

EAP Advisory Board
February 23, 2018 meeting minutes

Participants: Nicole Harris (Liberty), Shannon Nolin (BMCAP), Celeste Lovett (OSI), Tracy Desmarais (OSI), Lisa Sheehy (NHEC), Janice Johnson (Eversource), Sue Corson (Unitil), Alan Linder (NHLA), Dianne Pitts (TWH), Gary Cronin (NHPUC), Rorie Patterson (NHPUC), Amanda Noonan (NHPUC), D. Maurice Kreis (OCA), Pradip Chattopadhyay (OCA)

Discussion:

Commission Staff discussed the three enrollment levels used for the projections that were circulated – 30,800 (the PY 16-17 average enrollment level), 32,800 (the 5 year average enrollment) and 31,800 (the midpoint between the 5 year average and the average enrollment during the last program year). There was general agreement and consensus that an enrollment level of 31,800 was an appropriate estimate for the purpose of evaluating the projected impact of the proposed program change on the EAP Fund.

Liberty asked if the costs associated with changes to the utilities' IT systems should be included in the projections. Commission Staff explained that, while those costs could be included, Staff chose not to include them as the impact of these costs on the EAP fund could be calculated once the costs are known by subtracting those costs from the EAP fund balance in the projections.

NHLA reviewed discussion points circulated by The Way Home (TWH), including a request that the Advisory Board's recommendation include language about the Board's intention to comply with state law by reducing the balance of the EAP Fund. TWH would agree that IT costs incurred by the utilities for necessary changes to their billing systems are EAP incremental costs and recoverable from the EAP Fund. However, TWH wants to reserve the right to have input on the amount of costs that are recoverable. Without information from the utilities about the justification for the costs, TWH cannot agree that the costs are reasonable and prudent particularly given the significant difference – from \$20,000 to \$182,000 – in the cost estimates. TWH also requested the draft recommendation make clear that it and potentially other groups represented on the Advisory Board reserved the right to challenge any and all costs related to the design and implementation of the necessary IT changes.

The Commission Staff suggested including language in the recommendation that agrees, in concept, with recovery from the fund but only to the extent those costs are found to be prudent and reasonable. The OCA questioned who would do the review, and there was general discussion about how that might occur. The OCA abstained from voting on the general language proposed by the Commission Staff, indicating it thought the cost estimates provided by Eversource and Liberty were unreasonably high and noting that the OCA did not have the resources to dig into the cost issue. The OCA stated it was reserving all of its rights, but that it would be supportive of the TWH suggestion of leaving the prudence decision up to the Commission.

NHLA on behalf of TWH reiterated its support for modifying the EAP design to allow for the discount to be applied to the energy portion of the bill of EAP participants who have chosen a competitive energy supplier.

NHLA asked whether the spreadsheets that were provided to the Advisory Board would be attached to the draft recommendation. Commission Staff replied that it felt the summary provided in the PowerPoint slides would be a clearer, more concise way to convey the impact on the EAP Fund.