculate experienced employers contribution rates (https://www.mass.gov/info-details/learn-about-ui-contribution-rates#ui-tax-schedule-)
    - Based on DUA rates and review of the 2024 Q1 through Q3 SUTA wages and SUTA tax paid by PPL, the actual cost of SUTA is expected to be 2.6%. Based on this, Acumen is accruing SUTA at 2.6% for all SUTA taxable employments

    Workers Comp rate difference:
    Workers Comp rates are influenced by several factors which change over time including:
    - Claims History
    - Wages and Payroll Size
    - Experience Modification Rate (EMR)

3) On the home screen of the PPL system it was extremely easy to see exactly where an individual stood relative to their funding allocation, break down of budget into specific services, including what was spent YTD and what was remaining. The individual could even see the history across historical years on this one screen.
    a. Why is it so difficult to see funding and utilization information in the Acumen system?
    b. Why is it not all available in one place?
    c. When will participants, especially those who are less computer savvy, start getting monthly paper statement again? Or even a monthly statement delivered electronically?

    d. What are Acumen's recommended best practices relative to accessing meaningful numbers for managing an individual's budget and spending?

Acumen reinstated account statements on May 17th which are loaded into the DCI portal each month for ease of access. These statements are the best place to start to understand funding and utilization. In addition, DCI offers several budget related reports in the reporting tab for users that are interested in seeing the data displayed in other layouts that may be more helpful to them.

4) EVV was also a big selling point for the Acumen system, with a push toward using the photo option when clocking out. For the first month couple of months, the photo option worked fine. At some point (in March?) employees were still able to clock out with the photo option, but employers became unable to approve those punches. Why did that change and why can't EOR's approve photo-based punches anymore?

The Photo option is an available EVV verification method to move an entry through an auto-approval process. Since this option utilizes facial recognition, DCI must have a baseline photo on file for the system to verify against. Please contact your agent to set up this option and to receive assistance with uploading a photo.

5) There are many places where the EOR is able to click on links to drill down into more detail about an item. However, many of these items display a message about the EOR not having permissions to see that information. It's very frustrating for the EOR to click on links and be denied access. Ideally the EOR should have access to that information. But if that's not going to happen, those items should not display as links if permission is just going to be denied. What's the plan to address this?

DCI access is configured based on program rules and requirements, most links displayed should be available unless explicitly denied due to programmatic rules, however we will not hide links due to system design. If you experience this issue please let your agent know and we will verify your account is configured as intended.

6) The Acumen system provides EOR with functionality that allows the EOR to upload receipts directly to the system for reimbursement. EOR's who have done that, say that it works well and they receive timely payment. However, EORs have been told that they should NOT use that functionality, but instead to email their receipts to their service coordinators along with a separate form the EOR has also been asked to complete. DDS Service Coordinators say that they then have to upload those receipts to some other Acumen workflow process that they have no visibility into after the initial submission... and it seems to be a crap shoot as to whether the reimbursement request is processed or not.
    a. Why are EOR's being told not to upload invoices directly into the Acumen portal with the DDS approval process then happening within that one system?
    b. Does it not support that type of workflow?
    c. Are there plans to improve the current inefficient process?

On August 5th, Acumen is rolling out the Enhanced Casework View which will allow direct entry into the system by your Support Broker. This change will improve the invoice submission

process and provide more line of sight for EORs and the Support Brokers. Acumen will discuss the potential for EOR's to upload directly with MA DDS staff.

7) How can Acumen make their website more user friendly? It is really difficult to navigate because it is written for a fiscal person not a member of the general public.

   Acumen staff would be happy to host focus groups on improving our website and will discuss with MA DDS staff to partner on this effort. We also encourage setting up meetings with our Agents to assist with training to better understand DCI navigation.

8) The interface of the Acumen system is not user friendly, especially compared to PPL. Is there an ability to change this? Employers must take far too many steps, can't easily access critical information easily and prompts are confusing and many unnecessarily. There is far too much information that is not necessary on the main landing pages. Examples of interface issues are many, a few include: dates for an employee's shifts are not in chronological order and even after a sort, shift back. Entries for staff time should easily show the start/end time without having to click even further into the detailed page. When you login with your ID, why do you need to repeatedly type in your Client name when logged in as the EOR for that client. could there be different landing pages for the employers, employee, vendor, etc.

   As stated above, Acumen staff would be happy to host focus groups on improving our website and portal and will discuss with MA DDS staff to partner on this effort. We also encourage setting up meetings with our Agents to assist with training to better understand DCI navigation.

9) Lack of clarity around if Vendors have been paid, and vendors getting checks that are not clearly marked so no ability to know if vendors are being paid

   The account statements provides information on vendors that were paid. The check stubs or remittance information sent to vendors does indicate invoice number (if provided to us), and other information for them to identify who the payment was for.

10) This whole thing felt like it was going to remove the Support Broker and make the process easier. The lack of ability to shift toward that at this point has created excess work for DDS staff and pain and struggles for families. When will this be resolved, or perhaps is this the new plan as there's a lot of human capital being spent on this right now.

    The roll out of the Enhanced Caseworker profile on August 5th will allow for more streamlined processes with vendor payment and reimbursement submissions. The Enhanced Caseworker Profile will also provide a real-time view to entries as they flow through the payroll process.

11) It is still not clear what EVV methods gets auto approved and why. It's should now be communicated very clearly which EVV methods will auto approve and what require manual approval. Will this change over time?

    Below is a breakdown of the methods for auto-approvals, taken from the Tips and Tricks document created and sent to the MA21 group. This training is also available on Acumen's site.

Verification Method	Is Auto-Approved
Client Pin	Yes
Picture	•Yes - If picture matches is a success •No – If Participant's picture matches is not a success, then photo can be reviewed/approved •No-if there's no baseline photo of the Participant for the picture to match against, entry cannot be approved.
Signature	No - Verification Steps need to be applied
Portal Sign-off	No

12) There are currently 3 ways to view your budget and each one looks different, can we have one method to create consistency and avoid confusion. Why do we need 3 different views of the same information?

    Acumen provides multiple ways to view our budget so users can engage with the data in a way that's most meaningful and helpful to them. As best practice, we recommend using the monthly account statement delivered to your message center.

13) While Acumen promised more individualized support, it has not felt that way. The majority of the times you call your agent the calls go to voice mail and while they do usually call back within 24 hours, PPL answered their calls live (sometimes after a brief hold which people were OK with) as they you could get your answer when you need it. When sitting down to do billing, reconcile budgets or approve timesheets no one wants to have a questions they can't get answered on the spot. Could Acumen man the phones and shift to offer immediate local support at least during certain hours of the day?

    Acumen will continue to monitor response times to ensure this is completed within 24 hours. For quick questions related to clock in, clock out, approving time, etc., we recommend calling our 24/7 call center for immediate help.

    To schedule an appointment with our agent, please use our booking page listed here: Acumen MA State Agent Bookings Page