

## Wheelchair Repair Task Force

### MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

9:00 AM in Room 1A of the LOB and Zoom and YouTube Live

The meeting was called to order at 11:35 AM by Chairman, Beverley Brakeman.

The following task force members were present:

Members: Beverley Brakeman, Sen. Seminara L. S08, Rep. Case, J. 63, Rep. Smith, F. 118, David Morgana, Jonathan Sigworth, Rick Famiglietti, Joseph Shortt, Melissa Marshall, Sheldon Toubman, Wayne Grau, Diane Racicot, John Lee Goetz, Gary Gilberti, Darrell Ruopp, Jon Slifka, Shirley Skyers-Thomas, Ginny Mahoney, Barbara Cass, Jim Carson, Michelle Duprey

Absent were: Seth Johnson, Susan Halpin

Guests: Lara Manzione, Office of the State Comptroller

### **Opening Statements & Introductions**

Chair Beverley Brakeman welcomed everyone to the task force meeting.

### **Department of Social Services Presentation**

Ginny Mahoney outlines the presentation before beginning. Senator Seminara asks if there is a lot of data missing from the graph, which Ginny states they did the best they could with the figures considering how fast the task force wanted the data. For 2022 1,104,527 were enrolled in Medicaid and 0.44% were CRT users. She states that breaking it down by county, most CRT members are in the Hartford and New Haven counties. She states 90% of CRT users

are adults and 10% are children (the data is from 2022). Looking at new CRT purchases versus repairs, there was close to a 10 to 1 ratio where repairs outweighed new purchases. By 2022 there were 7,858 repairs and 1,392 new purchases. Looking at repairs with prior authorization or without prior authorization, repairs without prior authorization outweighed repairs with prior authorization significantly. She states prescriptions are required for all repairs including CRT repairs and a new prescription is required for each repair. She states DME vendors must submit the prescription with each repair, and that prescriptions are non-specific which allows coverage of any and all repairs necessary during the two-year period. The \$1,000 PA threshold for repairs was in effect prior to the COVID Public Health Emergency. She states that 11.8% of the repairs required PA. She goes on to explain that the 1,392 new CRTs cost the Connecticut Medical Assistance Program roughly \$10 million in calendar year 2022, and the 7,858 repairs costs were \$ 2.3 million in calendar year 2022. She then lists the vendors who provide CRT (Advanced Home Medical Supplies, Agawam Medical Supply, Home Health Pavilion, National Seating and Mobility, Numotion).

### **Questions for the Department of Social Services**

Senator Seminara asks if they are providers of power chairs, Ginny confirms they are providers of power chairs but that they don't go into nursing homes. Senator Seminara asks why most things are handled by National Seating and Mobility or Numotion. Ginny isn't aware of why they have most of the market but gives the opinion that they've been around for a long time. Senator Seminara stated she wasn't aware of the other providers. Senator Seminara asks whether prescriptions must be renewed every two years and if they are vague, Ginny confirms that is the case.

Gary Gilberti asks how CRT was defined for the data set. Ginny says it was compiled using all codes. Gary asks whether the other providers (everyone but Numotion and National Seating and Mobility) do repairs and new chairs, Ginny says they'd have to find out.

Jonathan Sigworth asks if there is a breakdown between National Seating and Mobility and Numotion's market shares. Ginny says they'd have to get the data. Jonathan states that it will be beneficial. Jonathan asks about the processing time for repairs comparing PA's and non-PAs. Ginny says she would have to get that data, but that they specified if prior authorizations come in with "urgent" on it they will try and speed up processing time. He asks whether the prescriptions that are vague are generally vague or have a specific vagueness and states he doesn't recall what his prescriptions looked like. Ginny said she'd have to look at a prescription to see what's on it but that you always need a diagnosis on the prescriptions including repairs.

Chair Brakeman asks whether the prescription is vague and generic so that it can be used for anything, Ginny confirms this.

Chair Brakeman states that the clerk sent out the presentation by the Department of Social Services to all members to take a look.

Sheldon Toubman asks whether 14 days is mandatory or if it can be a lot less, Ginny confirms it can be less. Sheldon asks why prescriptions are required at all and understands the need for a new device to have a prescription but isn't sure why for one that someone already has. Ginny isn't sure but assumes it's to make sure quality assurance has some type of documentation on file.

Rick Famiglietti asks if CRT reps (National Seating Mobility and Numotion) know what percentages of the market they have. Rick states that a doctor will write a prescription without seeing him so prescriptions are useless and is costing Medicaid a lot. Ginny states for a repair you don't need to see a doctor you can just have them fax the prescription.

Senator Seminara asks if you obtain a prescription if the insurance company keeps it in the file, so they don't have to call the physician again in that two-year period. Wayne Grau states that they do keep it in their record. Wayne states after the two-year period they have to wait on the doctor to get the new prescription and sometimes it does take some additional days.

Wayne Grau asks about whether individual data sets are included in the data, Ginny confirms. Wayne asks what percentage of miscellaneous codes under one thousand are included. Ginny states they didn't get into that level of detail.

Senator Seminara asks if CHN or DSS has to have a copy of the prescription. Ginny confirms. The Senator asks if there is a possibility that a month before someone's prescription expires an email can be sent to the consumer so that they can schedule a doctor appointment or get a new prescription. Ginny thinks that would be extremely difficult to keep track of by the Department. Gary from Numotion says it would be hard but thinks expanding the prescription to 5 years would fix the problem.

Chair Brakeman observes that the question is why prescriptions are needed and how to facilitate it easier. She asks if prescriptions are a Medicaid requirement and Ginny confirms it is.

Jonathan Sigworth states he wants to see the language of the prescription. He thinks in addition to extending the length of the prescription to also reach out to the provider.

### **Lara Manzione, Office of the State Comptroller Presentation**

Lara states they provide medical insurance for current state employees, retirees, and their dependents, as well as those enrolled in the CT state partnership plan which are mostly municipalities or related to them. Lara states there were only 12 power-operated wheelchairs purchased last year in their coverage group. Lara states they are the largest state provider of health insurance. Lara states that the average and maximum processing times for those looking for prior authorizations for new wheelchairs or repairs is 5-7 business days. Lara states medical criteria as well as conversations with the patient and doctor are used to determine the need for a power motorized wheelchair. Some things that are considered are functional mobility, living environment, and mental/physical capabilities. Lara states repairs are medically necessary when they are needed for normal wear or accidental damage, or the changes in the individual's condition warrant additional or different equipment based on clinical documentation. Lara states she is still waiting on more data from her department and will share it with the Task Force.

### **Questions for Lara Manzione and General Discussion**

Sheldon Toubman asks whether the Comptroller can unilaterally make decisions about prior authorization. Lara says they are subject to collective bargaining and that certain types of changes can be made by the Comptroller, but she is unsure where the line falls. Sheldon asks how many people are covered by the state plan. Lara states it's about 115,000 and

when you add active employees under the partnership plan it's an additional 65,000. Non-Medicare retirees and Medicare retirees are 90,000. Altogether it's about 270,000. Sheldon asks why the requirements for documentation for repairs compared to a new wheelchair are the same, Lara says she is unsure.

Wayne Grau asks the percentage of prior approvals that are approved the first time. Also asks whether the Comptroller process is different than DSS. Also ask, of the denials that need more information what percent get approved afterward. Lara says she'll get the answers.

Jonathan Sigworth asks whether manual wheelchairs were excluded from the data set. Lara says the information she presented covers everything and can get definitions for each kind of wheelchair she presented. Jonathan asks for Lara to check if the steps for prior authorization are the same for all wheelchairs, not just power operated. Jonathan asks if there are other requirements regarding whether a wheelchair needs to be repaired or replaced entirely, Lara states she can find out more clarification but that an answer was included in the presentation and that it's based on whether the device is functioning or not. Jonathan asks for case examples; Lara says she can put some together. Jonathan asks if there's any final verification of a prior authorization that could cause a delay. Gary Gilberti states they (Numotion) do an insurance verification before delivery but don't verify medical necessity.

Melissa Marshall asks if bariatric chairs are covered. Lara says she will find out. Melissa states that they are larger chairs, and Lara doesn't believe they would be covered.

Senator Seminara thanks Lara for the presentation and states she's done a great job.

Jonathan Sigworth asks if there is any data on situations where insurance changes, Gary says he can get the data.

Chair Brakeman states that Susan Halpin couldn't attend today but she will look into issues related to insurance.

Sheldon asks if there is data on suppliers giving loaners, Ginny says she'd have to ask the vendors for that data.

Chair Brakeman asks if there is any data on whether Medicaid covers loaners, Gary Gilberti says they do give loaners so long as they have availability but it's extremely difficult to have loaners for every single product. He states that Medicare does have a code to build a rental while their regular chair is being repaired.

Rick Famiglietti asks why you would have to call to get information regarding reverification, Gary states that sometimes it doesn't come through electronically but it's very rare.

Rick asks if you have to go through Medicaid/Medicare for reverification, Gary says that it's more of a pass through where it doesn't sometimes require authorization. Rick asks if it's a requirement of the insurance industry, Gary says it's standard practice for suppliers because there are situations where people change insurance.

Rick asks if he makes a claim with an insurance company on a date and then changes insurance, isn't the old company liable for the claim? Gary says the date of service

determines the date on which suppliers get paid and insurance has to be in place during that time.

Senator Seminara asked if there is a code for Medicaid or other insurers regarding loaners, K0462 is the code for power wheels Gary said and that it must be done every 30 days.

David Morgana asks how many wheelchair technicians the two biggest companies employ; Chair Brakeman lets David know that the next meeting will include that data.

Jonathan asks if there is any clarification on remedies for people who don't have an environment for certain chairs and if there are any codes to reimburse for expedited delivery of repairs, Ginny says that the device should fit in the necessary areas but not all areas of the home and regarding the codes she will have to look into it.

Jonathan asks if there is any coverage for expedited repairs, Ginny says that only 10% require prior authorization so 90% of repairs they aren't even looking at and it's up to the vendors.

Chair Brakeman asks what happens if they don't have an accessible home for a wheelchair and whether they would be denied, Ginny states that would not happen.

### **Closing Remarks**

Chair Brakeman thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and for all the information that was presented.

### **Approval of Minutes – October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Chair Brakeman made a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting, the minutes were approved unanimously.

### **Announcement of the Date and Time of Next Meeting**

November 2<sup>nd</sup> at 11:30AM.

### **Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:37AM.

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Chandra Persaud  
Task Force Administrator

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Nate Kalechman  
Minutes Prepared by