

Meeting With Disability Hearings Bureau Support Staff

Re:

SHD Internal Assessment and Strategic

Planning Process:

December 4, 2012, 1:30PM

I. Pre-Hearing Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

1. Issue: Should counties who have access to HWDC be allowed to enter WD and CWDs?
 - a) This creates real problems for staff as they have no way of knowing this information has been entered.
 - b) Staff would prefer that all counties fax that information to DHB.

II. Hearing Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

1. Issue: No comments were discussed.

III. Post-Hearing Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

1. Issue: Release of Decisions:
 - a) Questions were raised about the role of support staff when releasing a large number of decisions that come in to be processed.
 - b) A standard must be set for the expected number of decisions to be adopted when the support staff is confronted with a high volume of cases.
 - c) The protocols used by staff as to the selection of cases to be adopted is any case whose adopt date is about to lapse or has lapsed is processed first.
 - d) This process can lead to delays in decisions being adopted immediately which incurs complaints from RA ALJs whose decision release dates may fall into a different pay period than expected.
 - e) Support staff has been told by management not to review and correct decisions for grammar, spelling or format errors. There just isn't time to do this activity and ALJs acknowledge that the content of their decisions is their responsibility.

IV. Other Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

1. Issue: Should there be rotations within the Sacramento Offices?
 - a) Staff feels they are the step-children of the Division. They don't feel they are accorded the same level of respect given to the other units in Sacramento.
 - b) Everyone in the Division is supposed to be working as a team but they don't feel they are treated as equal team members.

- c) Rotations would help level the playing field as it would provide greater opportunity for the staff to work in different areas thereby gaining additional skills which would enable them to be more competitive for promotions, etc.
 - d) Rotations would also give those working in other areas a better perspective about the work in DHB and how and why it differs from the work in other units.
 - e) Rotations would improve morale as everyone will be viewed equally as team members.
2. Issue: Should everyone in the Bureau be cross-trained so there is back-up when someone is absent?
- a) Staff is cross-trained and covers the work when someone is absent.
 - b) There may be a problem with access to computer information?
3. Issue: Is there a need for training?
- a) The support manual of policies and procedures needs to be up-dated.
 - b) Job descriptions need to be revised and published so the distinctions of duties for MSTs and OTs are defined.
 - c) Protocols need to be set for morning v. afternoon work when workload demands frequently change and expectations of support for ALJs must vary.
4. Issue: There is a need to provide instructions to staff about the definitions of Case Name and Claimant and how they apply.
5. Issue: A question was asked, "How do you want SFT to work for counties that have the technology"?
- a) With SFT, you have a traceable record as to when the intake came in and when it went out.
 - b) CBAS used SFT successfully even though there are some technical issues.
 - c) It does not do form letters; HWDC has that capacity and sends out the Acknowledgement Letter, postponement, WD and CWD notices. Duplication of effort is a problem.
 - d) Training for counties could be done through the SCAC and SCAC via PowerPoint, etc.
 - e) The person doing the training should have technical knowledge of the system.
 - f) As a preliminary to the training, guidelines for using the system must be prepared.
6. Issue: Should Bar Codes be used for case records?
- a) Staff reacted favorably to the idea.
 - b) It provides up-to-date information about who made entries in the system and where the case record is at in the process at any given time.
7. Issue: Recognition-How should it be done?
- a) Kudos should be given when warranted.
 - b) Peer nominations are favored with standards and criteria published so everyone knows how to compete and the merits for an employee's nomination were objectively applied and the employee's accomplishment was worthy of nomination.

- c) If Division awards are given, the process must be well defined with criteria that are measureable.
 - d) The Performance Evaluation and Individual Development Plan for employees is an excellent tool for management to document employee achievements. Those evaluations go into the employee's personnel file.
 - e) Selection of staff to work on special projects is another method used to recognize the merits of an employee's work. Staff believes there needs to be greater access and opportunity to work on these projects as it seems to enhance promotional opportunities. Issue:
8. Issue: Customer Service Problems.
- a) DHB staff complains that they are not made aware of postponements taken by Customer Service staff.
 - b) DHB ALJs are responsible for ruling on postponement requests involving their case because the cases are assigned using the "Docket System". This system requires the ALJ to handle and dispose of all cases assigned. Therefore, all postponement requests must be forwarded to DHB to alert the ALJ of the request and to make a ruling. DHB management indicated that it would talk with Customer Service management about this issue.
 - c) Customer Service misdirects filings to counties when the issue involves a disability. This may be a training issue. When misdirected, delays in scheduling and assignment occurs compromising processing timeliness.