

STATE OF NEW MEXICO
ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND
OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE DISABLEMENT
MEETING MINUTES
September 30, 2025

Location: Workers' Compensation Administration Office, Albuquerque, NM

Council Members Present:

Marni Goodrich, Chair
Annie Scoggins
Darrell Deaguero (virtually)
Courtenay Eichhorst
Director Heather Jordan, ex-officio

Council Members Absent:

Sara Ranney

I. Call to Order and Introductions:

Chair Marni Goodrich called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m. Council members and attendees introduced themselves. Members of the audience were also invited to introduce themselves.

II. Approval of Agenda:

Courtenay Eichhorst moved to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Darrell Deaguero and approved unanimously.

III. Approval of Minutes:

Buffy Jackson moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Marni Goodrich. Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Discussion And Action Regarding the Expired Terms of Three Advisory Council Members:

Sara Ranney's term expired on April 1, 2025, and has been renewed for an additional three-year term. Buffy Jackson's term also expired on April 1, 2025; she chose not to renew her position as a Business Representative, leaving one vacancy in that category. The Advisory Council has identified a potential candidate, Chris from M'tucci's Restaurant, and is currently working on the necessary paperwork to finalize his appointment. Marni Goodrich's term expired on July 1, 2025, and has also been renewed for another three-year term.

V. Director Report:

The Director provided an update on staffing and operations across the agency. The

Workers' Compensation Administration currently has a 17% vacancy rate, which includes several positions still in the hiring process. The Farmington Field Office Manager recently retired after 32 years in the position, and interviews have already been conducted to fill the role soon.

Several new employees have joined the agency, including Claudia as Auditor, Norman and Stefany as Ombudsmen, Stephanie Rice in Return-to-Work, and Tylor in Safety. Two Safety Consultant positions remain vacant—one in Albuquerque and another in Hobbs.

The Workplace Poster Initiative continues to gain traction. So far, the agency has distributed more than 1,800 posters statewide, supported by social media promotion, a radio interview, and in-person distribution.

The agency's budget for FY27 was submitted on September 21. It is approximately one million dollars higher than FY26, covering legislative and agency increases as well as longevity pay. The Annual Report has been finalized and sent to the printer; it's accessible, visually appealing, and a strong representation of the agency's accomplishments this year. The annual financial audit is nearing completion, and the Office of the Superintendent of Insurance is also conducting an audit of the Uninsured Employers' Fund.

The Director noted that Speridian is conducting training and testing for the new Case Management System, with an anticipated go-live date of November 3, followed by an EDI upgrade scheduled for November 7. Rule revisions are nearly complete and are expected to go into effect the first week of November. Public comment on the 2026 Fee Schedule and Billing Instructions will be accepted through October 31, with a public hearing scheduled for October 22.

A special legislative session is scheduled to October 1, 2025. The Director shared that the session is not expected to impact the agency's budget, though the team will continue to monitor discussions closely.

The group also discussed the growing number of new jobs in rural areas and whether additional staffing or budget support may be needed.

VI. IME update with Ronda Gilliland-Lopez

Ronda Gilliland-Lopez provided an update on the Independent Medical Examination Committee, noting that the group continues its work under Section 52-1-1.2 NMSA 1978 to review applications and maintain the list of healthcare providers eligible to perform independent medical examinations in workers' compensation cases. She reported that the committee's membership remains balanced between worker and

employer representatives and outlined several term updates.

Dr. Juliana Garcia's term expired in July 2025, and Ronda requested an extension through July 2028 to allow her to continue serving. Cary Carter's term expired in July 2024, and an extension through July 2027 was also recommended. Additionally, following the retirement of Margie Nitterauer in July 2025, labor representatives have designated Andrew Palmer of Teamsters Local 492 to serve as her replacement, with an initial term expiring in July 2028.

Courtenay Eichhorst moved to approve the term extensions and designation. The motion was seconded by Annie Scoggins. Motion carried unanimously.

The Council also discussed challenges related to access to medical care in rural areas.

VII. **Legislative Sub Committee Update:**

The Sub Committee has not met but plans to discuss the IME fee schedule.

VIII. **Public Comment:**

Merilee shared observations on improving efficiency within the workers' compensation system to make the process easier for workers and less costly for employers. She noted that when discussions arise about conducting studies, it may be more effective to explore alternative approaches. Specifically, she suggested that the election of healthcare provider process can be cumbersome and that valuable insight could be gained by consulting with current and former judges to identify what aspects of the system are not working well and whether rule changes could provide solutions.

IX. **Next Meeting:**

The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, November 20, 2025, at 2:30 p.m.**, at the Workers' Compensation Administration office in Albuquerque.

X. **Adjourn:**

Chair Goodrich adjourned the meeting at 3:17 p.m.