

## Meeting minutes: Rehabilitation Review Panel

Date: July 10, 2025

Minutes prepared by: Katrina Namad

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

### Members present

Ashley Scully  
Carl Crimmins (chair)  
David Dubovich (remotely)  
Jessica Stimac, assistant commissioner  
(remotely)  
Laura Hokeness (remotely)  
Richard Hills (remotely)  
Stacie Goodrich (remotely)  
Steve Patton

### Members absent

Angie Andresen  
David Frary  
Megan Schueller  
Paul Osterbauer  
Russell Gelfman (vice-chair)  
Sarah Hunter  
Scott Parker

### DLI staff members present

Alexis Johnson  
April DelCastillo (remotely)  
Bretta Hines  
Denise Holmes  
Elora Leene (remotely)  
Jordan Trumbo  
Katrina Namad  
Lisa Wichterman (remotely)  
Michelle Doheny (remotely)  
Salina Tekle  
Sandy Stoddard  
Silvia Casadey  
Tom Garza (remotely)

### Visitors present

Kaylene Kickhafer

## Agenda items

- 1. Call to order** – Chair Carl Crimmins called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. A roll call was taken and a quorum was met.
- 2. Approval of April 3, 2025, meeting minutes** – A motion to approve the meeting minutes was made by Ashley Scully and seconded by Steve Patton. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried.

**3. Approval of July 10, 2025 agenda** – A motion to approve the agenda was made by Scully and seconded by Patton. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried.

**4. DLI updates – Assistant Commissioner Jessica Stimac –**

- The legislative deadline of Aug. 1 for the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) study is fast approaching and the University of Minnesota and DLI team are diligently finalizing the report. As mentioned in previous meetings, the university will present the report at the panel's fall meeting.
- The remaining department updates will be delivered by DLI staff members during the agenda items.

**5. Compliance, Records and Training (CRT) update – Sandy Stoddard, DLI CRT**

- In January, the Alternative Dispute Resolution unit and CRT presented about resolving unpaid rehabilitation bills and associated penalties. Following this, a webinar for the qualified rehabilitation consultant (QRC) community detailed the informal and formal avenues for bill payment. Recently, a simplified training module has been added to the DLI website's training library. This three-minute video provides guidance about resolving unpaid bills and understanding penalty opportunities.
- Jordan Trumbo, rehabilitation policy specialist, DLI CRT, provided her updates.
  - The next QRC intern orientation is Aug. 11, with 12 people registered. Also open to internal staff members and new staff members interested in rehabilitation, it primarily targets interns and their supervisors. It is also for anyone wanting to refresh their skills or learn more about departmental activities.
  - The rehabilitation FAQs page is under review to keep information relevant and up to date. Efforts since last fall have focused on gathering and tracking FAQs. The goal is to update the page soon, considering content and formatting. Input about commonly asked questions and suggestions for improvement are welcome.

**6. Federal law's impact on Minnesota workers' compensation – Bretta Hines, DLI Office of General Counsel**

- At a recent RRP meeting, DLI was asked to discuss the federal law's impact on Minnesota workers' compensation. Generally, state workers' compensation laws cannot be pre-empted by federal law unless Congress clearly intends otherwise. Conflict pre-emption and the following cases were mentioned: *New York Cent. R. Co. v. White*; *Sanchez v. Dahlke Trailer Sales, Inc.*; and *Arizona v. United States*.
- Related to an undocumented worker receiving workers' compensation benefits and vocational rehabilitation, the following cases were discussed: *Gonzalez vs. Midwest Staffing Group*; *Correa v. Weymouth Farms, Inc.*; *Rivas v. Car Wash Partners*; and *Lala v. Azia Restaurant*.
- Benefits are available even if immigration status impacts job search ability. Undocumented workers in Minnesota can receive workers' compensation benefits and vocational rehabilitation services if they meet the definition of a qualified employee.

- Vocational rehabilitation services can be provided to undocumented workers, though job placement services may pose legal challenges.

#### **7. Injured worker resources – Michelle Doheny, DLI Business Technology Office (BTO)**

- The last meeting raised the question of Work Comp Campus access for injured workers, sparking a discussion about resources and support. Since then, internal discussions have assessed materials, identified gaps and reviewed website content for updates. BTO has also received related stakeholder feedback.
- Efforts are ongoing to review and update materials to better support injured workers and enhance resources. Further work and updates are in progress.
- A welcome was extended to Elora Leene. She will work across various areas of the Workers' Compensation Division, including Campus.

#### **8. System report – Hared Mah, DLI Research and Data Analytics**

- Hared Mah provided an overview of the coming system report, covering indemnity benefits, vocational rehabilitation and dispute resolution. Data is sourced from the department and the Minnesota Workers' Compensation Insurers Association, with figures adjusted for inflation. COVID-19 claims from 2020 through 2022 are shown separately, but 2023 trends are returning to pre-pandemic levels.
- Data about claim rates and benefits are included in the report, which is posted on the DLI website.
- For vocational rehabilitation, two charts compare indemnity benefits with rehabilitation, which generally fluctuates around 5,000. In 2023, 22% of workers with indemnity benefits had rehabilitation plans, a figure largely unchanged when excluding COVID-19.
- The average cost for vocational rehabilitation services, adjusted for wage inflation, was approximately \$10,000 in 2023, with a median of about \$6,700. Costs are trending higher.
- Most plan closures are due to plan completion (46% to 51%) or settlements (26% to 33%). Regarding return-to-work status, 57% of plans closed in 2024 had participants reporting a job, with 41.5% returning to the same employer. For workers with completed plans, 26% had plans closed for other reasons.
- The speed at which workers start receiving services has improved. From 2004 to 2023, the average time from injury to the start of services decreased from eight months to five months. Service duration has also decreased, with the average dropping from 15 months to just less than 13 months. Recent numbers may be revised as more information becomes available.
- Rehabilitation requests have increased, from 30% to 45%. Non-certification often leads to resolution. The median days from filing a dispute to a pre-schedule conference have fluctuated due to a law change requiring rehabilitation request conferences within 21 days.
- Additional detail and analysis can be found in the report itself, posted on the DLI website.

## 9. Rehabilitation rules and Campus updates – Alexis Johnson, DLI Office of General Counsel and Silvia Casadey, DLI BTO

- After years of hard work, the rulemaking that amended vocational rehabilitation from Minnesota Rules Chapter 5220 is now complete. The notice of adoption was published June 23 in the *State Register* and the rules became effective June 30. There were no changes from the proposed rule draft published in September. A full copy of the rules is available on the department’s rulemaking webpage.
- Although this group is likely familiar with the rule draft, a brief recap is warranted due to recent turnover and the time since our last in-depth review. The rule amendments updated and reorganized the registration process and requirements for workers’ compensation rehabilitation providers.
- New rule sections were added to make the rules more user-friendly and clarify requirements for each rehabilitation provider group. Key amendments include:
  - updated and added key definitions;
  - updated documents incorporated by reference;
  - removed the option to file rehabilitation documents by fax, now requiring filing in Campus;
  - clarified approved rehabilitation vendor services;
  - made various administrative updates for consistency; and
  - repealed some parts and moved many provisions into newly created sections for better organization.

Silvia Casadey provided a demonstration of updates made in Campus to align with these amended rules.

- Changes were made to registration forms for QRCs and QRC interns, including initial, reinstatement and renewal forms. The renewal form now requires QRCs to affirm Minnesota residency or residency within 100 miles.
- Another change requires indicating the most recent department rehabilitation session attended, with the date in the past. Instructions have been updated to reflect rehabilitation changes. The registration fee has increased from \$100 to \$140 for QRCs and QRC interns. Once submitted, the form, including confirmation of residency and session date, is reviewed internally by CRT for approval.
- Another change impacts rehabilitation providers, with separate forms for QRC interns and rehabilitation vendors. The renewal process was shown; providers access their form and click “Submit Registration.” The renewal form for a QRC firm now requires confirmation of Minnesota residency or proximity within 100 miles. Another checkbox confirms all employees providing rehabilitation services are up to date with required sessions. The registration fee has increased from

\$200 to \$280. CRT will review the form, including responses related to residency and staff member attendance and will follow up if requirements are not met.

- Questions:

- What happens if “no” is selected for those boxes?

Currently, answering “no” does not trigger any tasks or alerts for CRT.

Future enhancements may include this feature. For now, CRT will follow up with providers if a “no” response is noted during form review.

- Has there been any discussion about providing an online payment option for QRCs at the time of renewal instead of mailing a check? Who would be the best person to answer this question?

Denise Holmes provided a response. The feedback regarding an online payment option for QRCs at the time of renewal has been noted and brought to the group. It is being considered as a possible future enhancement, but we do not have that capability at this time.

#### **10. Future agenda items – Crimmins and panel**

- There has been discussion about presenting the PTSD study results at the October meeting, should the panel be interested.
- Elections.

#### **11. Next in-person meeting – The next in-person meeting is Thursday, Oct. 2, at 1 p.m.**

## **Adjournment**

- A motion to adjourn was made by Scully and seconded by Stacie Goodrich. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 2:06 p.m.