

STATEWIDE PEF – DOL LM
Thursday, September 11, 2025
Minutes

PEF – planned attendees	MANAGEMENT – planned attendees
Scarlett Ahmed, PEF Co-chair	Jennifer Williamson
Bill Clingersmith,	Jane Thompson
Scott Hektor	Sean Hennessy
Robert Wright	Jeanette Lazelle
Ruiz, Erik	Justin Smi
	Allison Konderwich
	Michelle Daly
	Eric Frimpong
	Lucas Smock
	Patty Cahill

1. Welcome/Introductions (Roll Call)

2. Approve prior minutes

6/25/25 meeting minutes approved and posted on DOLi.

3. Discussion of Work Group related to UI Career Centers

A. PEF requests discussion of the Work Group related to UI and Career Centers.

Below is a summary of the topics discussed at the July 18th UI Career Center Work Group:

- **Call wait times.** Management confirmed there has been an increase in call wait times, which historically occurs around July each year. Much is due to end of school year filers. These individuals work at a school but are not employed directly through the school system. This can cause them to mistakenly include incorrect employer information which causes partial claims and necessitates UI speaking with the claimant. Many agents are assigned to these calls to complete the claim and prevent further backlogs.
- **TCC wait times.** As of July, TCC wait times remain steady.
- **Legislators contact with DOL.** Legislators have reached out on behalf of constituents' regarding their inability to get through TCC lines. DOL has specific representatives who address these concerns from state government.
- **Long call wait times, dropped calls, and request to all back during business hours.** This can occur when if there are not enough agents to handle the high level of incoming calls. Out of Office messaging should only occur from 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 a.m. and on weekends.
- **Career Center signage.** NYC staff requested signage emphasizing Career Center resources. Management stated advertisements of services provided can be in place but must be uniform across all Career Centers. Discussed further under DEWS section.
- **UIR filing related to disruptive incidents with customers.** Disruptive incidents can occur due to customers' frustration while navigating the UI system. Management highlighted several trainings

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located on DOLi related to the process for filing a UIR. DEWS will also include information on their August Roundtable (Customer Engagement). DEWS also plans to bring back their training spots and can include UIR process.

B. Confirmation of next meeting date October 17, 2025, 1:30-2:30pm
PEF wants the summary of UI Career Center Work Group meetings distributed and posted on DOLi.

DOL previously stated the Work Group meetings will be summarized and discussed at the Statewide Labor Management meeting and included in the minutes. The UI Career Center Workgroup is intended as an informal meeting to discuss issues and generate ideas for addressing those issues and finding solutions.

PEF can note any objections to the items summarized during Statewide Labor Management.

Posting on DOLi: PEF has discussed their position internally and shared with Management. Management will do likewise, regarding the path forward, and provide DOL's view prior to the next meeting.

4. Division of Employment and Workforce Solutions (DEWS)

A. General Division Update

Launch of the DEWS Employee Recognition Program has continued. With a large division spread across NYS, we have opted for a regional approach to maximize recognizing staff across the state for the great work that is happening. We have announced our Regional Award Winners from NYC and Hudson Valley. We are close to announcing winners from the North Country soon! It has been a busy summer, but we plan to hold award ceremonies for the winners very soon! We have mapped out our nomination timelines for the remainder of the state on our DEWS Employee Recognition Program DOLi page.

We are looking forward to our 37th Support our Veterans Hot Dog Day scheduled to happen next week. This has been a great way to bring awareness and raise money for local veterans who need emergency assistance with food, utilities, shelter, and other basic needs. This includes the return of the dunk tank that has been a fun way to raise money for a great cause. **We would like to sincerely thank PEF for your donation and continued support for this event.**

1) Update on the Asylum Seeker project.

There has been no change since the last meeting. DEWS is continuing to move forward with providing services to any/all customers, including Asylum Seekers. This has been woven into our general service provision offered to any customer.

2) Update on Jails to Jobs program

DEWS is still committed to operating this program in partnership with our sister agency. We were at a pause but expect to move on this program in the coming

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few weeks. This is still intended to be all virtual services, and we would ask for volunteers to staff the program. We hope to have the ask for volunteers out by the end of September.

3) Update on WFS rollout

WFS was rolled out to all offices on February 18, 2025. We have continued to make enhancements based on feedback and have received very positive feedback from supervisors and staff. We have created a DOLI page that contains resources for staff, including a list of enhancements that have been implemented. We have also completed outreach to our customers to educate them on the new tool with tips and things to watch for.

4) DVOP/LVER Grant materials/Funding Streams

Finance will review and report back.

5) DEWS Staff performing Labor Standards intake

We looked into this after getting more details and identified that we provide information and instructions to customers on how to file a complaint. In the rare occasion that that we have a customer that has a barrier to file (illiterate as an example) our SLSR has assisted the customer to complete the form. However, this is a rare example that was estimated at 1 maybe every six months. Most take the instructions provided and handle on their own. We have not heard any concerns but do encourage if the SLSR(s) have a concern they talk with their local manager for assistance when this occurs.

6) Signage update regarding UI

Clarification was provided that this was an issue raise during the UI/Career Center Workgroup. Based on the last meeting there was discussion of creating a sign to highlight what services we provide instead of a sign that states we are not UI. Management did indicate that they would need to see/review any signs before they could be used to ensure consistency across offices/areas. At this time, we are not aware of a draft being submitted to management for review/input. Once a draft is provided, we will review and provide feedback to the workgroup.

7) PEF requests discussion about career centers printing out determinations for customers.

We are working with UI to come up with a process so that customers can request a copy of their determination letter. We would not expect that the centers print the determination letters rather we would have them request the determination be sent via email from Central Office. Customers would be told that they will receive the letter to their email within 24 hours. This process is still being worked through so that UI dates for hearings/responses are not negatively impacted.

B. Staffing update. PEF requests discussion of Workforce Program Specialist 2 vacancies in the Apprenticeship Unit.

DEWS is being cautious with our hiring to ensure that we do not overspend or over allocate. Over the past few years, DEWS has increased staffing levels significantly throughout the division and are at our staffing allocation (based on all funds/grants etc.). We have more staff now than we have had in years which affords us the ability to take some time to assess staffing needs throughout the division. Out of an abundance of

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caution we are reevaluate our staffing levels to ensure that we remain within our funding allocations. That being said, offices that have priority staffing needs will be able to hire based on operational need.

If WPS2 vacancies in Apprenticeship comes up: We are looking at the need for staff to complete the work (ATRs/Workforce Program Specialist 1) as the priority. We have staff that can assist with supervision while we bring on the ATRs needed to adequately monitor and manage the program. We are not saying we will not revisit the WPS2 vacancies at a later point, but our first priority is to get the critical ATR positions filled. We currently have 2 ATR recruitments underway for NYC (Church Street) and Buffalo.

PEF has concerns over the indefinite time limit for filling these positions, and requests it be expedited.

DEWS is not stating these positions will not be filled. Program is determining the areas of most critical need and filling based on allocation.

5. Unemployment Insurance

A. General Division Update

Continuing to work towards modernization, with the planned goal of spring. Continuously working on the backlog to meet the needs of the claimants and are seeing a positive movement of the backlog.

B. Staffing update: PEF Wishes to Discuss Vacancies in UI Business Services (Grade 18s)

Program continues recruiting for those positions, working to fill based on a budgetary perspective. Filling these positions can be difficult due to competing with the private sector.

PEF requests input from Management on solutions to help DOL compete with the private sector for recruiting staff. PEF feels additional telecommuting would help.

DOL is working with Civil Service on a total compensation study of benefit package which could help entice candidates for the entry level positions. DOL's current agencywide telecommuting policy is 40%.

PEF: When an employee retires, per Civil Service law, how long must program keep that position open before requesting to backfill?

There is no Civil Service law regulating the time frame for this scenario. It's based on allocation and funding.

C. Update on UI modernization

UI continues to work through cycles of User Testing and Data Migration. UI is preparing for Division wide training to start in October.

D. Update on total unemployment backlog. How does it compare to historical numbers. What is backlog now compared to pre-Covid pandemic?

Justin will review and follow up.

E. Increase in Career Center phone line wait time.

Historically July is an especially busy time frame for UI calls. There has been a decline since that time, and the wait time is currently averaging at one hour. The UI Career Center partnership has been helpful in identifying issues and using resources in the best way possible to assist the customers.

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PEF feels there is a high demand for in-person UI Centers. Are there plans to create them? Previous requests to add UI staff to the Career Centers was denied. An offer from PEF was made to survey customers on their need for a local UI Center.

PEF's concern and request is noted. However, creating in-person UI Centers is not something the Agency is currently working towards. This would be a heavy undertaking. Management does not want an official DOL representative taking surveys on this issue as it will give the public the inaccurate impression this is something the Agency is currently moving towards.

The UI Career Center Workgroup was created to discuss options such as this.

F. Non-Monetary Determination Rate Increases change from 0.6 to 1.2 to 1.75 per hour.

Goals for staff are being updated in an effort to increase performance. This is being accomplished with support from supervisors and management; with new tools and methods of approaching the work. Since implementation there is an approximate one third reduction in backlog. Most staff are outperforming the 1.75 goal. Program regularly reassess their goals based on operational need and backlog.

PEF feels certain issues such as adjudication take longer and expressed concern over staff being reprimanded for not meeting the new goal.

Production is only measured during production hours, which excludes meetings.

Management feels this is an issue that should be addressed again at the next meeting, allowing time for both PEF and UI to review.

6. Research and Statistics

A. Division Update

- Working with UI on Modernization testing.
- Working on 2 job seeker surveys for DEWS which will be launched in October. Hoping to reach as many businesses and job seekers as possible.
- Working on dashboard for Worker Protection.

B. Staffing update

Recruiting for Research Scientists – one grade 27, two grade 27s. Both are PEF positions.

PEF shared appreciation for the work of a recently retired Associate Economist. R&S confirmed they will be backfilling that grade 23 position.

7. UI Appeal Board

A. General Division Update

As you are aware, we launched our CLE library of free, on-demand CLE courses related to Labor Law issues at the end of January. The classes are available to all attorneys and non-attorneys working for DOL and UIAB. The library currently offers nine pre-recorded, on-demand courses, which is two more than our last report. Our goal continues to be

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one new class per month. Attorneys from other agencies may be given access upon request. Since it is a SharePoint site, we can only grant access to State employees with email accounts and emails ending in "ny.gov."

PEF asked how non-DOL individuals will be able to access.

Follow-up response from UIAB: Non DOL employees can request access to the CLE SharePoint by emailing CLE@uiab.ny.gov. We only have a handful of non-UIAB/DOL attorneys. It would be great to see more.

On September 2nd, we started work with a vendor to conduct an on-site evaluation of the underlying technology systems, processes, and workflows between NYSDOL and the UIAB. The goal is to identify inefficiencies, slow processing times, and missing or incomplete functionality that hinder the effective processing of unemployment claim appeals. The vendor has held interviews with 18 judges, 17 admin and 4 BSA team members from the UIAB to obtain a clear picture of our systems, processes, workflows and pain points. The work is scheduled to be done from September 2nd through 15th. Following the analysis, the vendor will provide recommendations, developing training and training materials based on the agreed-upon recommendations if necessary, and delivering the training to NYSDOL and UIAB as necessary.

The UIAB has been working to obtain a customer support ticketing system for BSA team to replace BSA email. The system will allow us to track/organize issues and collect data on issues which will help the BSA team organize incoming requests of support and see where repetitive issues are occurring where we can provide developmental and modernization training for staff. The BSA Team is providing training on the system on September 18th and the system will go live on September 22nd.

As you are aware, we are all going through the Windows 11 upgrade. We know we will need to replace at least 58 laptops, so staff have the necessary space. We are working closely with DOL and ITS to accommodate that need.

B. Update on staffing.

Currently, the UIAB has 109 employees, excluding Board Members. Of those employees, 91 are PEF members (59 judicial/27 administrative/5 BSA). There are five ALJs from the July 3rd new hire class. They are holding two hearings a day, and they are expected to be on full calendar by 11/03.

Since our last meeting in June, we had a retirement in August, a Business Systems Analyst 3, and we have three retirements in September including one Principal ALJ in Menands, a Senior ALJ in Menands, and a Senior ALJ in Syracuse. We are prepared for more judicial retirements this year.

We are deciding when the next appropriate judicial recruitment will be based on UISIM go-live. We continue to be pleased with the results of the recruitment initiative, and our DOL recruitment team has been outstanding. While we had hoped to increase our judicial numbers, the two recruitments this year will help us maintain our team.

Just a reminder that over 25% of our judicial team is eligible to retire this year.

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Recruitment, training, and retention are key areas of focus for us. We appreciate DOL's support of our proactive recruitment initiative. This was a unique way to recruit and has helped us use our resources more effectively and efficiently.

C. Update on the UI hearing platform.

Virtual hearings continue to go well. The UIAB Virtual Hearings website is now available in 16 languages. Participants who check in online will see the option to select their preferred language. We are very proud of this customer service feature and thank DOL for its support in allowing us to expand that contract

D. Telecommuting Update - any issues

No update provided.

8. Worker Protection

A. General Division Update

Current total staff in Worker Protection is 522. There are 59 vacancies in various stages of recruitment. NY Helps has assisted tremendously in recruiting staff with the enforcement background needed. OT is available in most programs for grades 14, 16, 18, and 20. This is work that can be done during evenings and weekends from home.

PEF – is the OT to catch up on backlog?

Currently involved in a yearlong project of closing out older cases. Some of the OT is focused on various parts of that process. Much of the OT is devoted to intake but moves to different areas of the process as needed. Boiler Inspectors are also offered OT to address the busier summer workload.

B. Update on Staffing

1) PESH/DOSH

23 vacancies.

2) Public Work

10 vacancies.

3) Labor Standards

23 vacancies.

PEF requests an update on the Strikeforce team and its impact on staffing.

Strikeforce is a new unit within Labor Standards that WP is currently growing. Currently have Investigative Specialists 1 and 2 in Albany, White Plains and Buffalo. These positions are supervised by Chiefs and Supervising Investigative Officers. Cross training is occurring.

WP has asked for additional items to fill Investigative Specialists 3 and 4 positions.

PEF stated a directive was issued to LS staff restricting telecommuting – eliminating staff's ability to adjust their telecommuting days. What is the purpose of this directive?

This issue was not on the agenda. The ability to switch telecommuting days is

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reviewed on a case-by-case basis which would be addressed with their supervisor. Questions regarding specific instances can be forwarded to Management for review.

PEF – can supervisors work with staff to change telecommuting days?

Answers to telecommuting questions, including one-time modifications, can be found in the telecommuting FAQs.

4) Special Investigations

No update provided.

5) Division of Compliance and Education (DOCE, formerly “DIPA”)

No update provided.

9. Division of Administration and Finance –

A. Division Update

1) List of lease expiration dates

Attached lease dates.

PEF requests an update on any potential moves, such as Amsterdam office and 290 Main Street Buffalo.

Amsterdam:

This is a partner location. Working with OGS to locate new space which will include partner staff.

290 Main Street Buffalo:

A good relocation option has become available. Currently working with the landlord regarding pricing and build out options. The process is progressing at a good rate.

276 Waring Road Rochester combining with State Street MCC Office:

Waring Road is a recently renovated space; no immediate plans to move locations. DOL is actively working to extend the lease on South Union Street, gaining space to reduce square footage needs at Waring Road.

A meeting is scheduled to further discuss options with MCC, DEWS, Monroe County, and Rochester Works.

2) Tracking devices on state vehicles.

- PEF requests update on information being collected from the trackers and how it is being used. What is management seeing in the data?**

The information gathered is related to vehicle statistics, and safety.

Formulas within the product being used trigger alerts related to vehicle mechanics, accidents or other safety concerns, making it easier for the agency to assist the driver.

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Individual driver safety scores are calculated, and all averaged together to obtain an overall agency safety score. DOL's previous safety score was in the 70's. DOL educated drivers and provided similar safe driving tips on DOLi, raising the agency's safety score to high 90's. No disciplinary actions is occurring at DOL related to vehicle trackers.

3) Federal update

PEF requests discussion of potential impacts of “Big Beautiful Bill.” Is staff reduction being discussed?

The President of the United States recently fired the Commissioner of the US Bureau of Labor Statistics for publishing a negative jobs report.

PEF requests a discussion on the impact a more propaganda- based jobs report could have on funding streams that support NYSDOL jobs.

No update to provide as there was no final budget in place at the time of the meeting. When a budget is not finalized timely, a “continuing resolution” is generally put in place, which provides the same funding appropriated in the previous year. Finance does not foresee any impact on staffing at DOL.

4) State update

DOL has begun to put together the agency's State Budget request for 2026. The Call Letter generally comes in early October.

5) UI Trust Fund Status

The UI Trust Fund loan has been paid, and the interest is due to be paid on 9/30/25.

6) Excel Spreadsheet showing all current PS&T members at DOL.

a) Current Staffing by Division, including hourlies.
Report provided.

b) Monthly Position Allocation vs. Spending by Division
Report provided.

c) Two new hourlies on the report. An SLSR and a WPS 1.
WPS1 hourly has been made permanent. SLSR is currently temporary (not hourly), and Personnel is actively working to make permanent. The updates will be on the next meeting's reports.

PEF – is the SLSR reachable on the list?

Personnel will review and report back prior to the next meeting.

B. Personnel

1) Unit update.

a) Update NY HELPS program. PEF requests discussion about hiring from HELPS when there are viable promotional lists or eligible 70.1 transfers.

Civil Service has parameters regarding promotional titles. DOL must

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utilize the promotional list prior to utilizing NY Helps candidate list. If there is not a viable list, programs can utilize the NY Helps list.

PEF – Is NY Helps utilized for WPS1 positions rather than PCO list? This is also an issue with other agencies which PEF is reviewing.

Personnel uses all hiring mechanisms available. All qualified candidates are sent to program, making them aware when the promotional list must be utilized. Program has the discretion to choose which individuals they opt to interview. NY Helps is for open-competitive titles. Anyone on the PCO list or eligible via 70.1 are also eligible to apply to the posting.

NY Helps' intended purpose was to bring in large groups of candidates in order to fill vacancies and backfills. NYS Helps Is not likely to be extended beyond 2026.

b) Update on recruitment and retention efforts across the divisions

Personnel currently has approximately 135 active recruitments. Personnel is also attending more targeted job fairs to assist in recruiting specific, hard to fill job titles. PEF suggested reaching out to high school students as well regarding job opportunities for after graduation.

2) Discussion of any other plans for new titles, reclassification or earmarking of existing titles, redefining job descriptions/duties, or other changes to a title?

PEF requests that DOL submit a reallocation review request for Boiler Inspectors, so that it may be expedited at the completion of the compensation study.

Personnel reached out to Civil Service for an update on the study. Civil Service plans to release the results at the end of 2025. Personnel will take the next steps based on the outcome of the compensation study.

PEF – can the compensation study package be shared with the union?

Not at this point in the process. Once the determination has been made, DOL and PEF can work together to confirm the members' stance has been justified.

PEF requests update on any other reallocation efforts.

Civil Service approved a classification package to establish an engineering traineeship. (WP)

A classification package was recently submitted to Civil Service for the Administrative Adjudication unit whose workload has expanded. An update will be provided when available.

PEF- can a similar package be presented for the apprenticeship program?

Personnel would need more information to review for consideration.

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10. EAP

A. General Update

Capital District EAP Coordinator Janelle Morehouse will be holding a Wellness Fair in November at Building 12. This will be the pilot for other regional locations.

OMH, NYS OER, Civil Service, Personnel staff, and unions have all been invited to be in attendance. This could assist with obtaining answers to more personalized questions.

Personnel recently attended a NYS OER HR Directors meeting to discuss EAP partnerships and actions OMH has become involved in, which could be incorporated at DOL.

Some Personnel staff have recently become certified as mental health first responders.

B. Staffing Update

All positions are filled based on OER guidance.

11. Miscellaneous.

A. PEF requests discussion on counseling. Management had indicated that sometimes a third party is brought into the counseling. In such cases, PEF asserts that members have the right to have a union representative present. PEF asserts counseling sessions should be face to face and not over a screen.

Management provided a response to this question during the 6/25/25 meeting, and the response remains the same. DOL's interpretation of the Harnett Memo is that having a manager attend a counseling session is not a violation and counseling does not require representation.

PEF asserts they will continue to grieve each counseling session if additional individuals are in attendance and not held in person.

B. PEF once again requests to convene an in-person LM meeting with an open invitation to the Commissioner.

Meeting dates for 2026 has not yet been confirmed. The March 2026 LM and S&H meetings can be scheduled as an in-person meetings at Building 12, with the intent to hold an in-person meeting annually. A confirmation of the Commissioner's availability to attend was not available at the time of the meeting.

C. Update on PEFs requested changes to the Telecommuting Agreement

Many of PEF's revision recommendations were utilized, and the amended document will be posted on DOLi when finalized. DOL will notify PEF in advance of that posting.

D. PEF wishes to discuss the inclusion of rank-and-file members on local L/M committees. PEF states some have been denied EOL to attend.

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PEF will provide the specifics to Management in order to review and report back.

12. Reminder of dates for upcoming LM meetings.

PEF's agenda building:

November 18, 2025 (rescheduled from October 29th)

Statewide LM meeting: December 1, 2025 (rescheduled from November 19th)

Going forward PEF requests the final agendas are provided on word, not pdf.
Management confirmed this will be put in place.

HANDOUTS

Budget Section:

1. Federal, State Budget, UI Trust Fund Status Update
2. Monthly Summary Position Allocation & Spending by Major Division
3. PEF Count of Employees by Division
4. PEF Permanent and Hourly Employees
5. Current PEF Recruitments
6. Summary on Leases

UI Section:

7. Initial Claims