

Meeting With Customer Service Support Staff

Re:

SHD Internal Assessment and Strategic

Planning Process:

December 5, 2012, 9:00AM

I. Pre-Hearing Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

1. Issue: The HWDC screen for entering an address has a limited field so communications sent to a claimant who has a longer address than the field allows results in returned mail.
How to Fix:
 - a) There needs to be an IT fix when HWDC migrates to a new system and allows for a greater field for address data entry.
 - b) There needs to be an IT fix when HWDC migrates to a new system and allows for a greater field for address data entry.
 - c) Manuel has asked for data to be taken of the number of returned mail due to incorrect addresses (and/or any other reasons) for a two week trial period so he can evaluate the extent of the problem and develop a plan of correction, as necessary.
2. Issue: **WD/CWD-Fully Executed** (Claimant and county signed the WD or CWD)
When counties who have data capacity (LA, Santa Clara, Calaveras, Amador, Alameda and San Francisco) make entries in the HWDC system that WD/CWD has occurred, there is no alert mechanism in the system notifying the staff that action has occurred. This can result in cases remaining calendared and has resulted in hearings being completed and decisions issued when a withdrawal has occurred.
How to Fix:
 - a) Rescind the county's access to the system.
 - b) Allow the county's access, but, in the interim, require the county to e-mail or fax the staff that a WD or CWD has been taken.
 - c) Establish a Flag in the IT upgrade that notifies staff that the county has taken an action.
3. Issue: **Verbal** WD/CWD. When counties who have access to the HWDC enter that a Verbal WD or CWD has been agreed to, the case is closed out for purposes of the scheduled hearing. Claimants call in saying they have not withdrawn or have not agreed to a CWD. Staff has to reopen the case.
How to Fix:
 - a) Rescind the counties on-lining capacity for WD/CWDs.

- b) Have the county fax or e-mail that a verbal WD or CWD has been taken. (This could reduce the incidence of needlessly on-lining cases).
 - c) Establish in the IT upgrade, that when a verbal WD or CWD has occurred, the claimant will be notified immediately and given the opportunity to provide information about their agreement or disagreement. If a WD and the claimant agrees with the county information, the case is closed out of the system. If a WD and claimant disagrees, the county will be notified and the case remains on the hearing calendar. If a verbal CWD and the claimant agrees with the county's information, the case is placed in a suspense folder until the county sends out a new notice of action in which case the claimant's right to a hearing will depend on a timely filing of a new request for hearing. If the claimant disagrees with the county's information, the matter will be reopened with notice to the claimant and the county of the new hearing date, time and place. In the CWD situation where the CWD is fully executed or verbal, the claimant will be eligible, for a continuation of Aid Paid Pending, if applicable.
4. Issue: The Support Procedural Manuals are outdated and ways in which staff process procedural matters can differ by individual. As outdated, it is not a valuable resource tool.
- How to Fix:
- a) As outdated, it is not a valuable resource tool.
 - b) Of particular interest are the time-frames and procedures used for re-opening. (A handout of procedures currently used by staff was submitted for review).
 - c) Provide training on the use of the manual and individual training provided to ensure consistency of application.
 - d) Management to monitor the procedures employed by Sacramento and regional offices to make sure they are is consistent.
5. Issue: When third time postponement requests or requests for bifurcations and dismissals are received, currently, the request is taken and forwarded to the NVO PJ or Duty Judge to make the decision. A staff member stated that they do not receive information about what the decision was so they hold on to the paperwork and in some cases, it appears no data entry has been made in HWDC to update the system.
- How to Fix:
- a) It was explained that there will be a change in protocols for all post second time postponement requests and requests for bifurcation and dismissals.
 - b) PJs want those requests to be forwarded to the appropriate PJ who has responsibility for making the decision involving that claimant whose residence is within a county under the PJs jurisdiction.
 - c) There is one exception, and that involves postponement requests made on the day of the hearing. Those requests are to be forwarded to the ALJ who has responsibility for conducting the hearing to make the decision.
 - d) These new protocols will be published with specific guidelines for staff to follow.

II. Hearing Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

- 1. Issue: There were no issues.

III. Post-Hearing Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

1. Issue: Staff receives calls from claimants and counties stating that the ALJ stated at the hearing the decision would be out within a specified time period, the time period has occurred, but the decision has not been received. The claimant and/or the county is/are calling to find out the status of the decision. These calls can be difficult to field for the staff as they have no information about when the decision will be released.

How to Fix:

- a) Issue protocols to staff about what to communicate to the caller and how to proceed in terms of transferring the call for appropriate action/communication.
 - b) Provide instructions to ALJs, when asked or if totally unsolicited, about how to address and communicate to the parties when to expect the decision.
 - c) Suggested procedures now followed by staff when this occurs involving claimant calls is as follow:
 - 1) Staff go to HWDC and if the projected adoption date for the decision is under 90 days, the claimant is told of the projected adopt date and encouraged to call back after that date if the claimant has not received the decision by then. The ALJ Support person is alerted about the inquiry.
 - 2) If the decision is late, the call is referred to the ALJ support staff who would alert the PJ.
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2. Issue: The system for capturing interpreter information does not have a field for an Index number or an Invoice number. Staff have extreme difficulty retrieving the correct billing form and processing it for payment.

How to Fix:

- a) Establish a field in the system that provides either the Index or Invoice number.

IV. Other Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

1. Issue: Issue: Whether the Division should establish a Southern Call Center for all cases involving counties south of Kern, including Kern County? Staff were advised and asked if this was a good idea. The reaction was positive but questions arose about:
 - a) Is there a resource issue?
 - b) What would be the impact on the unit and staffing?
 - c) Does decentralization make sense?
 - d) Would there be problems of consistency/uniformity?
 - e) Will additional 1-800 phone lines be needed and what changes or improvements are needed to transact hearing requests and actions necessary to process the case from intake to final decision?
 - 1) Need to research data on volume of intake per regions since 2006. Overall there has been a substantial increase but data per county is needed.
 - 2) It is believed that southern intake will continue to increase.
 - 3) Will need to evaluate the need for a BCP to support the suspected increase in staffing due to decentralization.

- f) What would happen if a claimant moved from the southern region to the northern region? Who would handle the case?

It was explained that all of these issues are on the table and will be examined very carefully before any decisions are made.

The need to consider the Southern Call Center arises because the volume of hearing requests has increased markedly since 2006 and is expected to continue.

- 2. Issue: What problems are there with the current phone system that needs to be addressed by a new phone system?
 - a) Eliminate dropped calls
 - b) Eliminate or reduce incidence of rollovers.
 - c) Make sure there are sufficient lines to handle the expected increased activity.
- 3. Issue: Interpreter Services-Problems.
 - a) There needs to be established a way of scanning documents to the tele-interpreter in advance of the hearing.
 - b) Should the tele-interpreter be called in advance of the hearing to translate the county's SOP and relevant documents for the claimant?
 - c) It takes far too long to establish a connection for the interpreter-up to 7-10 minutes often.
 - d) Staff has heard from stakeholders and from ALJs a sense of frustration about the communication between interpreters and claimants.
 - e) Up-to-date interpreter and translator handbooks with glossaries of program and medical terms should be produced.
 - f) Most languages are covered by tele-interpreter services but on occasion no interpreter is available due to a rare language. There needs to be a backup plan for when this occurs to avoid delay.
 - g) There are occasions when a claimant cannot identify their native language. There needs to be a backup plan for when this occurs to avoid delay. For example, the county should be consulted as it has a responsibility to provide interpreter services to its clients.
- 4. Issue: Use of Bar Codes on case files.
 - a) It was noted that Corrections uses Bar Codes for its cases. The staff liked the idea of using them!
 - b) Bar Codes will track every transaction made on a case identifying the person who made the entry and where the record presently is in the system.
- 5. Issue: Are job rotations of staff a good idea?
 - a) A definitive statement of the process to be used for rotations will be fundamental to its success.
 - b) The Division should look at other users to see how they work and how to avoid implementation problems and/or reassess whether rotations are a good idea. "We need to be smart"!
 - c) Training of staff in their current positions may be necessary and advance training of staff as to their new jobs will alleviate problems. This could be

- integrated with Performance Evaluations and the Individual Development Plan.
- d) The learning curve of each staff person needs to be assessed and mentors provided as necessary.
6. Issue: Is cross-training of staff a good idea?
- a) Generally, the staff was in favor of cross-training. The only reservation is that it might increase the incidence of error.
 - b) Training and mentoring will be keys to its success.
 - c) A prescriptive description of job duties must be available to staff temporarily backing up the work of another employee.
7. Issue: Would a person/functional organization chart be helpful?
- a) A chart that lists the who, what and where would be greatly appreciated. Transferring calls is difficult because there is no readily available chart to provide guidance.
 - b) The chart should list both primary and backup staff.
 - c) The functional aspect of the chart should show the reporting relationships to managers.
 - d) The chart once implemented must be electronically stored and updated as changes occur.
 - e) Staff indicated that an organization chart for county appeals staff would be a good idea. Advocates too!
8. Issue: There is a need for expanded training.
- a) MSTs-There is a lack of consistency as to how staff handle like issues.
 - b) There needs to be a handbook/desk guide that everyone division-wide follows consistently. It should reference job duties for all positions along with information about how to respond to specific issues (guidelines).
 - c) The handbook/desk guide should be on the SHD website.
 - d) The handbook/desk guide could be used for performance evaluations.
 - e) If changes in procedures occur, the handbook must be updated and training provided as to the new procedures.
 - f) It was noted, that when special projects are implemented, procedures may vary from those used in a handbook. However, staff involved will receive training necessary to process the workload.
9. Issue: Meetings
- a) When management has meetings with analysts, the MSTs should be included because they work as a team and the MSTs fulfill a backup role to the analysts.
10. Issue: Recognition:
- a) Staff felt that management should be telling individual employees of incidents where they are doing a good job. There is no hesitation for management to discuss with employees incidents where complaints occur.
 - b) For a unit recognition process, peer nomination was a good idea. It could be done by e-mail, for example.
 - c) The process needs to be published so everyone knows the criteria and can compete.

- d) If someone is recognized, a letter in the employee's personnel file memorializing the achievement would be welcomed.
- e) Division recognition is also a good idea as long as the criteria are published and everyone can compete.
- f) Performance reviews can be an opportunity for management to provide recognition to an employee for good or exceptional work.