

WORKERS' COMPENSATION
MANAGEMENT-LABOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Access To Care Subcommittee Committee Meeting

June 25, 2025
9:00 a.m.– 11:00 a.m.

Committee members present via zoom:

Emily Cronan, Oregon Nurses Association
Kim Schlessinger, Samaritan Health Services

Staff:

Teri Watson, MLAC Committee Administrator
Baaba Ampah, MLAC Assistant

| Agenda Item | Discussion |
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| Opening | |
| (00:00:00) | Co-chair Kim Schlessinger called the meeting to order and shared an affirmation. She announced that the scope statement is on the MLAC webpage. |
| | Provider Feedback -Audrey Duke NP |
| (00:02:05) | Audrey Duke introduced herself as a retired nurse practitioner who practiced at Northbend Medical Center in Coos Bay, Oregon with 17 years of experience in workers' compensation. She shared her experience in the system: |
| (00:02:53) | Barriers to Care: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasized that a strong team support (experienced physician, billing staff and medical assistant) is essential for efficient claims management, especially one person dedicated to billing workers' compensation claims.• Post-Covid, referrals to any medical services became a barrier as people needed to be treated in a timely manner. This is a barrier in workers' compensation and primary care, as well.• Referrals at Northbend Medical Center, such as MRIs, allowed for timely treatment and efficient billing.• Experienced few barriers caused by injured workers; abuse in the system by workers was rare. |
| (00:06:15) | Collaboration with other providers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initially collaborated with Dr. Gerber on workers' compensation cases, later relied on orthopedic specialists for guidance.• Her background in nursing and six years in orthopedics helped her form and maintain professional relationships with orthopedic providers, which she utilized during in her practice. |

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- (00:07:54) Staff :
- Emphasized that well-educated and well-trained office staff is key for efficiencies.
 - Although insurer caseworkers were a resource, it was a barrier as it was sometimes hard to get in contact with them.
- (00:09:47) Co-chair Cronan asked if referrals were a barrier due to prolonged appointment times or problems connecting with providers. Audrey Duke answered that some providers, such as physical therapists, do not accept workers' compensation. This limits the availability of local options, forcing patients to travel long distances, which is impractical for many patients. These issues are within the MCO network.
- (00:11:41) In regards to difficulty getting in contact with caseworkers, Co-chair Cronan asked what the pathway was communicating with them. Audrey Duke answered that she typically called case workers directly, as it was the most effective way to communicate. She also noted that response time varied from a day or two to as long as a week.
- (00:12:56) Ryan Hearn, Roseburg Forest Products and MLAC member, asked what the biggest barriers for providers getting into workers' compensation. Audrey Duke responded that lack of education deters providers. She noted that provider conference do not have much education regarding workers' compensation.
- (00:16:00) Ryan Hearn asked Audrey Duke was she would change about the system to open it up. Audrey Duke answered that allowing nurse practitioners to treat longer than the 180 days would be helpful. In order to treat patients longer, she had to receive special permission from the MCO.
- (00:18:05) Co-chair Cronan asked about the process of connecting to an MCO and extending treatment longer than 180 days. Audrey Duke mentioned that Majoris MCO would ask her to do so, and she would discuss with her staff when it happened.
- (00:19:16) Lon Holsten asked about the number of staff members and their roles that made it easier to treat injured workers. Audrey Duke explained that she relied on an exceptional medical assistant, who learned on the job, and an experienced billing specialist at Northbend Medical Center. She explained that most people learn workers' compensation on the job and advocated for better education for billing staff.
- (00:21:02) Ryan Hearn echoed Audrey's point that education and knowledge of staff is essential for success. Audrey Duke agreed to Ryan's question that extending nurse practitioners time of treatment, as long as they are partnered with a Medical Doctor (MD) or a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO), would be successful outside an MCO.
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- (00:22:58) Matt West, WCD Administrator, noted that WCD is committed to educating all stakeholders and asked if there is advice on educational opportunities that WCD might be missing. Audrey Duke responded that Oregon State Board of Nursing and Physician Assistant conferences would be helpful. Co-chair Schlessinger added that the biannual Lane County Association of Nurse Practitioners annual conference and the Governor Occupational Safety and Health (GOSH) conference would be a great place to educate providers about workers' compensation.
- (00:26:32) Teri Watson asked if the nurse practitioner group are by local chapters or statewide. Co-chair Cronan answered that the Nurse Practitioner of Oregon (NPO), which operates within Oregon Nurse association (ONA), is state affiliated. However it does not mean they do not have relationship with regional chapters or appropriate union bargaining unit.
- (00:27:44) Ann Klein, Majoris Health, mentioned the nurse practitioner extension program, explaining that Majoris Health has started partnering with advanced nurse practitioners to extend treatment beyond the 180 days when appropriate, especially in rural areas. MCOs have the ability to extend treatment, and it is documented for WCD. She noted that this type of collaboration is productive, and Majoris Health is hoping to offer it statewide to any interested advanced nurse practitioner or physician associates. After the program is designed, Majoris will update their MCO plan to outline an educational program.
- Public Comment - Stakeholder Feedback**
- (00:31:19) There were not additional comments.
- (00:31:51) Teri Watson announced that next meeting, August 8, there will be an interim medical director and operations manager coming from Ontario.
- (00:32:28) Co-chair Schlessinger encouraged feedback from stakeholders.
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- (00:32:28) Co-chair Schlessinger adjourned the meeting at 9:33 a.m.

*These minutes include time stamps from the meeting video found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BT-MjRIaWVc>

**Referenced documents can be found on the MLAC Meeting Information page here:

<https://www.oregon.gov/DCBS/mlac/Pages/access-to-care-subcommittee.aspx>