Washington
Paid Family & Medical Leave

Amended 8/1/2019 with Advisory Committee feedback

Location	Washington State Labor Council | 321 16th Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98144
Time	9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Attendees	Employee's Interests Representative: Joe Kendo 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 (Phone) Employer's Interests Representative: Julia Gorton (Phone) Paid Family and Medical Leave Act Ombuds: Edsonya Charles
Guests	PFML Operations Manager: John Mattes PFML Product Owner: Matt Buelow PFML Policy Manager: April Amundson PFML Assistant OMBUDS: Wendy Galloway
Members Absent	Department Representative: Carla Reyes, Paid Family and Medical Leave Director Employer's Interests Representative: Christine Brewer
Scribe	Tracy Moore

Welcome and Introductions: Matt Buelow

- Introductions at the table.
- May Meeting Minutes Approved

Beta Update – John Mattes

John shared a summary on Beta 1 (focused on large employers who were single filers). He summarized the overall impression as successful and outlined the following challenges:

- A few technical glitches that have been resolved.
- An opportunity to clarify on the website wage filing / premium payment tips and tricks, such as:
    - How to add PFML to SAW Services.
    - Formatting CSV files.
    - Descriptions of report status types, submissions timelines and tips for troubleshooting errors.
    - Explanation of the report confirmation ID.

Bob Battles noted his concern that the UI and PFML systems do not connect with one another and he would like to see the integration in the future. John advised with the PFML system, only the employers using manual entry filing will have to key in the information every time they report. Those using a CSV upload will not.

Maggie Humphreys was interested in the plans in place to address the employer feedback/suggestions collected during the Betas. Matt explained some feedback has been incorporated into the system performance tuning launch underway, and those changes will be in production on July 1st. There is more feedback than time available to make improvements and Matt's team is prioritizing the backlog (along with necessary development for Benefits).

John continued to provide an update on the Beta 2- which comprises of employers, voluntary plan holders and employer agents (third party, submits one file with multiple employers). This was schedule to complete on 6/21, but it appears some may carry over to Monday 6/24. The greatest challenge has been with the Employer Agent appointments, specifically:

- Employer Agent's data and wage files have not been ready.
- Changes on their end that require their own technology support.
- Errors due to data validation (2 of the errors that were on our end, are scheduled for a hotfix this week).

All three modes of premium payments (ACH-debit, check and credit card) were used, with no preferred method. We are accepting payments online.

Looking ahead to July, John shared the PFML teams are considering all scenarios (e.g. large call volume) and working on the necessary contingency plans

John shared the loan repayment is on track for 6/28 (the scheduled date). *Update 6/26- we are confirmed and in motion for a full loan repayment plus one quarter of operating expenses.*

A question was posed on whether the beta-approach will be used for the Benefits launch, and Matt advised the team is considering all the avenues to get early customer feedback on the system, including how a beta could work.

July Launch Readiness Activities – Matt Buelow

Matt reviewed the various technology, communications and operations activities in support of the July launch. The technology team is currently engaged in a rigorous testing looking at integrated system performance. The crisis communications plan is in place, and employer communications are encouraging early account set up.

Action Clare – Share the crisis communications plan with Advisory Committee.

Bob stated July will likely be the most difficult time for the program and could test system capacity, customer supports and employer readiness which could result in their ability to timely file. Matt shared the intent is not to be punitive as we launch the program and will not apply penalties and interest for the Q1 and Q2 filings (through August). Based on ESD experience, we anticipate most of the employers / employer agents to file at the end of the month.

The approach for July's launch was adjusted so that we can ensure system performance with the anticipated volume. Additionally, the customer care team will have technology team members available in a nearby, centrally located space to support as needed.

Matt further explained the July release strategy. July 1 launch will only feature operational and performance enhancements to the already established system functionality. Then a July 17 launch provides new premium functionality (Elective Coverage registration, refund processing, business closure).

Edsonya inquired about the addition of a "self-employed" tab on the website (or independent contractors, sole proprietors). Matt shared the website will continue to evolve as the system functionality is released.

An offline wage reporting process will not be available in July 2019. When employers contact the Customer Care Team, the staff will help the employer troubleshoot how to file, and document the reasons for why they can't file electronically. We will use this information to determine:

- Whether an alternative to electronic filing is necessary;
- What alternate path(s) meet the needs of our customers and the agency; and
- What amount of resources we should use to implement any alternate path deemed necessary.

Advisory Committee discussed the need for an alternate method, as some places in our state have zero service and no internet access. They support the approach to get additional data to inform the alternative(s). Meanwhile WorkSource offices and Employment Connections are a viable avenue to support reporting. Based on Unemployment Insurance data there is a small number of employers who use paper filing, but it is primarily paper amendments submitted by employer agents.

Advisory Committee is supportive of all methods of reporting and being sure all employers can access online before making it a requirement. There should be a backup for mailing payments. There are remote areas where internet is not always dependable.

Action Matt: analyze the data and provide the findings to Advisory Committee.

Benefits applications will be online as well as available to do over the phone. Alternatives to support employees included libraries, WorkSource, medical providers, health care providers / workers, worker's compensation.

The marketing vendor is working with the Communication's team to host Benefit Focus Groups in Seattle, Spokane and Yakima. They began on June 19 (through July 2), Advisory Committee members were invited to observe and still welcome to attend. The communications team will bring the results to a future Advisory Committee meeting.

Policy Update – April Amundson

April shared they are on track to finish all six rule making phases by the end of 2019. Her team is ramping up on documenting operational policies and creating a policy manual. She shared on the progress of hiring, and the team's next steps for developing the privacy rules. They will begin to stakeholder in August for the 2020 Legislative session.

For the Good of the Order

Edsonya Charles asked about the status of the poster requiring employers to provide benefits. Maggie requested Advisory Committee is given the opportunity to provide input on the poster as well as the associated rules for posting.

(Audience) Gina Rutledge asked if a tip sheet to support wage reporting and premium payments will be added to the website to help with troubleshooting. Matt confirmed we are adding FAQs on the website. If you have any specific questions, please contact the customer care team, 833-717-2273 or email paidleave@esd.wa.gov

John confirmed the team will provide a breakdown of the Voluntary Plan data at a future meeting after the voluntary plan holders have submitted their wage files and our data manager has analyzed the information provided.