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WCDToday

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Sally Coen

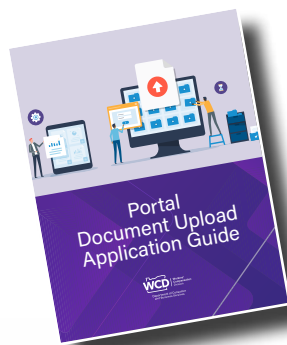
Administrator's notebook: Division and legislative updates

By Sally Coen, WCD administrator.

Welcome back to another edition of *WCD Today*. Before diving into some updates from the recent legislative session, I am excited to share what's been going on at the division for the last six months.

The Modernization Program has fully implemented the document upload application through the WCD portal. Through the application, insurers, self-insured employers, and service companies are able to submit certain documents:

- Audit referrals
- Audit responses
- Appellate review dispute responses
- Medical resolution dispute responses
- Vocational dispute responses
- Employer-at-Injury Program (EAIP) reimbursement requests



The document upload application is easy to navigate, secure, and fast. Uploaded documents go directly to the related program area. The division has created a [user guide](#) to help customers navigate

the application and answer frequently asked questions. The guide also contains contact information if users need help in real time.

The 2023 legislative session recently ended. Administrators from the Department of Consumer and Business Services testified before the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development in March about the agency's accomplishments from the last biennium and its

budget goals for the next. As Director Andrew Stolfi told the committee, DCBS made sacrifices during the 2021-23 biennium in anticipation of any shortfalls due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these restrictions, WCD served the people of Oregon through one of the most difficult times in recent memory. Now that life and the economy resemble what they were pre-pandemic, WCD and DCBS asked the committee to approve a budget that would allow for improvements to our information technology infrastructure. Many organizations and community members testified on behalf of DCBS and WCD, commending the programs and services the division administers. We cannot do this important work without the partnership of our customers and external partners. Thank you all so much for your support.

The Oregon Legislature passed DCBS' budget bill, [House Bill 5010](#), which will allow WCD to continue

improving business processes and technology to better serve customers, initiate the program's core system project, make the limited-duration positions of project manager and change management analyst permanent, as well as add a system tester in 2024. The division is grateful for your confidence in us and extends its promise to continue doing the work that helps make Oregon safe for workers and affordable for employers.

This session, there were also a few bills that affect Oregon's workers' compensation system. [House Bill 3471](#) makes it unlawful for an employer to make an offer to negotiate a settlement agreement conditional upon a worker also entering into an agreement that includes a no-rehire provision. The bill also makes it unlawful for an employer to make an offer for settlement agreement conditional upon a no-rehire provision, unless:

- Before the offer, the worker has given the employer written confirmation of the worker's willingness to enter into an agreement that includes a no-rehire provision as a condition of entering into the settlement agreement.
- And the settlement offer affirmatively states that entering into the settlement agreement is conditional upon the worker also entering into an agreement that includes a no-rehire provision.

A worker may file a complaint with the Bureau of Labor and Industries for violations of these provisions and may bring a civil action and recover a civil penalty of up to \$5,000. The bill

becomes effective immediately.

[House Bill 3412](#) increases the time that a physician assistant (PA) may be an attending physician to an injured worker. A PA may be the attending physician for a cumulative total of 180 days from the first visit on the initial claim. The PA may also authorize temporary disability benefits for up to 180 days from the date of the first visit on the initial claim. A PA who is not a member of a managed care organization (MCO) will be able to provide continued care for workers under their care if they follow certain conditions. A PA who is authorized to provide medical services to a worker enrolled in an MCO may provide medically appropriate treatment according to the MCO's process. MCOs may authorize PAs to provide medical services and authorize temporary disability payments for longer periods. The bill becomes effective Jan. 1, 2024.

[House Bill 2696](#) establishes the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters. The bill authorizes the Health Licensing Office to issue sign language interpreter licenses, including supervisory, provisional, educational, medical, and legal sign language interpreter licenses. Except in limited circumstances, only a licensed person may provide signed language interpreter services. Only a licensed medical sign language interpreter may provide signed language interpretation services in a medical setting as defined by the board. Only a licensed legal

sign language interpreter may provide signed language interpretation services in a legal setting as defined by the board. Signed language interpretation service providers may not employ or contract with an individual who is not licensed to provide signed language interpretation services. The bill becomes effective Jan. 1, 2024.

[Senate Bill 418](#) removes the minimum four-hour period that a worker must be absent from work for compensable medical services before the worker may receive temporary disability benefits for the absence. An insurer may require confirmation that a worker is absent from work to receive compensable medical services. These payments will not trigger the advance notice requirement under ORS 656.262(4)(j) that temporary disability benefits are ending. The bill becomes effective Jan. 1, 2024.

We invite our external customers – workers, employers, attorneys, insurers, self-insured employers, service companies, medical care providers, and community groups – to share their experiences and feedback with us about navigating the Oregon workers' compensation system that we've worked hard to build together. While we're all proud of what we have accomplished, the division is always looking for ways to improve.

You can reach out to any of our program areas that you work directly with or to me at sally.c.coen@dcbs.oregon.gov. ■

Modernization Program update



Heather Williamson

*By Heather Williamson,
Modernization Program
manager.*

The Modernization Program has been busy since our last update.

The main focus of the program since January has been preparing for our first major project, the Core System Implementation. WCD will be replacing multiple legacy applications and databases that are more than 30 years old and require extensive workarounds and patches. The Core System will act as the division's foundation, serving all of its program areas and allowing centralized sign-on, records management, and automation.

Large projects like the Core System require extensive oversight from the State of Oregon Department of Administrative Services Enterprise Information Services (DAS EIS). DAS EIS endorsed the Core System Implementation project in March 2023. The endorsement allowed the program to begin the process of hiring a team to build the system.

As part of DCBS' 2023-25 biennium budget, the Modernization Program asked for funding

authority for its permanent team and for the vendors who will work on the first project. In the [January edition of WCD Today](#), I mentioned that we hired Steve Unwin to be the program's project manager and Darcy Crisp as the change management analyst. Originally, these were approved by the Legislature as limited duration positions. As part of the new budget, the program was able to make the positions permanent. Steve and Darcy have already made a positive impact on the program and project in the short time they have been with the division.

In addition to adding the permanent project manager and change management analyst positions, the new budget includes funding authority for a tester, professional IT services, independent quality management services (iQMS), and procurement and contract administration costs. The program has been working closely with DCBS and DAS procurement to request quotes for professional IT services and iQMS. Once contracts



Steve Unwin



Darcy Crisp



are approved for IT services, those contracted positions will help in the hiring of the main vendor WCD will use to create our first system.

As we prepare for the first IT project, the program has worked hard on other areas important to stakeholders. As Sally mentioned, the division implemented the document upload application through its Web portal. It completed a project to ensure business continuity as longtime WCD employees retire by establishing trained backups for its most critical positions. The program is also working with stakeholders and subject matter experts to streamline and simplify mandatory rule language. The focus has been on rule language that must be included in notices to workers. The division was able to increase the readability of the language. Proposed changes of the final revised language will go through the normal rulemaking process, and the public will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the changes. The division is especially interested in perspectives from workers. This step is especially critical because the goal is to create communication that is understandable to workers.

You can visit the Modernization Program's [news page](#) to read more about the work it has done in streamlining worker communications and how to provide feedback regarding the changes. There, you'll also find more information about the process of undertaking the Core System Implementation and updates about its progress.

If you would like to share your input about the work the Modernization Program is doing, please email me at WCD.Modernization@dcbs.oregon.gov. ■

Meet new Employment Services Team Manager: Charity Steffen

On Feb. 1, longtime WCD employee Charity Steffen became the division's new Employment Services Team

(EST) manager. The team includes the Benefit Consultation Unit, administers benefits through the Employer-at-Injury (EAIP) and the Preferred Worker programs (PWP), and resolves disputes regarding vocational assistance.

"WCD is very fortunate to have Charity leading our EST programs," WCD Administrator Sally Coen said. "Her passion for the programs

enables our team to provide creative, responsive service to our customers."

Charity joined the division in 2013 as a temporary scheduler in the Appellate Review Unit (ARU). When that position ended, Charity joined EST as an office specialist supporting PWP and then was hired as a re-employment assistant. Charity wanted to take on more

responsibility and learn something new, so she returned to ARU as a reclassification specialist. In 2018, Charity rejoined the PWP team as a re-employment specialist. In 2022, Charity became the lead worker in her area.

"I am incredibly grateful to be part of the leadership team at WCD and beyond thrilled to continue to support EST in my new role," Charity said. "EST does amazing work on a daily basis, and I feel lucky to support this talented group of dedicated people."

Outside of work, Charity and her husband, Jason, have a 30-acre conifer tree farm. They sell wholesale, live Christmas trees to nurseries throughout the Northwest and Canada. When they aren't busy with their farm, the couple spends as much time as possible with their five adult children. Charity and her husband also have two dogs, Samson (a Saint Bernard), and Daisy Mae (a golden retriever). Charity also enjoys gardening, cooking, and sewing. ■



Charity Steffen

Meet new Legislative Coordinator

Teri Watson

Teri Watson joined the Workers' Compensation Division in June 2023 to replace Cara Filsinger, who retired after 15 years as WCD's legislative coordinator. Cara also was the administrator of the Management-Labor Advisory Committee when she retired.

"Teri notes she's not replacing Cara, because Cara is irreplaceable," WCD Administrator Sally Coen said. "I agree; Cara was an institution! We all miss her. However, we were extremely fortunate to welcome Teri back to WCD. Her broad background in policy and legislative work is a perfect match for the division's needs."

Teri is an Oregon native from Toledo, Oregon. Before coming to DCBS, she worked for local public health departments. In 2011, she joined WCD as the managed care specialist. She quickly joined Oregon OSHA as its legislative coordinator and senior policy analyst. Teri then went to the Building Codes Division and helped them with the same kind of work in 2022. She left DCBS for several months to work at the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council before starting her new role at WCD.

Because Teri started at WCD, she said returning to WCD feels like coming home. She enjoys spending her time with her three children and three grandchildren, and going on adventures. ■



Teri Watson

Preferred Worker Program success: Linda Davis

By Jennifer Rice, worksite modification consultant.



Jennifer Rice



Equamore Foundation is a nonprofit organization in Ashland, Oregon, that provides rescue and

sanctuary for neglected, abused, and abandoned equines that have no alternative for their care. The 35-

acre property currently takes care of 59 equines. Linda Davis started working at the foundation in 2012 as its executive director and barn manager.

Linda is a veritable jack-of-all-trades for the



sanctuary. She is the on-site caretaker of the entire property and for the animals they rescue. Linda handles all the financial tasks including bookkeeping, payroll, managing, and soliciting donations. She coordinates supplies for the office and horses. She supervises building projects and performs the maintenance on the buildings and equipment. Linda also works with the horses helping with their rescue, transportation, and training. She even lives on site to be available anytime she's needed. These are only a fraction of



the duties Linda does for the organization.

In 2020, Linda was attaching the lead rope to a donkey's halter when she was kicked by the donkey and knocked down. She suffered many injuries, including a broken hip. Linda's workers' compensation claim resulted in permanent work restrictions due to her injuries. She has limited strength and range of motion in her hips and wrists. Because of her restrictions, she could not return to her job-at-injury. When her claim closed in 2021, she couldn't imagine working anywhere else and wanted to stay in her position.

The Preferred Worker Program (PWP) assists injured workers who are unable to return to their job-at-injury after claim closure. Linda became eligible for program benefits after her claim closed. Re-employment Specialist Christy Johnson helped Linda access an insurance premium exemption for the Equamore Foundation. The exemption began after Linda's claim closed and will continue for three years. It exempts the foundation from workers' compensation premium costs associated with



insuring Linda as an employee. If she is injured again during that time frame, the exemption covers the costs of processing the new claim.

After hearing about the struggles Linda was facing in her job duties, Christy referred Linda to me as a worksite modification consultant. I met with Linda at the Equamore Foundation's property, learned about her job duties, and evaluated the full worksite. Together, Linda and I came up with ideas to make various modifications for her position in order for her to stay within her work restrictions and maximize her abilities.

Because Linda could no longer do as much physical labor after her injury, she expanded her abilities to do more office work. PWP allowed her to pay for a class on grant writing. Through applying for grants, Linda is able to focus on less strenuous work while benefitting the foundation. Linda still spends considerable time outdoors, so the program purchased rain gear, boots, tools, and equipment for her. The program provides up to \$500 for work appropriate clothing. She

was able to access this benefit for more “office appropriate” clothing. This was especially important as Linda transitioned her job duties to be more administrative from the more physically demanding work she did before her injury.

Through the worksite creation benefit, Linda was able to receive a new file storage system, a laptop to bring from her on-site house to the sanctuary’s office, a printer, docking station, and monitors. This allows her to perform administrative duties at home or in the office. PWP provided funds for technical assistance to transfer files from her desktop to the new laptop and install software on her new device. The program also purchased outdoor cameras so Linda could monitor volunteer and equine activities from her on-site home instead of the office.

Linda is very creative and made several of her own modifications while going through the claims process. She made lighter weight tools, added ergonomic handles to existing tools, and purchased golf carts to transport guests and volunteers around the paved and gravel roads. The worksite modification benefit allowed changes to the barn doors so Linda is able to open them without needing to use force that exceeds her restrictions.

“Having stall and barn doors slide open easily



again are not only less physically demanding, but the ease with which they open and close also makes it much safer when moving horses in and out of their stalls for daily turnout, grooming,

vet care, hoof care, and training,” Linda said. “The update is not only safer for myself, but for all the other employees that handle the horses.”

When horses are turned out to walk the pastures

or to come into their stalls in the evening, they sometimes lose their fly masks or other items out in the pasture. Linda needs to retrieve these items, but her feet kept getting stuck in the mud. To get unstuck, Linda was having to twist her hips, which was outside of her physical restrictions. The golf carts the foundation used around the property would also get stuck in the mud, and Linda would have to dig them out. The solution to this problem was an all-terrain utility task vehicle (UTV) that PWP purchased so Linda can drive around the pasture and find the missing items without getting stuck.

“(The UTV) allows me access to the fields that would otherwise be off limits to me and cuts down on the amount of time spent on foot around the facility,” she said.

One of Linda’s job duties requires her to sweep the excess hay out of the main barn hallways. Before her injury, she did this with a broom, but the repetitive wrist movement in standard sweeping was outside her restrictions. The program purchased a battery-powered shop vacuum that can either vacuum up the hay or blow it out of the way. This reduces the time Linda uses her wrists and hips, and helps keep her within her repetitive-use restrictions.

Before Linda’s injury, she would use a pitchfork



to drop hay into the barn, requiring her to repetitively bend and twist. The program paid for the addition of a smaller door to the long auxiliary barn. Now Linda can go through the door with a skid-steer loader to drop hay into the barn instead of needing to use a pitchfork.

“The new feeder doors in our long barn allow us

to feed the horses without actually going into the stalls with them, limiting the risk of injury,” Linda said.

One of the benefits of the program is a 50 percent wage subsidy. The subsidy reimburses employers for 50 percent of the injured worker’s wages for 183 days. After all of Linda’s worksite modifications are complete, Equamore will begin

to receive the subsidy. The foundation is looking forward to using the funds to expand and help more horses in their rehabilitation.

You can see photos of the equines the Equamore Foundation helps on their [website](#). You can also see Linda talk about the work the foundation does [here](#). ■



History of change management

By Darcy Crisp, change management analyst.



Darcy Crisp

The Workers' Compensation Division recently added a new change management analyst position

to the Modernization Program team, and I was hired to fill that role.

As I have met with WCD employees, the question I get the most is, "What exactly is change management?" To answer this question, we need to look at the history of change management.

Where did change management come from?

Change management, as a theory, dates back to the early 1900s. Kurt Lewin was one of the founders of change management theory. His three-step model for change is the foundation for many of the change management models that still exist. These models were expanded upon in the 1960s when psychologists mapped the parallels between change management and grief studies. They found that allowing employees time to "mourn" changes benefitted the entire

company. During this era, there was more time between large-scale changes than in the modern era, where advancing technology has made change constant.

Change management as a professional practice continued to gain ground with the increase in global businesses. The approach pivoted to joining the technical side of change to the psychological

aspect of helping employees navigate change successfully. A leader of this was John Kotter, who wrote the book "Leading Change" in 1996. Kotter described change management as an eight-step process. He developed this process from Lewin's model and expanded the ideas behind it.

What is change management now?

Let's flash forward to the modern day: Companies still find themselves struggling to make projects successful because there is a lack of change management built into the project. Businesses that invest time and resources into building a change management program in conjunction with project management find themselves more agile. Their employees also respond better to the rapid-fire change of today's needs. A change manager's goal continues to be approaching change and projects systematically while having a deep understanding of the dynamics and needs of their workforce. This includes being aware of past successes or failures in the company's history.

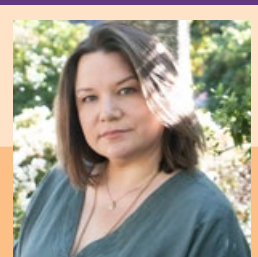
There are now many methodologies, including Lean, available to change management professionals to support their missions. The most important approach, however, is finding the methodology that will work for each particular company or team. By approaching each team based on their individual needs, a new dynamic with change can be created – making innovation a standard. ■

What is the Scope of Change Management?



Change Management scope is often limited to the "tip of the iceberg" while our true potential remains untapped beneath the surface.
Source: G&F McNeel, LLC

Workers' Compensation Educational Conference: May 9-10, 2024



Jennifer Hlad

If you have suggestions or comments, call Conference and Training Coordinator Jennifer Hlad at 503-947-7515 or email jennifer.l.hlad@oregon.gov.

SAVE the date

May 9-10, 2024

Join us for the 21st annual
Oregon Workers' Compensation Educational Conference

Holiday Inn Portland,
Columbia Riverfront

After reviewing feedback from the 2022 Workers' Compensation Educational Conference, the division is returning to an in-person event. The conference will be held May 9-10, 2024, in Portland, Oregon.

The conference is a great opportunity to network with fellow workers' compensation professionals. Experts and those new to working within Oregon's workers' compensation system will benefit from the

variety of classes. You can sign up to receive [email updates](#) on class topics and registration or follow the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services on your favorite social media platform for all the information you need to attend and participate:

- Facebook: [OregonDCBS](#) or [State of Oregon - Preferred Worker Program](#)
- Twitter: [OregonDCBS](#)
- Instagram: [oregon_dcbs](#)
- LinkedIn: [Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services](#)





WCD in the community

Division employees have been excited to get back into the community and make connections.





In January, Field Investigators Sarah Jones and Mikaela Polk attended the 2023 Mid-Oregon Construction Summit in Bend.

In February, Worksite Modification Consultant Jennifer Rice attended the Partners in Diversity event, Say Hey!, with DCBS Diversity and Inclusion Manager Veronica Murray.

In March, many WCD staff members presented and exhibited at the Governor's Occupational Safety and Health Conference in Portland. Assistant Small Business Ombudsman and Re-employment Specialist Caitlin Breitbach, WCD Administrator Sally Coen, Senior Field Investigator Bob Hamre, Conference and Training Coordinator Jenn Hlad, Re-employment Specialist Christy Johnson, Employment Services Team Manager Charity Steffen, Benefit Consultant Julie Stratton, and Deputy Administrator Matt West all gave presentations. Additionally, Mikaela represented WCD at an exhibit booth.

In April, Sanctions and Medical Resolution Manager Rob Andersen, Policy Analyst Jenni Bertels, Employer Compliance Manager Katie Bruns, Legal Issues Coordinator Cathy Ostrand-Ponsioen, Charity and a few other DCBS employees traveled to Florida to participate in the International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions Forum 2023.

In May, Field Investigator Oscar Garcia Lopez and Bob attended the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs annual tradeshow. While there, Oscar and Bob also staffed an exhibit booth with Caitlin and David Waki of the Office of the Small Business Ombudsman. Later in May,



Jennifer attended the Oregon Women Veterans' Conference in Salem.

In June, Charity, Jennifer, and Communications Coordinator Autumn Blake attended the Salem-Keizer NAACP Juneteenth Freedom Fund event along with other DCBS employees. Also in June, Mikaela, Worksite Modification Consultant Tim Kessel, and Oscar represented WCD at the 2023 Blue Mountain Occupational Safety & Health

Conference in Pendleton.

Mikaela also attended the World Beat Festival in Salem with fellow investigators Jason Hopkins and Becka Hunt.

Division representatives will be at the Salem Pride in the Park event in August. We hope to see you at other events soon! ■

