

<b>Location</b>	Washington State Labor Council   321 16 <sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98144
<b>Time</b>	9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
<b>Attendees</b>	Department Representative: Carla Reyes, Paid Family and Medical Leave Director 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: Julia Gorton (phone) Employer's Interests Representative: Tammie Hetrick (phone) Paid Family and Medical Leave Act Ombuds: Edsonya Charles
<b>Guests</b>	PFML Operations Manager: John Mattes PFML Communications Manager: Clare DeLong PFML Assistant Ombuds: Wendy Galloway Marian Hammond, Brink Dave Metz, FM3 Research
<b>Members Absent</b>	Employer's Interests Representative: Bob Battles Employer's Interests Representative: Christine Brewer
<b>Scribe</b>	Tracy Moore

## Welcome and Introductions: Carla Reyes

- Welcome and Introductions were done around the room.
- Meeting Minutes will be approved electronically.

## Customer Experience with the Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 reporting and call statistics: John Mattes

John provided an overview of the reporting and call statistics (see updated presentation materials). He shared the average wait time is (insert the figure here) and the longest wait time was 35 minutes.

- **ACTION John:** Provide data for unsuccessful reports broken out by submission type (CSV File, ICESA File, Manual filing) (if available); Provide breakdown of bad data trends (if available)

John provided an overview of three scenarios that illustrate the current customer experience (based on actual scenarios and customer feedback):

- Customer #1: They filed on their own without assistance from us. Thanked us for the process not being too difficult. They did want to know why they couldn't print a copy of their final report.
- Customer #2: The customer was frustrated. When they went to SAW, there was nothing about PFML. It wasn't an easy process. They couldn't print a copy of their report for their files. When asked about placing a referral link on that SAW Landing page John shared the Department has and will continue working with WA Tech and our Communications to identify and apply any available tools or adjustments to ease the interaction challenges.
- Customer #3: An employer agent will need to have a power of attorney (POA) on file. This Customer (a third-party administrator) emailed us in early August and had not heard anything about the POAs submitted (uploaded them in July). They were frustrated that

Department did not notify them about the rejection of some of the POAs. With further research, PFML did not have the contact information for the employer agent in order to let them know.

John shared the POA process has been less than optimal. At one point in July there was a large backlog of approximately 5,800 POA forms for the the Customer Care Team to process (note the backlog has been cleared out as of the end of July). The Department addressed the large backlog by authorizing overtime; leveraging non-Customer Care Team resources to answer general email questions; and dedicating a handful of Care Staff to focus on POA processing. Lessons learned in this launch will be applied to planning and actions we take for Benefits phase.

A different issue also surfaced around the POA which will be corrected with the new release scheduled to launch tonight (8/15/2019). This improvement, referred to as Limited Access, will allow all employer agents to file and pay on behalf of their customers even if the POA has not yet been submitted, reviewed or updated. The employer agent is not able to go back into the Employer's account and amend or review the information after it is submitted; however, until the POA is received and processed.

John showed an excerpt from the 8/13/2019 All Employer Email, which contained Top 5 tips for Reporting. It was sent to 630,000 email addresses of employers, employer agents and independent contractors.

Julia asked whether a FAQ would be available on the paidleave.wa.gov website to provide answers to alert those planning for a qualifying event (e.g. birth of a child). It was discussed we often get similar questions from customers as well. Additional guidance is requested on what Customers who are planning to apply for Benefits should be doing now to get ready.

- **Action Clare:** Add information to the Employee (Worker) section of the website: FAQs about what to do if you have a qualifying condition NOW (e.g. pregnant and due in Dec 2019), what can they do to prepare for January
- **Action April:** Please follow up to provide information about whether a business with less than 150 employers can now opt into and pay the employer portion of the premium. (Note there was discussion also about whether employers can currently choose to pay the employee portion of the premium. The answer is yes, they are paying the premiums already, in this case they would simply not be collecting the employee portion.)

**April's Response (added 9/6 to the minutes) to the question above:** *Currently at this time, employers with fewer than 50 employees do not have the ability to opt-in for employer portion of premium assessment and payment. Employers with 150-50 employees are already being assessed premiums for the employer portion.*

*Since the only benefit to paying the employer share for fewer than 50 employees is to be able to receive a small business assistance grant, this is not available at this time. Benefits as you know will not be available until after the new year. Employers with fewer than 50 employees that have an employee that apply and take PFML leave, can apply for a small business assistance grant and will be assessed employer portion of premiums the quarter they apply for the grant.*

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## **Benefit and Focus Group Findings – Clare DeLong**

Presented by Marian Hammond, Brink and Dave Metz, FM3 Research as well as Clare DeLong focused on the March phone/online survey (810 employee interviews in English and Spanish) and 15 focus groups in June -July 2019 (Seattle, Yakima and Spokane).

Key findings:

- Employees say the most important reason to use paid leave are to recover from an illness, childbirth, or to care for a family member.
- Among those who took leave, two in five took less time off than what they felt they needed. Those with lower income did not take as much time off as those with a higher income.
- More than one third say they have not taken time off when they needed to.
- A majority is familiar with the PFML program, but few consider themselves “very familiar”.
- Full time employees have greater familiarity with the program than do part-time workers.
  - Also noted awareness increased with income.
- Certain questions and points of confusion were consistent across the employee groups.
  - Aspects that were most confusing about the program were:
    - Portability
    - Job Protection
    - Sign up and logistics
    - Breaking up the 12 weeks
    - FMLA
    - Timing
    - Negative Impacts (fraud or harm to small businesses)
- Several obstacles to participation in the program came up during the discussion
  - Previous negative experiences with government programs and excessive paperwork
  - Generalized lack of trust in government in general, particularly in African American participants
  - Workplace culture that created an obstacle for using the program, even though legal
  - Concern about impacts on coworkers and employers
  - Fear of retribution
  - Challenges in accessing information on the program due to language barriers

Participants said that if they had all the information they needed, they would take advantage of the program since the alternative would be a complete loss of wages.

- The most effective incentives would be knowing the program is legally required, employer encouragement, and job protection.
- The top scoring message referenced the commonality of facing emergencies and needing support during those times.
  - Life holds big moments for all of us. Sometimes those moments demand more of our time – like when a new child arrives, an aging parent falls or we become seriously ill. When it happens, PFML gives each of us the support to be off work and still be paid. And that can make a tough time a little easier for all of us.
- Messages that had a focus on “being there for family” also resonated strongly.

Healthcare employees expressed the willingness to tell their patients and clients about the program. Key considerations for them were what their role in serving patients was (for instance, Social Workers may be

better suited to deliver messaging) and the time they had available during an appointment in which to share information.

### Major Takeaways

- Keep it clear and simple.
- Dispelling a few key misconceptions can be impactful
- Emotional messaging plays an important role for employees.
- The concept of family was a critical motivator throughout.

### Feedback from Committee

- Samantha agrees that the healthcare community is very overworked but incredibly passionate.
- Marilyn has seen/heard similar reactions from the African-American community. A sense that they are judged more harshly by their coworkers and employers.
- Maggie is nervous about the small employer focus group. There were several employers that had negative relationships with their employees that impacted the opinions of the group.
- Julia noted that the focus group work seemed to be focused on gauging favorability toward the program which we have already had much information to establish. She was concerned about how this would be useful in the overarching communications and outreach campaign. Marian clarified that the work is helping them identify what messaging resonates and what challenges there may be to accessing the benefit. This will help in identifying appropriate messaging as well as in developing service delivery options that help try to alleviate such challenges.

Marian Hammond shared there is a broad understanding of the universal need to care for themselves or others at key moments. People are generally supportive of paid leave – with some questions and concerns. She noted some significant barriers for some Washingtonians:

- Belief that the program applies to them
- Complexity of understanding and applying for the benefit, and system/language barriers along the way
- Concerns about retaliation from coworkers or employers
- Concerns about wage replacement and job protection.

She expects, over time, the programs' momentum will remove some of these barriers. Workplaces and health care providers will adapt to address system issues; and as more Washingtonians use it, others will follow their lead. She also explained many barriers are more significant than a communications campaign can address this first year.

Together with ESD Paid Family and Medical Leave Communications, Brink is developing a Sequenced Campaign - segments the strategy by key audiences, identifies where each audience is in the journey, and does one of two things:

- "Pushes" innovators\* and early adopters\* and some early majority to use the benefit now.
- "Pulls" early majority\* and late majority\* by removing barriers and moving them toward future use.  
\*refer to Innovation Curve in presentation.

Next month, Brink will provide more specifics about the media campaign (Broad media, digital advertising, print and radio.) This will be a sequenced roll out over the next year. We want to be intentional about the volume of folks we're bringing into the system.

The committee showed concerns about the campaign timing and ensuring that we are not holding back on program messaging now as employees are eligible for the benefits. They want the opportunity to provide feedback on the strategy before it's too late. They also want to be able to prepare the communication strategy to their own groups and the timelines are very tight.

## **For the Good of the Order**

Edsonya asked for an update for alternatives to electronic filing. John shared the plan is still the same where current the Care staff is collecting as much data as possible to inform a decision that will be shared in September.

Carla announced there is an upcoming national PFML conference on October 22-24, in Tacoma. Advisory Committee "save-the-date" will be sent electronically.

PFML is on the agenda at the NASWA Conference in September.