

PEF Statewide Labor/Management Meeting

Via MS Teams

10/29/20

<u>PEF</u>	<u>MANAGEMENT</u>
Charles Browning – Co-Chair	Cliff Meister – Co-Chair
Dan Warren	Sadhna Gujral
Bradley Kolb, PEF Field Rep	Patricia Carroll
Lisa Wells	Alyce Siegel
Chris Rampe, PEF recording secretary (excused)	
Patty Mason	
Clifvon Jones	
John Babich	
Jeff Hutchinson (excused)	
Kathy Czachorowski	
Brandi Loveday-Chesley	
Radhakrishna Mohan (excused)	
Prashant Singapura	

1.) Minutes – 9/24/20 minutes approved 10/27/20 and posted to the NYSIF intranet.

2.) Next Meeting - PEF proposes 11/19/20 and 12/17/20 at 9:30am to address pandemic concerns, and 1/21/21 at 9:30am for a full agenda.

3.) *Tabled*** Local L/M Meetings –**

Due to NYSIF's departmental reorganizations, PEF requests SW organizational charts for all departments for proper communication of local LM and H&S issues.

NYSIF advised that employees with local concerns should go to the highest rank of the respective department. NYSIF to provide a listing of top ranked management for respective offices.

- PEF requests the SW list of managers that will be handling local LM/H&S meetings.

NYSIF advised to seek out local Business Managers in the interim due to the pandemic.

4.) Statewide Staffing Levels –

a.) CSR 1 Staffing levels:

Due to the recent Hearing Rep promotions and CSR2 postings, NYSIF quite likely will be promoting/losing approximately 20 CSR1's. Are these CSR1's going to be replenished?

Management reports they expect approximately 13 CSR1 openings due to recent hearing rep promotions and CSR2 postings. Claims Admin advises they look monthly at case load counts. The current model is: Pension 400 cases, Med only 300 cases, Lost time claims 160. Due to Covid-19, our numbers are down about 6% this year. Applying the model with the positions lost and promotions, we currently have an overage of 30-35 CSR1's, which is 7% over staff. Binghamton appears to need a half a CSR1 based on current numbers, and Buffalo is short 3 case managers. Syracuse will be receiving more safety cases. Cases are still being transferred and expected to be transferred into 2021. NYSIF actively checks caseloads monthly and any deviations should be addressed to local management.

b.) ITS – Staffing – SSA staffing.

PEF requests SSA's be adequately staffed statewide. Rochester office is down to 1 SSA, Binghamton has zero, White Plains has 1, Albany is down 2.

PEF raises overall low ITS staffing and reports out that end user services are affected by SSA understaffing. Additional tasks have been assigned to SSA's which will be important for reintegration. All ITS positions are needed in end user services for better customer service and employee needs. PEF understands the current management transition in ITS but is seeking recruitment.

Ms. Carroll advises that she spoke with Ms. Griffin regarding staffing. SSA's are very important to NYSIF, there is value in SSA's especially as we are working remotely. NYSIF is reviewing overall duties of ITS including reintegration and remote work. Specific issues should be addressed with Ms. Griffin. NYSIF is also looking at SSA staffing in Binghamton and other offices and notes that requests to fill are being reviewed. Staffing is a fluid situation; data is being reviewed and analyzed constantly.

Given Ms. Griffin's new position in ITS, NYSIF requests she be given the opportunity to assess the work of SSA's and all ITS positions in all the offices and is specifically looking at Binghamton.

5.) Reintegration & Telecommuting –

Effective 3/15/20 & 3/17/20 temporary telecommuting where possible was directed by the Governor. On 10/2/20 it was again extended to 1/1/21.

Maintaining production in every NYSIF department and quality customer service is a mutual goal.

PEF and NYSIF management agree that telecommuting is successful, and that health and safety is a mutual priority when returning to the office.

In addition to physical health and safety, PEF members are reporting many benefits including better focus, increased production, general well-being, and overall improved mental health while telecommuting.

PEF appreciates NYSIF reporting out at this forum, and their on-going updates via NYSIF email, NYSIF intranet, and other communications with PEF. PEF seeks to continue to work with NYSIF on safe reintegration.

- PEF asks how many members have returned to each open office and how many are anticipated in each downstate office.

Management reports that their return-to-the-office strategy is to first offer full-time in the office as a pilot in order to assess the programs and screening processes, and to confirm everything is working as expected. If all goes well, then NYSIF will offer that office part-time 50/50, and if that is successful, a more flexible than 50/50 schedule will be offered.

Management provided an approximate number of staff who have returned to the office:

Albany 8: - 16 employees

Albany 1: - 66 employees

Albany 15: - 41 employees, some with a 50/50 work schedule.

In total, Albany has approximately 123 working in some capacity.

Syracuse: - 42 employees, some with 50/50 work schedule.

Buffalo - 12 employees

Long Island is opening 11/2/20 and 30-33 employees have reported they will return to the office.

NYC is expecting to open 11/9/20 with just over 100 employees reporting their desire to return to the office.

Binghamton - 14 employees have returned; they were offered 50/50 split only- no flexible split time offered as of yet.

Rochester does not have an expected date to reopen as there has not been enough interest.

White Plains also does not have an expected date due to lack of interest.

Another survey will be sent out in those offices with lack of interest.

Management reports they expect approximately 331 employees will have returned by 11/9/20. Those employees surveyed post-return have stated they are happy & comfortable with working in the office. Some have reverted to telecommuting due to personal circumstances, not office concerns. Others that originally reported no interest in returning have expressed interest in a 50/50 schedule. All rollouts are being done in a deliberate and designed fashion.

Management asks what PEF's thoughts are on this topic. PEF reports no complaints and a desire to relay this information and numbers to querying PEF members.

Management advises that they expect numbers to change when they offer more flexible schedules in all offices. Management also advised that for those who have returned to the office, should they wish to change their schedule, they should email their request to the Covid19 mailbox with a copy to their supervisor.

- PEF awaits a list of all building's Make/model of HVAC systems. Has NYSIF received an update from GOER on the time frame for this information?
- PEF asks which NYSIF offices have MERV13 filters?
- For those without MERV13, which offices will receive monthly HVAC filter changes?
- Are landlords following the Governor's recommendations with respect to air quality? "Increased Air changes per hour" was recommended and 4.5 ACH or

greater is considered safe per PEF Health & Safety. Can NYSIF speak to this for owned and leased buildings?

Management has advised that it is their belief that the Governor's office is gathering information on all air systems for all agencies and that they continue to gather information. Management reports that they believe GOER is sharing this information with unions and advised PEF SWLM should check with PEF on this.

PEF asks if landlords of leased buildings are documenting filter changes, what those requirements are, and if when filters are changed, this could be communicated to staff.

Management responds that NYSIF's HVAC system filters are being changed and upgraded as needed. It was suggested that semi-dirty filters may be better than brand new filters as they capture more particles, that you can do more harm than good by changing filters too frequently, however management leaves that to the experts. Management asks where PEF has obtained their guidelines and PEF relays information is provided by PEF's Health and Safety department.

Due to the pandemic, other NYS agencies are individually negotiating telecommuting at SWLM that is outside of the contract and outside of the temporary telecommuting agreement. PEF continues to request NYSIF consider such an agreement.

PEF seeks to work with NYSIF on implementing an agency telecommuting policy, one that would include full-time telecommuting at least during abnormal circumstances.

- It is advantageous for NYSIF to have a telecommuting agreement in place:
 - For when the statewide temporary telecommuting policy ends,
 - in the event of another surge in Covid-19,
 - in the event of any other disaster to come, statewide or local.

NYSIF's proactive approach to telecommuting at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic is what made our telecommuting imminently successful.

- PEF urges NYSIF to be proactive and enter into a telecommuting agreement.

PEF expressed concerns that when the temporary telecommuting policy expires, staff will be forced back to work at a moment's notice and without timely notice. Although management understands the concerns, there are no assurances that members will continue to work from home if the agreement ends in January 2021.

Management inquires if PEF has obtained any other agency's signed telecommuting agreements to share. PEF advised they are awaiting agreements that speak to telecommuting outside the contract's parameters and will provide upon receipt.

When asked why NYSIF is resistant to implement telecommuting as it has shown to be successful and productive, management responds NYSIF is not resistant, it has absolutely been successful, but there is much effort that goes into an agreement. NYSIF looks at each issue separately and there have been a few problems and they need to take each issue one at a time. It may appear to be a simple clear-cut agreement, but there's a lot more involved.

PEF asks if NYSIF can provide anything showing good faith that telecommuting will be an option in any capacity, even post pandemic.

Management responds that the only assurance that can be given is that it will be looked at. NYSIF will take one step at a time and cannot provide any other assurances. Conversations are taking place regarding employees telecommuting during storms or due to other issues that would directly affect any particular office(s).

6.) *Tabled*** ITS Concerns** – PEF ITS staff have brought specific concerns re: reduced security, training concerns, various specialties, staffing, networking, servicing, and OOT work to this forum with suggestions for better workflow.

- NYSIF's compartmented departments, fragmented ITS specialties, and unequal distribution of work should be reviewed and assessed.
- NYSIF's SSA career path is stagnant.

7.) NYSIF Budget in the midst of COVID-19 -

- NYSIF Financial Business Plan – PEF requests NYSIF's business projections for the agency.
- Does NYSIF have to cut their budget due to the pandemic/NYS budget deficits?
- Since NYSIF is off budget, are we exempt from layoffs?
- Does NYSIF foresee any layoffs?
- Due to the reduction in policyholder premium, PEF asks if there has been any direction from the Governor or any statewide indications that speak to restructuring plans? What changes can we expect to see?

Management advised NYSIF is doing fine, investments are fine. Premiums are down and claims are down, but Policy Holder Services has implemented some programs

to obtain and retain policyholders. NYSIF introduced a new COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Premium Credit Program that offers a 5% credit of their annual premium with a maximum reimbursement of \$500 for the purchase of PPE and other eligible items. The future is unknown and WC business is unknown due to the pandemic. While predictions have not shown lay-off's, there are no guarantees. Financially NYSIF is healthy.

NYSIF introduced the following new programs at the end of 2019 to attract new business:

1. Preferred New Business Discount Program- This program is available to the new members of the safety groups and offers up to an additional 10% discount on top of the group discount (20% or 25%) for the declaration period.
2. Lead Program – This program was introduced to bring back prior policyholders who had left NYSIF for various reasons. ~~there was a program where~~ NYSIF creates a list of policyholders cancelled between 2013 and 2019, send the list to NYSIF'S a marketing firm that in turn creates and mail the marketing literature to these prior policyholders. Safety Group managers then make follow up phone calls to these prior policyholders and help interested parties to secure coverage with NYSIF.

We have not lost much business. In 2018 we had 153,330 policies and currently we have approximately 150,000. Although premiums are down, some businesses like trucking and deliveries are growing during pandemic. Amazon is now hiring more drivers/ independent contractors for deliveries. Home healthcare business has also picked up.

NYSIF is using the new classification code 8873(Telecommuter Reassigned Employees), established by Rating Board, to help our policyholders lower their workers' compensation premiums and address the temporary change in employee duties amid the COVID-19 crisis. It will be applied to the payroll of employees who, during New York's stay-at-home order related to the COVID-19 pandemic (and future stay-at-home orders), are reassigned to either:(a)not perform any work duties (idle), or(b)perform clerical work duties at home. A roofer who is no longer working in the field and is getting paid for being idle at home or for performing clerical duties at home can be reassigned to this code with lower rate.

Members can check the business continuity page on the intranet which has postings on incentives and programs. The bi-weekly emails from administration also try's to include an update on the business side.

PEF thanks NYSIF for the informative PHS report and appreciates NYSIF meeting monthly to address pandemic concerns.

Cliff Meister 11/18/20

Cliff Meister, NYSIF SWLM Co-Chair

CL Browning 11/18/2020

Charles Browning, PEF SWLM Co-Chair