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MEA Pushes OLR to Address Healthplex Problems

By Vanessa De Santis



Healthplex Committee Chair Joel Fishelson (left) and Committee Member Bob Pfefferman led two of the breakout groups at the General Membership Meeting.

Long telephone hold times and claims that are somehow, mysteriously, not received – these are just a few things that bother New York City managers and MEA members about Healthplex, their dental care provider.

MEA members voiced long-held grievances at a meeting on October 17th called for that purpose in four “breakout” sessions which were arranged to allow for a greater dialogue among members. These sessions were led by MEA President Stu Eber; Joel Fishelson, the MEA representative to the Management Benefits Fund; and Larry Konstan and Bob Pfefferman, two members of the MEA’s Healthplex committee.

“Over the 15 years that we have been working through the Office of Labor Relations (OLR) to respond to individual member’s concerns, we have found that the problems are systemic, not just individuals falling through the cracks,” said Mr. Fishelson.

(OLR is the city department that provides the dental benefit through the Management Benefits Fund. The MBF contracts with Healthplex to administer the benefit through a bidding process.)

MEA President Stu Eber noted, “This is a long-term effort and we are not letting OLR off the hook with generalities and vague responses.”

In the past two years, Mr. Fishelson reported, a committee formed by the MEA has exchanged letters and had

phone consultations with the Office of Labor Relations. Many members responded to an MEA survey of their experiences with Healthplex. The MEA also has received a copy of the relevant contracts via a Freedom of Information Act request.

Mr. Eber reported that OLR has, grudgingly, acknowledged some

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CONTACTING HEALTHPLEX

Members with questions or concerns are urged to contact Healthplex.

Here’s how:

1. Call 800-468-0600. Generally speaking, Healthplex is supposed to answer in less than 30 seconds after the recorded interactive voice plays out (e.g., press 1 for this, press 2 for that). Healthplex also has an e-mail address, info@healthplex.com, but the MEA does not know how responsive this is.
2. If you receive no satisfaction from Healthplex, or are subject to a long hold time, complain directly to OLR, (212) 306-7290, or e-mail them through the OLR website: <http://nyc.gov/olr>

By contract, Healthplex is supposed to have two full time, trained staff at OLR to answer questions; the MEA has verified that those two people actually exist.

3. If you have not been able to reach either Healthplex or OLR, then give the MEA a report. E-mail us at info@nycmea.org or call the office, (212) 964-0035.

Members Voice Concerns

Here are a few of the issues raised by MEA members (identified only by their first names) in breakout sessions at the general membership meeting:

- **Adrienne** reported that Healthplex lost x-rays for an implant three times. She wanted to spread the work over two benefit years but Healthplex’ slow response to the pre-determination resulted in everything being done in the same benefit year.
- **Alex** says that telephone hold times often exceed 30 minutes. He also reports that Healthplex denied his claim, stating that he’d had a break in service and a year waiting period before he was covered. Alex denies having a break in his service. He was required to obtain a letter from his personnel office verifying that no such break existed.
- **Edgar** reported a slow registration of new managers. He added that it took Healthplex six months to approve an implant that he needed.
- **Jane** said that the “explanation of benefits” from Healthplex listed dates when she was not at the dentist. She said there were not enough providers near her home in Queens.

Bits & Pieces



THE CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM: EXAMS AND TITLE CERTIFICATIONS

By Linda A. Barnes, NYC MEA Executive Director

On a consistent basis, we receive inquiries from our members regarding the civil service system. Specifically, questions asked relate to the design of civil service exams and the certification process. In order to provide accurate information, we often consult with the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS). DCAS designs and develops the criteria for all civil service exams.

PURPOSE OF EXAMS

Why take a civil service exam? Managers seeking a stable, perhaps long-term career within city government apply for civil service exams in order to establish a permanent job title within a competitive class of positions. Civil service exams can also provide a mechanism for upward career mobility. For example, individuals who complete promotional exams receive the benefit of being promoted into the next class of positions with an increase in salary. Currently, the Long Beach decision impacts upon the City's requirements to decrease its number of provisional employees. This has an effect upon city employees to ensure they complete and pass a civil service exam, in order to be certified into a permanent civil service title.

Another perspective related to the purpose of exams is demonstrated by city agencies who use civil service examinations to help determine if applicants possess the basics needed to perform the functions of a particular position and/or title. Written and oral tests, and credentialing assessments, are used to evaluate an employee's knowledge, skills, abilities, experience and education. After managers have completed a civil service exam, the

steps for certification are applied. This can represent a confusing and conflicting experience.

THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Civil service examinations are designed to provide a system that is fair and objective for everyone. Satisfactory completion of the components of a civil service exam gives city employees and prospective employees an equal opportunity to be placed on a list for agency certification, interviewed if necessary and the potential to be selected.

Promotional lists are utilized first, then agencies are legally obligated use an open competitive list until it is exhausted, to replace provisional employees with individuals from the certified lists. The agencies have the discretion to decide the order in which positions occupied by a provisional employee will be filled.

There is no requirement to look at the provisional incumbent's civil service status or length of service in the agency when determining which positions to fill. Any provisional employee who does not have an underlying permanent civil service title may be transferred or demoted to another title, managerial or non-managerial, that does not have a current certified civil service list. These provisional employees can be terminated at the agencies' discretion. The agencies have the right to use the starting salary or higher salary of the new title in place of the current salary.

Provisional employees with permanent underlying civil service titles who are being replaced will be bumped back to those titles. Their salaries are to be recalculated to no less than they would have been earning if they had remained in the permanent title during the interim.

FILING FOR EXAMS

Recently, we received various questions from managerial employees eager to resume the exam process for an exam that was previously posted, removed and re-posted on the DCAS website. Managers want to know: "What do I do now?" "How do I get a refund or credit for the fee I already paid?"

According to DCAS, individuals who previously filed for an exam that was postponed and re-posted will either receive a refund or have their fee transferred to the new exam. Prior to re-opening filing, DCAS will send communication to everyone with instructions regarding how to proceed.

If DCAS transfers a previously filed application to a new exam for the same title, it may not be necessary to apply for the exam again. Candidates who wish to continue with the exam process will need to re-enter relevant details and information using the DCAS online application system at www.nyc.gov/examsforjobs.

If you paid an application fee for an exam and have decided you are no longer interested, you may request a refund by contacting DCAS in writing at 1 Centre Street, 14th floor, New York, NY 10007, Attn: Refund for Exam(s).

This information has been shared with us by DCAS.

JUST GIVING YOU THE 4-1-1
Kudos and Congratulations to Dean Kokkoris on his recent promotion to Assistant Comptroller.
Save the Date: Our annual scholarship awards/holiday event will be Monday, December 5. Details will be provided at a later date.

Striving for Excellence: The MEA Scholarship Winners

By Vanessa DeSantis

Each year, the Career Development Program of the New York City Managerial Employees Association offers its members and their children who are applying to college the opportunity to qualify for scholarship prizes.

The prizes range from \$1000 to \$500 and were awarded to 22 students this year. The top three top-prize winners are **Andrew Deur**, whose parent is Allen Deur of DEP; **Abrielle Moore**, the daughter of Jeffrey Moore of FDNY; and MEA member and former New York City manager **Jackie Walton**.

The competition was fierce. From the many submissions, MEA selected this year's winners based on rigorous criteria such as grade point averages, SAT and ACT test scores and an application essay.

Talent, vision, focus and, in the case of dependents, exceptional marks at their respective high schools – all go into the mix of what makes the committee choose an awardee. Not surprisingly, the top winners are an especially talented lot.

Abrielle Moore is attending Brown University to study Business and Entrepreneurship. A graduate of the Brooklyn Friends School, where she maintained an unwavering



4.0 grade point average, Ms. Moore is interested in social justice issues such as advocating for effective ways to prevent discrimination based on race, gender and class at the institutional level and beyond.

Top winner **Andrew Deur** is a student at Stevens Institute of Technology studying Chemical Engineering and is scheduled to graduate in 2018. Mr. Deur has completed multiple internships at such impressive institutions as

Columbia University and the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.



MEA member **Jacqueline Walton** plans to obtain a Master's Degree in Urban Studies. She will use her experience with New York City Health and Hospitals towards her plans to help people living in neglected



City neighborhoods where health issues, such as asthma and diabetes are prevalent.

Ms. Walton formerly worked in Community Outreach at Harlem Hospital with a team of nurses – they would go out in the community and administer blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol screenings. Asked who inspires her, Jacqueline didn't hesitate to mention her mother, who taught her by her own example, the value of striving for a better life, even when the odds are tough.

"She is a Cuban immigrant who came here in the early 1960's to make a better life for herself," said Ms. Walton. "She worked as

a Teacher's Aide for over 20 years, volunteered in the community and was also a foster mother."

Jacqueline, Andrew and Abrielle are all very thankful for this honor by New York's MEA.

HEALTHPLEX (Continued from Page 1) shortcomings in Healthplex's administration of dental benefits.

For example, in a letter of March 23, OLR revealed that Healthplex is exploring modifications to the opaque Explanation of Benefits and that it is exploring changes to the clunky website.

The March 23 letter from OLR also reported that Healthplex is "examining its staffing levels (for telephone reps) to ensure that appropriate response times are achieved."

At a meeting with OLR, scheduled for mid-November, the MEA expected an update of what Healthplex is doing to address these shortcomings.

Mr. Fishelson noted that the MEA's advocacy was a contributing factor in the lifting of the annual cap on benefits to \$4,000 from \$2,500 and an increase of the orthodontic life time cap from \$2,500 to \$4,000.

The MEA, at (212) 964-0035 and info@nycmea.org, wants to hear your experience and is prepared to advocate for individuals members who have unsatisfactory experiences with Healthplex and/or OLR.

The MEA Healthplex committee is chaired by Mr. Fishelson.

Mr. Konstan and Mr. Pfefferman are members, along with Evelyn Nyman, Michael Schady, and Allen Pinchoff.



New York City Managerial Employees Association
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2016 NYC MEA CDP SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

RECIPIENTS	MEA MEMBER	SCHOOL	SCHOLARSHIP
Abrielle Moore	Jeffrey Moore - FDNY	Brown University	\$1000
Andrew Deur	Allen Deur - DEP	Stevens Institute of Technology	\$1000
Terri Javaluyas	Maria-Teresa Javaluyas - Health & Hospitals	Northeastern University	\$750
Alexandra Eichenstein	Debra Eichenstein - Health & Hospitals	University Of Delaware	\$750
Rivka Rimmer	Stuart Rimmer - Comptroller	Mercy College	\$750
Tsourounakis George	Mary Tsourounakis - Health & Hospitals	Cornell University	\$600
Bria Hernandez	Katrianna Baker - DOMH	Wells College	\$600
Kahleen Kalschmid	Loretta Kalschmid-Bolt -Health & Hospitals	St. John's University	\$600
Aaron Brown	Dr. Raymond Croskey - Retiree	SUNY Farmingdale State College	\$600
Eric Russell	Juanita Thompson-Barnes - Health & Hospitals	SUNY Binghamton University	\$600
Kellie Williams	Darryl C. Williams - DOP	Sarah Lawrence College	\$600
Dhiti Kapadia	Devang Kapadia - DDC	Rutgers University	\$500
Kerri Sexton	John Sexton - DEP	Iona College	\$500
Clayton Williams	Carl Williams - ACS	Manhattan College	\$500
Aleiyah Springer	Simon Anatashia - DoITT	Haverford College	\$500
MEMBER RECIPIENTS	AGENCY	SCHOOL	SCHOLARSHIP
Jacqueline Walton	Health & Hospitals	CUNY John Jay College	\$1000
Alicia Walton	ACS	CUNY Baruch College	\$750
Karlene Ryan	Health & Hospitals	Long Island University	\$600
Elaine Deschamps-Garcia	DHS	University of Phoenix	\$600
Amelia Arca-Quinto -	Health & Hospitals	Liberty University	\$600
Georgina Howard	Health & Hospitals	St. Xavier University	\$600
Renee Alfieri	DEP	New York University	\$500
Nara Sainthil	DYCD	CUNY Baruch College	\$500