Personal Care Attendant Quality

Home Care Workforce Council

## 1 Ashburton Place, 11th Floor

## Boston, Massachusetts 02108

Tel: (617) 573-1712

[www.mass.gov/pca](http://www.mass.gov/pca)

Email: pcacouncil@state.ma.us

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MassPCA

CHARLES D. BAKER

Governor

KARYN E. POLITO

Lieutenant Governor

MARYLOU SUDDERS

EOHHS Secretary

# Personal Care Attendant Quality Home Care Workforce Council

Council Meeting

General Session

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | February 8, 2022 | 2:00-3:30 p.m. | Zoom Conference Call |

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| coUNCIL members in attendance | Ann Ackil, Lauren Peters, Karen Shack, Christopher Hoeh, Kristen McCosh, Cindy Purcell, Joe Tringali, Tim Kunzier |
| Council members not in attendance |  |
|  Staff attending | Beth Farnham |
|  chair | Lauren Peters |
| Note taker | Beth Farnham |
| agenda setting | No issues were added to previously-issued agenda |

Lauren Peters called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

Statement from Lauren Peters

* Lauren reminded the Council that there is time on the agenda later for questions related to the FI Transition, but wanted to acknowledge at the top that the FI Transition has consumed a lot of bandwidth of the PCA program and diverted attention from other ongoing initiatives. Please know that the state is committed to these other initiatives in flight.

Michelle Byrd Retirement

* Please note that Michelle Byrd retired in January 2022. Beth Farnham from the EHS offices has taken on many of the administrative tasks, and is attending today, so please welcome her. You will be receiving emails from Beth moving forward.

Executive Director Search

* EHS is moving forward on the search for a new PCA Council Executive Director and will be arranging for opportunities for the Council to meet with the final candidate. The parameters of the process will need to be confirmed, but it would be great to receive feedback. The goal is to have the position posted by the end of this week.
* Chris said that he is glad that the position is being posted and that he thinks a hiring committee from the Council would be beneficial. Lauren said that the amount of work for current and future state planning is pretty incredible, and so, part of this is recognizing that there’s a lot moving and happening the PCA program.
* Chris said that he will re-send the last discussion from the Council regarding the hiring process and added that the group felt strongly that they should help find the person.
* Lauren said she needs to confirm what is allowable for state employee positions and open meeting law considerations, as it may need to go into executive session.
* At the time the position is posted, an update will be provided to let the Council know how to proceed ahead within the allowable parameters.
1. **Council Organizational Matters:**

Review and approval of the minutes of December 7, 2021

* Joe Tringali made a motion to approve the December 7th minutes. Karen Shack seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by majority vote.

FY22 Budget Report

* This report does not require a vote.
* Chris noted that the Council approves the budget on a FY basis and asked for a better understanding of what is in the budget, as it is part of the charge of the Council.
	+ Lauren agreed that it is a fair point, and that each year the budget has looked fairly similar in terms of costs and allocations.
	+ Lauren provided a brief overview of the budget process: The budget/GAA is approved by the Governor every July; the fiscal year is on a July 1 schedule. Assuming the GAA is passed in July, we can plan to review the appropriated amount the first Council meeting in August and can propose the allocation of the appropriated amount across the various line items. We can have discussion prior to voting about how the budget is spent.
* Joe said he agrees with Chris and stated he would like to know how effective the programs are that the money is being spent on.
1. **Executive Director’s Report:**

Update on Racial Justice Subcommittee

* The subcommittee has not met since October but plan to reconvene in March.
	+ Joe asked what the nature of the work has been so far.
		- Lauren provided an update: The nature of the conversation to date has been around planning and the scope of the subcommittee’s work so we can solicit information from PCA’s and consumers in a meaningful way. The subcommittee does not want to make recommendations around addressing some part of the program that doesn’t fall within the scope of the PCA Workforce Council. If we’re doing a listening session or forum, we want to make sure it’s done in an intentional and constructive way.
* Joe asked whether objectives have been identified.
	+ Lauren said the subcommittee has not identified an exhausted list of objectives and has had preliminary conversations around where there are inequities related to the program and possible solutions. For example, if a PCA felt like they were being discriminated against, could we create a process to raise that issue and have it elevated so that it could be reviewed and addressed?
* Chris said that the issue is that the subcommittee is discussing solutions to a problem, but the steering group was meant to define a process for getting information that we can act on. For example, if people are not being paid enough, that may be historically linked to racism, but that is more related to bargaining. He also stated that as co-chair of the subcommittee, he felt like they were not getting where they needed to go and were working on a reset, then lots of things happened that drew the attention away.
* Ann asked about the status of the subcommittee’s consultant.
	+ Lauren responded that the consult, Chris Bijou, is fully engaged and did facilitate initial subcommittee meetings.

Update on ARPA Implementation

* Lauren provided the following update: Since we last met, we submitted a quarterly spending plan, then submitted another quarterly spending plan that stated what was previously committed to CMS. As many of you recall, under the Federal American Rescue Plan Act, there were a significant amount of funds directed towards state home and community-based services. The state did a number of stakeholder engagement and listening sessions early fall and late summer. Since we submitted the October spending plan, we’ve been working on policy development and implementation. Until last Friday we had not received feedback from CMS, who need to approve. We are actively engaged with CMS currently, and working to clarify and address a few outstanding questions, and hope to begin implementation with at least a certain number of initiatives within the first half of the calendar year. To close, we will keep the Council appraised of timelines as they become clear and refined.
* Chris said that one of the points was the “Call to Care” media campaign, which would be part of larger recruitment. He added that when Whitney Moyer spoke with the Council, our understanding was that would be occurring later this year. Lauren confirmed that it was still part of the plan.
* Lauren added that, through ARPA funds, the state made the decision to increase PCA wages by 10 percent July 1 through Dec 31, and then extended through the end of June. That spending was approved by CMS.

COVID-19 Vaccination Update

* Lauren provided the following update since the last communication to the Council on Friday, February 4: To recap, in the beginning of January, DPH issued an order in light of CMS’ updates to their language of “fully vaccinated” to “up to date.” To conform to federal language and increase the number of COVID-19 boosters amongst home care workers, the order requires home care workers to get their booster by Monday, February 28. A draft order was sent to the Council for awareness that it would go out to PCAs and consumers. There are supply chain issues that will cause the delay of the notices going out. Given that February 28 is right around the corner, we are proposing to update the deadline by three weeks so that we give consumers and PCA’s sufficient time to be on notice and get their booster shot. Three weeks out would be Monday, March 21.
* Chris said that the Council had concerns with the language last time when MassHealth was flooded with attestation forms and then a new version was written that had more clarity. He said he was concerned this is very wordy and whether there will be time. The union and other stakeholders weighed into prevent misunderstanding. Ultimately this is a mandate, but the consumer must enforce it, and they may choose not to require an attestation. He asked if this required more impact bargaining with the union and deferred to the union.
	+ Lauren responded that the state could take the concerns back for discussion, as they are trying to balance the timing and getting it out as soon as possible. She added that a whole re-write will delay the release of the notices.
	+ Sherri responded that largely the language must mimic the original language aside from the problems. This is an executive order. She said she understands that the language is very official sounding, but in this particular instance, there is not much of a choice.

EVV Subcommittee

* Lauren provided the following update: As part of the bargaining for implementation of EVV the MOU called for a subcommittee made up of members of the Council and 1199, with the goal of assisting, monitoring, and exploring enhancements to the use of EVV. The first report was due per the MOU in January of this year with three specific tasks:
	1. Explore enhancements related to EVV application features
	2. Explore functions of an EVV hotline
	3. Identify hardships and understand the landscape of PCAs who have a personal device to use for EVV vs those who may not, and contemplate a solution for PCAs without a smartphone to receive a voucher and purchase a smart device for EVV.

The goal of the subcommittee was to plan and make recommendations and explore gaps and challenges and areas of opportunity as we start to prepare. The PowerPoint addresses those three items in this first report. A second report is due later this fall. As this is an important issue, we will continue to keep the Council apprised of any updates related to implementation.

* Chris said that the initial idea was that the pilot would start in April, and asked Sherri whether that is going to be delayed, at least for an unspecified amount of time.
	+ Sherri responded that she does not want to conflate the FI piece with the EVV piece, and said that while implementation will be delayed, there is no update on the timeline dates.

Advanced Aide Training

* Lauren stated, for context, that this a proposal/standing agenda item per the CBA on the Labor Management Meeting to explore the creation of an advanced aide category and construct. She said that there are a number of ways to do it and the state recognizes that this is a topic that likely warrants bargaining. The Council had deferred the January meeting to discuss the proposal given everything else that has been going on, and the meeting will be rescheduled to go into more detail in an executive session to solicit feedback on what it should look like.
* Chris provided background on the work of the subcommittee: The subcommittee was working with the union and looking at different background research on consumers who had high levels of need and identifying the types of tasks. The subcommittee got good background information on what the problem is. One thing that came up was what are the criteria for consumers who could hire certified PCAs to be paid more to provide these types of services. Many of us fall under the category of having complex care needs that would fall under the category. Subcommittee members had a constructive meeting with the state of Oregon, and he thinks there is something there. It gets into bargaining, so that is why we’re going to have an executive session to talk through the process.
* Lauren added that the Council will be brought together for an executive session in short/immediate term.
* Cindy said that she just hired a new girl who attends a vocational high school, and the professor overseeing her tasks was saying the tasks she was doing were nursing-level skill.
	+ Lauren responded that this is part of the conversation. There is a need to recognize and account for the fact that some consumers need higher levels of care than others. How do we create the opportunity for some PCAs to work with those consumers? A whole bunch of factors that need to be considered and balanced. That will be another item for the March queue.
* Karen said that she was hospitalized overnight, and her routine had to be done. The nurses stated that it was against hospital rules for them to do the routine, but PCAs cannot come into the hospital.
	+ Lauren responded that there are nuances and parameters for what is eligible for covered services within the PCA program vs not, as well as federal /state parameters.
* Joe said that from the description of the Oregon programs, it sounds like a lot like what was being talking about… tube feeding, catheters, is this program being used as a jumping off point?
	+ Lauren responded that it has not been decided, and that the Council would discuss in an executive session. She added that certainly, there are features in the Oregon model worth looking at, but the group needs to be having these conversations as a Council under executive session.

FI Transition Update

* Sherri Hannigan from MassHealth provided the following update: As everyone is aware, as of January 1, 2022, Tempus is our sole Fiscal Intermediary. We started out a little bumpy and maintain a little bumpy right now. In the first week, Tempus received 6,000 calls a day and certainly that had a lot of impact on a lot of different things. In addition, there were approximately 4,000 PCAs who were not paid post-transition but had been paid during a control period: End of November/early December pre-transition. We issued a one-time payment to those PCAs based on that period of time. We were not able to determine whether the PCAs worked, or whether the time sheets were completed and just not processed, but we made the decision to pay. As of this week the call volume is starting to normalize: 1,700-3,000 calls per day. Based upon past practices that were accepted at former FIs, there were errors on timesheets, but the consumers and the PCAs were unable to correct it themselves. We have a lot of education to go on appropriate timesheet completion and appropriate times for submitting timesheets. Timesheets are due Wednesday by 4 PM to be paid on Friday. We have a lot of do at a high level regarding managing expectations and making program members aware. All of these things are compounding what is going on.

To assist Tempus with call volume and short timely payments, MassHealth contracted with two entities. MassOptions is taking 800 calls a day, lower level types of payment and confirmations. Accenture, who is also aiding the call center, started taking calls yesterday, and there were a few hiccups with call transfers. We will have more info end of week one; we are getting hour-by-hour information at this point. Accenture will also assist with timesheet processing because you cannot make a mistake, so people are very interested in the timesheet process. With the call volume and increase in timesheet processing Tempus has not been able to tackle the new app. We are looking at the Tempus website and how to make it more user-friendly. For one example seeing a package of new hire information, but it is not labeled as such. If you don’t know what you were looking at you would not know. We are meeting with Tempus on a daily basis, multiple times a day, and have been for the entire month of January, which includes nights and weekends. As we are nearing the other side of this process, we have learned a lot and have a lot to do. Tempus has conducted three trainings with PCM skills trainers, every single skills trainer has attended. They fully understanding how to complete timesheets and can provide training to consumer employers so that they understand how to run their program.

* Jarred Damico from MassHealth added that in mid-January when things were coming to a head, MassHealth facilitated public info sessions, daily for a couple of weeks, with hundreds of consumers and PCAs. Sherri facilitated and Jarred attended, along with Larry Spencer, Tempus CEO. We saw through those public info sessions there were a lot of people who had technical/basic questions - E-timesheets, “why can’t I see my PCA”, “where are my paystubs.” - things that we consider routine. That is the reason why we asked Tempus to do that mandatory training. Tempus continues to host those information sessions twice a week. We are still triaging issues, wait time is still long, and emails are still taking too long from responses.
1. **PCA Program Update**

MassHealth Report

* Jarred gave the following additional updates to Council members on the Tempus Unlimited transition: There are many improvements, including call channeling, that we have instructed Tempus to do. For Friday, Tempus will have a callback feature in place. MassHealth is still working with them to determine which queues that will apply to. The calls getting sent to MassOptions would not have the callback feature. Once Tempus is up to speed, our understanding is that the callback feature will be in place for everyone; it is in place only for certain topics now.
* Joe asked how Tempus can expect new people to take calls right away, and added that in a video chat, it was explained that Tempus needs a couple of months to bring people up to speed.
	+ Sherri responded that there are certain things that are being channeled to call center staff. They are getting a bit of a crash course in less-involved things and then channeling the rest of the calls to their own representatives who have more experience.
* Chris stated that he really appreciated the response of the administration, but that what was left out was that they had to make a demand; that there are a small group that started meeting with the union and made these suggestions. He added that the paying of 4,000 people is based on the understanding that 4,000 PCAs were not paid; that he doesn’t know how much is in the MOU but that it was an extraordinary step to pay people without a timesheet under the assumptions. Chris acknowledged that MassHealth was going the extra length to err on the side of paying people rather than forcing people through more hoops; people faced with overdraft fees and threats of eviction and financial problems like what was reported in the *Globe* yesterday. Chris added that it is unfortunate that these things weren’t in place earlier, they were previously recommended, and these are functions that need to be in place going forward.
	+ Sherri clarified that were not 4,000 PCAs that were not paid; that there was an unknown number, and 4,000 people in the pool who were unidentified.
* Becca Gutman stated her appreciation of the work with the MassHealth, and the Council to help resolve this, and underscored just how difficult of a situation it has been for PCAs. She said that the stories 1199 has heard from PCAs when their paycheck is weeks late; it does throw people into crisis. She said that she looks forward to working with Council to address pay issues in the future, and that once we are out of this crisis to work proactively to figure out how we can address pay issues.

EVV Implementation

* Key updates were stated earlier. The Council will move on to the last section of the agenda.

Recruitment and Retention Update

* Chris said that during the last meeting there were a number of resources and initiatives that were going to be posted outside of the directory and asked whether the link could be sent.
	+ Louise Gorham responded that the UMass team has been working with two other organizations, they were open to it, and now have been working with Legal for next steps.
	+ Lisa Marschke added that they are working with MassHire and MRC to share PCA jobs more directly, which means less work for consumers.
* Lisa Marschke provided the following updates: The Mass PCA Directory Facebook page is now live. We hope it’s going to be a terrific place for consumer-employers to find out about hiring events and jobs that are posted; maybe highlight some jobs in the future. Information about the FI Listening Sessions have been posted. We need more Facebook followers; the next strategy is to work with stakeholders to build followership. Additionally, there are revisions being done to MADirectCare.com with information for all of the workforce development agencies and orgs in the state to promote PCA job opportunities. A new job seeker flyer has been created for MRC to use with job-ready candidates. In April, we will have more information to share about collaborations with MassHire and MRC; will first start in Springfield. We are doing tweaks to the new Mass PCA Directory. Lastly, the UMass team was invited to participate on a workgroup with EOEA and talk with leadership about how to promote jobs to mature workers, including PCA opportunities. The workgroup is meeting every two weeks, and we are excited about the collaboration and all that it might bring.
* Lisa added that a slide deck will be provided later to the Council as an update summary.
* Chris asked whether people are using the sites more, and if there were metrics, adding that he felt there was a general sense that the directory is not useful.
	+ Lisa responded that they will include numbers when the update is sent, and that they will start a marketing campaign once all of the enhancements are done. She added that there was misinformation on how the directory was being promoted, as a lot of work has been done over the last year in particular to refine the directory and create materials about what the directory is and how to use it.
	+ Chris asked whether the materials were linked to mass.gov. Lisa responded no, but that the materials will be coming.
* Cindy said that she used the directory but did not find it helpful because there were not many PCAs listed in the Rutland area.
* Karen said that she just got the email from Commonwealth Medicine with the link to the updated resource website, which she thought was great. She thinks it’s going to be a really great resource for career center staff and added that those staff should be trained to introduce customers to the directory.
	+ Lisa responded that in the past many assumptions were made, but they have been working closely with career centers, and giving them a lot of information and support.
	+ Chris added that skills trainers also need to be trained to show consumers how to use it as well.
* Lauren thanked Lisa for chasing down every opportunity and optimizing all opportunities to get the word out for both consumers and PCAs.
* Chris asked whether there were follow-ups from last meeting and said that the presentation from the last meeting was excellent. He said he wanted to respond to inquiries and criticisms about the directory, and will be good to have this information so we can follow up.

Chris thought itw as an excellent presentation last time we met. Chris wanted to respond to inquiries and criticisms about the directory, would be good to have the information so we can follow-up.

With no other agenda items for discussion. Chris Hoeh made a motion to adjourn, Ann Ackil seconded the motion, and the meeting adjourned at 3:34 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Beth Farnham