

EAP Advisory Board Quarterly Meeting Minutes

October 25, 2024

Present: Amanda Noonan – Dept. Energy, Leah Richards – Dept. Energy, Robyn Sarette – NHEC, Jeanne Argi – Belknap-Merrimack CAP, Liza Reynolds - EAP, Jessica Arnold - Liberty, Justin Stearns - Unutil, Ray Bourgque – NHLA, Don Kreis - OCA, Lea Francoeur – Dept. Energy, Gary Cronin – Dept. Energy

Meeting Minutes taken by: **Unutil**

1. Approval of July 26, 2024, Meeting Minutes

July minutes approved unanimously.

2. New Software update

Leah shared completed RFP's were reviewed, selected JAI software, approved at the Governor & Council September meeting. The company is comprised of software folks and people from various assistance programs. The projection is the new software should be available by next program year. It will allow for online applications, upload of documentations, better interaction with the vendors. Also great for the weatherization teams

It was noted Arkansas, Alaska, Maine are using the software by this company. Some have seen an increase in enrollment due to it being consumer friendly. Applicants can send a message and watch their application move through the process. Specific details on whether the system provides consumer with a notice unknown at this time. It was suggested not to go paperless only but rather provide an option of one or the other or both to address consumers various levels of comfort with technology. Initial understanding is the system will allow for both online AND paper applications. Impact on staffing with efficiencies vs. incomplete applications.

Discussion on importance of allowing time for consumers to gather all required information for a complete application, another issue consumers may struggle with is that they cannot “see” the upload. suggested option to allow people to see what they uploaded after the upload the document. Group was encouraged to continue providing feedback to help in the creation of the best system. There will be testing on the application process, reporting and testing file sharing with the utilities. It was noted Massachusetts is creating a new data sharing agreement with the utilities that encompasses Medicare. Currently SNAP already shares this information with the state.

3. Triennial Review process evaluation

We are at the point of talking about the group of this board in doing some of that process. It was noted Roger Colton’s 2022 report would be used as the triennial evaluation. The next will be 2025. Also, board should consider the triennial process was created by the EAP advisory board to review the program, is there something else that might work better? Was designed to ensure the process still works well, with the new software is there another recommendation?

Noted was the previous cost of the Triennial review when completed by OSI for \$30,000. Cost for Roger Colton’s work was \$40,000. Unknown if Roger will be continuing this type of work. It was suggested this may be a good point, can we re-evaluate with a new software, is there something we can do with the software to eliminate the triennial review process? Also noted was the OCA motion regarding transitioning the EAP program from the Commission to the Department. There was brief discussion on the uncertainty of the result and the pros and cons of the change.

It was suggested at our next meeting in January, the board should draft a recommendation for consideration it be included in the March filing in that docket. There was agreement and was also noted if we were to use the 2022 docket, which is still open, then that keeps it out of next year’s budget. Technical statements that are due 10/31 for 22-043 we have contracted with Roger Colton to advise on the misunderstandings of the Commission from his earlier testimony. Data will be gathered from the CAA’s. The balance in the fund is higher than the projection that was provided to the Commission in mid-May. Still ample funds left.

Roundtable –

A question was raised regarding 22-043 docket and if the board wanted to know if the board wanted to file anything more. There was discussion the board did talk about what if anything they would file. A motion was filed, board supports the motion and requests the Commission grant it, schedule a new hearing, and re-open the record.