

## Meeting notes: Workers' Compensation Insurers' Task Force (WCITF)

Date: April 1, 2026

Minutes prepared by: Nathaniel Corcoran

Location: Hybrid – Minnesota Room at the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), 443 Lafayette Road N., St. Paul, MN, and online via Webex

### Members present

- Lee Ingrassia, co-chair
- Angie Andresen (remotely)
- Matthew Fasse (remotely)
- Stacy Kohlhofer (remotely)
- Deb Norsten (remotely)
- Sherry Staffa (remotely)
- John Wiatros
- Lee Ziegler (remotely)
- Patty Hammil (remotely for Sarah Groskreutz)
- Shawn Gregoire (remotely for Gary Westman)

### Members absent

- Gary Westman, co-chair
- Mike Johns
- Michael Schneider
- Sarah Groskreutz
- Steve Patton
- Ryan Shaughnessy

### DLI staff members present

- Abdi Takhal (remotely)
- Alexis Johnson (remotely)
- Jeff Hendrix (remotely)
- Bretta Hines
- Brian Mak
- Denise Holmes
- Jeanne Vogel (remotely)
- Katrina Namad
- Lisa Wichterman
- Lynne Knowles (remotely)
- Nathaniel Corcoran
- Sandy Stoddard
- Sharon Benkufsky (remotely)
- Tom Garza (remotely)

### Visitors present

- Steve Stone (remotely)

## Agenda items

1. **Call to order** – The meeting was called to order by co-chair Lee Ingrassia at 9:05 a.m. Roll call was taken. Brief introductions were made.
2. **Department updates – Bretta Hines, Office of General Counsel, DLI**
  - Bretta Hines confirmed the Workers’ Compensation Advisory Council (WCAC) continues to consider proposals for a legislative package for this year. The department anticipates a proposed package will be reviewed at the next WCAC meeting April 8, 2026. If legislation is passed, details will be included in an coming edition of the *COMPACT* newsletter.
  - Members discussed a recent WCAC presentation concerning filing requirements for claim petitions at the Court of Administrative Hearings (CAH) and potential procedural clarifications. John Wiatros expressed willingness to share redacted examples of incomplete claim petitions to support potential WCAC review.
3. **Alternative Dispute Resolution update – Brian Mak, Alternative Dispute Resolution, DLI**
  - Brian Mak provided an overview of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) services and activity metrics for 2024. Highlights included:
    - 66,000 OSHA-reportable work injuries and 6,600 total dispute filings.
    - ADR handled approximately 3,000 disputes (1,600 medical and 1,400 rehabilitation).
    - ADR maintains initial jurisdiction over medical disputes under \$7,500, excessive treatment disputes and all rehabilitation disputes.
    - CAH retains jurisdiction for primary liability denials, wage loss denials and formal hearings.
  - Key clarifications:
    - Concurrent litigation at CAH does not automatically trigger a referral from ADR.
    - Referral is required only when inconsistent determinations are likely.
  - ADR services summary:
    - Inquiry and education – about 5,000 inquiries a year and supports injured workers, providers, qualified rehabilitation consultants, insurers, employers and attorneys.
    - Certification of disputes – required before attorney fees and, in 2024, 54% of medical and 45% of rehabilitation disputes were certified.
    - Conferences – typically scheduled within 70 days (medical) or 31 days (rehabilitation) and more than half resolve prior to conference.
    - Mediation – free service with approximately 1,000 mediations a year, with about 85% successfully settling.
  - Other DLI resources: ombudsman office, help desk and early referral pathways were highlighted as tools available to prevent unnecessary litigation.
4. **Rulemaking update – Alexis Johnson, Office of General Counsel, DLI**
  - The department, in consultation with the Medical Services Review Board (MSRB), is working on updating the injection treatment parameters; an initial working rule draft is available on the Workers’ compensation rulemaking webpage; comments from interested parties about the proposed changes are welcome.

- Post-traumatic stress disorder treatment criteria updates are being considered consistent with new 2025 American Psychological Association guidelines.
- MSRB will discuss updates at its April 16 meeting; feedback remains welcome.

#### **5. Work Comp Campus update – Jeff Hendrix, Business Technology Office, DLI**

- The benefits tab fix is nearing completion, with improved accuracy and navigation.
- The assessments and payments rework is underway, with completion targeted for July 2026.
- There is ongoing user research, with more than 200 completed usability sessions informing platform enhancements.
- Additional notes included the efforts to increase injured worker participation in Work Comp Campus and discussion of coming improvements to request-for-information functionality.

#### **6. Compliance, Records and Training update – Sandy Stoddard, of Compliance, Records and Training, DLI**

- A batch of invoices was sent without claim numbers; Compliance, Records and Training or the help desk can provide associated penalty numbers.
- Beginning next month, statements will include both the claim number and penalty number.
- Compliance, Records and Training is reviewing workflow options and welcomes feedback regarding service access.

#### **7. Discussion points**

- Members discussed significant United States Postal Service (USPS) delays that impact timeliness standards for mailed payments. Key points included:
  - Postmark dates no longer reliably reflect mailing dates, sometimes delayed by several days.
  - Delays have resulted in approximately 38 late-check inquiries during past disruptions for one insurer.
  - USPS issued similar warnings regarding postmark timing.
  - Insurers are encouraged to mail payments resulting from an award on stipulation well in advance of statutory deadlines.

#### **8. Future agenda items – Please reach out to co-chairs Ingrassia and Gary Westman.**

- **Workers' Compensation Summit ideas:** Medicare

#### **9. Next meeting – The next WCITF meeting will be May 20, 2026.**

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:09 a.m.