

Location	Teleconference
Time	2:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Attendees (all on the phone)	Employee's Interests Representative: Maggie Humphreys Employee's Interests Representative: Marilyn Watkins Employee's Interests Representative: Samantha Grad Employer's Interests Representative: Bob Battles Employer's Interests Representative: Tammie Hetrick Employer's Interests Representative: Julia Gorton Employer's Interests Representative: Christine Brewer Paid Family and Medical Leave Act Ombudsman: Edsonya Charles
Guests	PFML Operations Manager: John Mattes PFML Business Systems Product Manager: Matt Buelow (representing Carla Reyes)
Members Absent	Carla Reyes, Paid Family and Medical Leave Director Employee's Interests Representative: Joe Kendo
Scribe	Linda Kleingartner

Introductions - Members introduced themselves.

January and February Meeting Minutes – all approved.

Application Volumes, Update on Mitigations, specifically “Target: 2-Weeks” – Matt Buelow reviewed the latest data (as of 3/16/2020) for the application and weekly claim volumes and processing times. (Refer to presentation slides 5-7) Overall 60% of new applications have been for family leave. The overall is a little higher than recent experience, because of the high portion of bonding claims in the first week. Recent weeks have seen more of a 55/45 Family/Medical split. New applications rose 3 weeks ago. We believe this is not related to COVID-19, though we are expecting we may see more applications related to that in the coming weeks. This increase happened the week we had media attention. Weekly claim submissions continue to rise as each approved application generates many weekly claims.

The Customer Care Team continues to process applications and weekly claims as quickly as possible. Good news is we released more automation in late February, and in the first two weeks of having these system enhancements in place, 60-70% of the weekly claims have been auto processed. The Department is still anticipating a 10-week processing time for the applications.

Matt shared the total numbers as of 3/14/2020-

- 44,995 benefit applications submitted
- 13,376 applications have been processed. Of those;
 - 11,897 approved
 - 1,841 denied

General denial reasons are applications did not have an actual qualifying event per the law, did not meet the 820 hours. A handful of applications are missing the necessary documents,

which prompts fact finding. John Mattes noted a denial will occur if no applicant response to fact finding.

Advisory Committee discussed some confusion around the qualifying event and how the delays in the Department's processing time could impact the actual start date (e.g. a person may elect to continue working until they have received formal approval, which then would trigger the need to change the start date previously submitted on the application). Matt advised the Customer Care team looks at each of these on a case-by-case and where necessary they will make these adjustments between the original application and the actual circumstance. Edsonya Charles reiterated the Department's website information as well as all subsequent messaging (e.g. Commissioner videos, FAQs) have been very clear that coverage is retroactive.

Advisory Committee inquired whether verification for a birth of a child is a requirement at this time. Matt stated this has not gone into effect, there is still some internal review occurring. In order to implement technology changes are required, as are Care Team procedural changes and significant external communications. The program intends to roll this out in a planned manner with proper notifications to mitigate the surprise.

The presentation materials provide the summary of the call data. Matt highlighted the team continues to balance the inbound calls, application processing and weekly claim processing. The majority of the inbound calls still are around the status of the application.

Bob Battles is concerned the unemployment insurance needs will cause the Department to reallocate Paid Family and Medical Leave resources. Matt reiterated the Customer Care Team is solely focused on Paid Leave and in the process to increase their own staffing.

Matt explained the program's goal to process applications within 2 weeks, no later than June (aka Target Two Weeks). The goal is supported a 4-pronged approach: Hiring staff, hiring contracted staff (short term), implement new processes and providing technical tools. He highlighted the activities, risks and mitigations outlined on the slide (see presentation, page 8). Other highlights include:

- 35 new staff began in March as planned.
- We are now doing hiring process virtually, but do not expect our progress to slow.
- Onboarding Contractor for short-term support is progressing; they will begin mid-April.
- We continue with proactive mass communications to acknowledge receipt of applications that are pending review.
- Will be adjusting the technology initiatives based on the available staffing; are recruiting for technical staff as well.

Action Matt: Share the job postings with Advisory. Information below was sent to Advisory on 3/23/2020.

Link to the ESD Job posting page: <https://esd.wa.gov/esdjobs> (recommend you use the search button to navigate... here are the ones for Paid Family & Medical Leave)

[Service Delivery Manager](#)

[Customer Care Team Specialist](#)

Fiscal Analyst
Management Analyst

Bob stated his concerns about the rate and program solvency. He acknowledged it is too early to know, and the Department cannot provide any determination at this time. The rates are set by statute and it is reasonable to believe the premium amounts will decrease due to the fact this is based on employer's and employee's contributions. The Advisory Committee would be interested in learning more about the internal discussions and future impacts. The Committee suggested Washington partner with the other state's currently offering Paid Leave and submit a coordinated ask of the Federal government.

COVID-19 Impacts – Matt outlined the Program and ESD impacts to the COVID-19. Currently Paid Family and Medical Leave is working 6 days a week. John Mattes reiterated his team is closely monitoring and evaluating the staffing model to effectively process claims. Matt confirmed applications pertaining to COVID-19 with corresponding medical certification would certainly fall under the Medical side of Paid Leave.

Open Comment –

Maggie was interested in how Advisory Committee substitutes are handled; specifically can Joe's back-up participate while he is unavailable?

ACTION Matt/Carla: clarify the Advisory Committee substitution policy.

Extract from the Advisory Committee Charter regarding substitutes

MEMBER MEETINGS- PROXY

Members may, after giving notice via email or telephone of at least 24 hours to the Chair, send a proxy member to the meeting. The proxy member will have full authority to act on behalf of the appointed member. If a proxy member attends and participates in the meeting as a member, the appointed member for whom a proxy was sent may not attend the meeting in his or her capacity as an appointed member.

September's scheduled meeting conflicts with an AWB Policy Summit. Bob requested the meeting location is changed for the office (at a minimum) and possibly explore another date.

ACTION Liz: explore alternate location/dates for the September meeting.

Bob noted the passage of the Federal FMLA rules yesterday (3/19)- he is concerned about there being a potential disagreement and/or potential for employees now to request up to 24 weeks. He requested the Department to provide analysis and interpretation for Advisory Committee, as soon as possible.

ACTION April: follow up with the Advisory Committee to provide the Department's analysis and interpretation.

The Advisory Committee wanted to acknowledge Carla Reyes' service to the Program, and expressed their confidence in John Mattes, Matt and the entire team for their ability to manage Paid Family and Medical Leave.

No Public Open comment was heard due to the time constraints.

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 16, 10am - Noon | This meeting will be held via WebEx only