

Meeting minutes: Rehabilitation Review Panel

Date: Jan. 9, 2025

Minutes prepared by: Katrina Namad

Location: Hybrid – Isanti Room, Department of Labor and Industry, 443 Lafayette Road N., St. Paul, MN, and online

Members present

- Angie Andresen
- Ashley Scully
- David Dubovich (remotely)
- David Frary (remotely)
- Jessica Stimac
- Laura Hokeness
- Megan Schueller (remotely)
- Richard Hills (remotely)
- Richard Zeman
- Russell Gelfman
- Stacie Goodrich
- Steven Patton (remotely)

DLI staff members present

- Alexis Johnson (remotely)
- Bretta Hines
- Denise Holmes
- Ethan Landy
- Jeanne Vogel (remotely)
- Jeff Hendrix
- Jess Larson (remotely)
- Jordan Trumbo
- Katrina Namad
- Michelle Doheny (remotely)
- Sarah Monson
- Virginia Prax (remotely)

Members absent

- Carl Crimmins
- Paul Osterbauer
- Scott Parker

Visitors present

- Danielle Hacker (remotely)
- Jeff Heimerl (remotely)
- Matthew Schmidt (remotely)

Agenda items

1. **Call to order** – Vice Chair Russell Gelfman called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. A roll call was taken and a quorum was met.
2. **Approval of the Jan. 9, 2025 agenda and the Nov. 3, 2024 meeting minutes** – A motion to approve both the agenda and meeting minutes was made by David Dubovich and seconded by Richard Zeman. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried.
3. **Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) updates – Assistant Commissioner Jessica Stimac**
 - The post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) study update was postponed from our previous meetings. We have requested the University of Minnesota present an update at a future meeting. A comprehensive update was given at the Dec. 11 Workers' Compensation Advisory Council (WCAC) meeting. The survey closed Dec. 30; the university is analyzing data and selecting stakeholders for interviews, which should be completed by the end of February.
 - The Medical Services Review Board (MSRB) will meet next Thursday from 4 to 6 p.m. and WCAC is scheduled to meet Jan. 22. If you are interested in the department's policymaking activities and our

stakeholders' involvement, I encourage you to attend these public meetings. Information about how to attend is available on our website.

- The December edition of *COMPACT* has been published. This quarterly newsletter contains information relevant to our stakeholders. You can subscribe on our website. We plan to increase the frequency of communications to our subscribers. In addition to the quarterly publication, we will send more frequent updates, such as Work Comp Campus news. If you are not already subscribed, we encourage you to join the subscriber list.
- The comment period for the rehabilitation rules ended Oct. 23, with no comments received, so no hearing was held and there are no changes to the rules published Sept. 23. The rulemaking record was submitted to the administrative law judge (ALJ) at the Office of Administrative Hearings yesterday. The ALJ will now review the submission for legality and form. It will be reviewed within 14 days and a report will be issued that may approve, disapprove or suggest changes. If disapproved, the chief ALJ will issue another report within five working days. Following ALJ approval, we may adopt the rules, after which the governor has a 14-day veto period. Barring a veto, a notice of adoption will be published in the *State Register* and the rules will become effective five working days after that. This has been a lengthy process, taking six to seven years. I appreciate the panel's work and recommendations and am excited to have reached this milestone.
- At our most recent meeting, I provided a list of staffing changes and now have additional updates to share.
 - Dr. Taiwo Lawal joined DLI as a medical consultant Oct. 14. She is board-certified in internal and occupational medicine, with more than 20 years of experience. Lawal advises the DLI commissioner about the supervision of injured employees' care continuum. She is also assisting MSRB with draft recommendations for low back treatment parameters related to injections and aiding Minnesota OSHA about potential blood lead levels rulemaking.
 - Brenda Beebe transitioned from insurance verification in the Special Compensation Fund to copy file review lead, succeeding Tony Galvan.
 - Pam Carlson, our workers' compensation ombudsman with 35 years of workers' compensation experience, retired Jan. 6. Lisa Wichterman, previously our medical policy specialist, will succeed Pam, starting Jan. 29.
 - Lila Zarins, a compliance services officer with 45 years of service, retired in early December. She had extensive knowledge of dependency and permanent total disability benefits. We recently filled her position.
 - Chris Leifeld retired after more than a decade with DLI, having served in various roles, including assistant commissioner and director of the Compliance, Records and Training (CRT) unit. Leifeld was actively involved with this panel, MSRB and the Workers' Compensation Insurers' Task Force. Sandy Stoddard, with more than 25 years in the workers' compensation industry, is our new director of CRT.

4. Education – Denise Holmes, CRT

- CRT rehabilitation policy specialist Jordan Trumbo will discuss vocational testing at today's meeting.
- We will present an online training about QRCs' options for assistance with unpaid rehabilitation bills from the Alternative Dispute Resolution and CRT units at DLI. Details and training materials will be announced and posted online soon.
- The online rehabilitation FAQs are being updated with current issues and tips. The updated document will be posted online as a resource guide.

- A reminder that the qualified rehabilitation consultant (QRC) intern orientation seminar will be in person at DLI on Monday, Feb. 10. Please register by Jan. 24.
- A new document by the Business Technology Office (BTO) unit is available online, detailing updates to the change of employment process for a QRC or QRC intern. A BTO staff member will provide more information later in this meeting.
- Lastly, if you have any ideas or specific topics of interest for future DLI trainings, please share them with us.

5. Vocational testing – Jordan Trumbo, CRT

- Trumbo provided an overview of the vocational testing presentation. The focus was on providing general guidance about selecting, timing and effectively applying assessments. This approach allows for professional judgment in delivering individualized services. She noted the presentation would cover general information, regulations, certification levels and trends in vocational testing.
- Trumbo addressed several key points, including:
 - regulations;
 - decision-making – emphasis should be on necessity over internship requirements;
 - certification requirements;
 - assessment results;
 - transitioning careers;
 - client communication;
 - qualified administration;
 - types of tests – achievement and aptitude testing, IQ testing, interest and work values testing and personality assess testing;
 - test administration;
 - scoring and interpretation;
 - discussing results; and
 - best practices.

6. QRC access management in Campus – Jeff Hendrix, Sarah Monson and Sylvia Casadey, BTO

- Jeff Hendricks introduced himself and indicated this presentation will also feature contributions from Sarah Monson and Sylvia Casadey. Hendrix attended two recent Rehabilitation Review Panel meetings to capture year-end efforts on QRCs and early-year work. His team has been enhancing Campus for more than two years, emphasizing three main areas in 2024:
 - making documents more accessible and navigable;
 - enhancing data in Campus, particularly for insurers and third-party administrators; and
 - shifting from quarterly deployments and adopting a more frequent deployment cadence.
- The first two deployments in 2025 implemented more than 20 items. Hendrix will cover last quarter achievements, focusing on QRC process enhancements based on a usability study. Monson, who joined DLI in February 2024, will discuss user experience research and implementation.
- Monson is a user experience researcher. Her expertise lies in ethnographic methods, understanding key players' behaviors and needs within their context, which is particularly crucial in workers' compensation, due to its diverse stakeholders. Before joining DLI, she worked as a user experience research consultant at a user experience agency in Minneapolis, improving clients' digital products.
- The user research process identifies who the users are, their needs and their wants. This involves understanding the users' roles, daily tasks, successes and obstacles. By gathering feedback from real users, we share insights with decision-makers to prioritize design and development, enhancing the

overall user experience. Our goal is to avoid pitfalls of designs lacking user input and ensure our solutions meet user needs effectively.

- User research is a continuous cycle to:
 - identify – understand who our users are, their needs and how they expect Campus to work;
 - prototype – develop potential solutions based on insights gathered; and
 - evaluate – present solutions to users for feedback and iterate based on input.
- Recent implementation examples for QRCs include:
 - addressed QRC feedback for viewing open rehabilitation cases;
 - streamlined the filing process for change of QRC forms;
 - conducted usability studies with DLI’s Vocational Rehabilitation unit; and
 - expanded usability studies to other user groups.
- Future plans include:
 - developing a roadmap for testing priorities;
 - investigating issues with forms in draft status; and
 - researching to improve Campus tracking and deadline management.
- Benefits of user research:
 - by engaging with users and observing their interactions, we optimize functionality, enhance usability, reduce onboarding time, increase task efficiency and improve user satisfaction.
- Sylvia Casadey joined DLI in May 2024, bringing more than 17 years of experience in the private sector. She delivered digital solutions across 80 countries, in 14 languages and to 120,000 users. Her background spans various roles in development cycles, from developer to team lead, scrum master, product owner and user researcher.
- Recent enhancements Casadey has worked on for QRCs include:
 - improving the process for QRCs to change employment organizations within Campus;
 - facilitating the submission of change of QRC requests, eliminating workarounds;
 - improving sorting of rehabilitation transactions for QRCs;
 - automating document tagging for Rehabilitation Consultation Report submissions; and
 - extending the timeline for forms in draft status based on user feedback.
- Coming enhancements include:
 - automated updates to the QRC’s email account, address and phone number;
 - the “Employment History” tab will be updated to reflect changes automatically; and
 - Campus will remove all previous transactions related to former firms, streamlining the “My Claims,” “My Disputes” and “My Rehabs” tabs.
- Recent internal changes by BTO include:
 - adding a new registration tab to facilitate CRT audits; and
 - resolving issues with incorrect registration dates due to meetings, employment changes or supervision changes.
- We are pleased with the improvements, which save time, enhance intuitiveness and streamline processes, ultimately achieving our goal.

7. Future agenda items – Vice-chair Gelfman and panel

- We have discussed the PTSD study data availability. The full report is scheduled for release in August. If the University of Minnesota presented at the April meeting, the update would focus on the study’s scope and status, without preliminary findings or data. The update would solely address the process. After further discussion, it was decided to not have the university present anything in

April. After the August report release, a comprehensive update will be provided at the October Rehabilitation Review Panel meeting instead.

- Last year, Laura Hokeness discussed QRC training opportunities with the board, including TSA, LMS, vocational testing and retraining. The University of Wisconsin – Stout offers training programs for QRC updates or intern training, usable by individual QRCs or through a rental arrangement with MARP.
- QRCs with nursing backgrounds need training. She met with MARP and MASPPR leadership in July to discuss further. Assistant Commissioner Stimac informed the panel that as a regulatory agency, DLI must adhere to rules and cannot prescribe specific training without legislative changes. The rehabilitation community is highly regulated; additional regulation requires interest from the QRC community and statutory changes. The MARP and MASPPR merger will be a powerful tool moving forward. MARP and MASPPR can recommend training to their members, but DLI must be cautious as a government entity.

8. Next in-person meeting – The next in-person meeting is Thursday, April 3, at 1 p.m.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Stacie Goodrich and seconded by Ashley Scully. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 2:49 p.m.