



**SEIU District 1199, State of Ohio Chapter
Ohio Department of Health
Agency Professional Committee Meeting
July 29, 2025**

For the Union

Geoff Davies, Organizer

HIW-Chronic Disease	Liz Curry, Public Health Nutritionist
HIW-Violence and Injury Prevention	Brittany Burns, Public Health Consultant
BID-Immunization (Toledo)	Julie Keegan, Public Health Consultant
BID-ORBIT/TB/HAI	David Martin, Infectious Disease Control Consultant
Bureau of HIV/STI/HEP	Heather Searfoss-Allaire, Public Health Consultant
Bureau of Regulatory Operations	Chris Binder, Reviewer
Bureau of Survey and Certification	Darlene Swords, Surveyor
Bureau of Survey and Certification	David Marlowe, Surveyor
Bureau of Survey and Certification	Molly Davis, Surveyor
Bureau of Survey and Certification	Angela Thomas, Surveyor (LTC)

For management:

Benjamin Hunt, LRA

Bill Beavin, LRO3

Housekeeping

- Two week check in on outstanding issues: can do on membership/NEO day (8/11). Agreed.
- October 28 next APC.

1. Budget

- State budget update and impact on ODH
- Federal Budget implications of State and ODH

In both of these areas please provide an overview of the budget that has been allocated to ODH, whether and how it has changed from the previous budget, and what if any impact it will have on services provided by ODH and hiring.

Goal: how are you gathering information for needs? What is the reporting mechanism for whether funding is coming in? Whose gathering it and looking at it agency wide, because its so piecemeal. How will you be gathering information about who is getting funding? Are you looking at it agency wide?

All we know is so far we still have a job. Reallocations and cuts what is the plan to respond to it at our level?

Accessing General revenue? After 2008 crash there was no layoffs but there are reassignments.

Communication / skey: can there be some sort of proactive communication, to demonstrate that we are all in this.

BH: State and fed are separate. We know state budget is passed and done. We have two years.

Fed budget is less knowable. We are more federal money than state. A lot of streams, many are entitlement streams. Grant funding from the fed is more subject to whim. We don't have great info. Everything is all uncertain. We read the news and that what can tell you. We see uncertainty.

State budget: passed. ODH operations well preserved, no funding issues.

Bureau chiefs have been reporting back and director is adamant there is no kind of layoffs. Seems we have been able to dodge any kind of reduction of force. People are talking about that; will I have a job in a year? Our leadership does not want that to happen.

BB: The state budget is GRF. That's usually money we're spending to do things with. Federal dollars we're redistributing.

BB: the plan for situations. Its hard to answer. If there were cuts it would be reduction in force. There is a process. But we cannot plan until we know what it is.

EC: CDC has told us federal budget doesn't go into effect until October. It could change what you have July 1 to October 1.

AT: if worst case is layoff. Bosse first or workers?

BH: It can be both. OCB has a 400-page manual on their website on it. Some exempt might have BU bumping rights. So we're looking at funding stream; if all ABC jobs are funded by one stream then they are going be displaced.

Bill: contract, ORC, law, funding. It depends on how it falls out.

CB: 08 crash. Does it feel like that? No.

BB: No. it's the weirdest though.

Who is monitoring the funding we get then don't get? Start stop. All we know is so far we still have a job. What is the plan to respond to it at our level? What is the communication plan?

BH: Everything you hear take with grain of salt, unless you hear it from the Director or Belinda Kehr (Director HR). We also have a huge rainy day fund.

U: Communication and transparency? Its more I will have a job next week.

BH: We could share everything little thing we hear about a federal grant not being renewed. But then it comes in on time but later than last year. Or we could just share nothing. Both are scary. We're trying to find the middle ground. We don't want to share things and scare people on a rumor. For example, the state budget initially looked terrible for us. Turns out the final product was okay. RIF process is not a quick one.

EC: the lack of anything perpetuates fear too. There hasn't been any acknowledgement of the uncertainty. Even that would be helpful. Nothing is worse.

BB: Right, honesty is good but if we say anything about anything now we have 1200 people now asking questions about certainty.

EC: ODH has a track record of not saying anything.

BB: There has to be balance though. The pendulum. We need to make sure we know what we're taking about. Talking about something without information can create issues itself. Talking about it may make it a thing when it's not. We don't want to open the door when we have nothing to say.

DS: so you're not working on a plan, even though its been six months. Unless the stream gets cut then you'll decide?

BH: somewhat accurate, but we can't plan. Our money is not just a big pot of money. Little streams come in for all the programs etc. We're not choosing which one to use or to divvy some here and there. If so then we could list priorities. But we don't know that because funding streams are tied to particular programs. It's not really our choice so there is nothing to plan around.

BB: but there is also collective involved. We have to plug in the right pieces. We're always looking at all possible avenues.

DM: I've been through bumps and shuffles and jobs in 30 years and I'm still here.

U: for communication. Managers communicate and say things. Who is the person to listen to?

Ben: There are notice requirements legally. Management are not authorized to do/say anything like that. If your manager is saying it, it's not true because it wouldn't come from them. It would also be inappropriate, and you can report it. This kind of news or announcements wouldn't come from a manager. By process it only comes from HR or leadership.

MN: Are any of the vacant positions being held vacant just in case adjustments?

Ben: Potentially. Senior leadership are very averse to lay off so were being careful about filling. We're not freezing, but certainly having vacancies does provide a buffer. HR sends out a newsletter. Also, the BBR emails. But when there is something big to communicate it would come out.

2. Probationary Removals

Please provide a list of probationary removals since January 1, 2025, and give us an insight to the reasons for the removals and how the budget has affected management's decision in these cases.

Ben: Very rarely. Normally it's for performance. Since I've been here, we're had about 30 probationary removals. In only two were even a factor. So in those two case there were other factors as well. We're not going to drop someone just because of a budgetary factor, other factors will be part of it.

When it does come up budget is not the driving intent. It will be assessed based on the various factors of which budget might be one. Its not common.

GD: Our interest is protecting our contractual rights. There is a process in place if members are being let go due to the budget. That process affords those members certain rights of bumping and return. Using probationary removals instead of layoff process could be seen as a violation of contract and a unilateral change.

BH: Understood.

3. Current filled/vacant positions and what is agency plan to fill

For item to please provide in advance an excel report for all 1199 positions by bureau with status (open or vacant) name, classification, section, hire date. (7/15)

BB: Provided today.

Geoff will review and send report to delegates.

U: Do you as management have any specific concerns with staffing or filling positions?

BH: We're filling vacancies as we can. We have budgetary constraints. We have a cap on how positions we can actually have. We have a limit of the money and a limit of the cap. Also getting applicants.

Nelson: general or specific cap?

Ben: Just in general each agency can only employ x number of employees. When we have those constraints the number of vacancies exceed that constraint then there is a prioritization of where we fill and where we don't. It's a total bodies number. The budget limit is subject to who is paid what.

U: Where are we now? The cap?

Ben: We have space, there will be more filled in future than last couple month, especially with budget now set.

Nelson: Since return to office has there been a change of vacancies. We've seen four people go in one

BH: Yes in past four months there are more leaving than hiring. With this new budget we're looking to fill quicker.

Geoff: Are there any priorities in filling?

Ben: It's down to the bureau chiefs and the leadership team. Needs assessments which are taken up the change and a decision made.

Liz: if the money is there what's issue with jockeying?

Ben: It's not money, it's the cap but also whether we can attract and the qualified.

Geoff pivot table and context: Current vacancy rate is 12.50%.

July 2025:

Row Labels	Count of Vacancies	
Filled	350	87.50%
Vacant	50	12.50%
Grand Total	400	

Previous filled and open each year per roster for context

Year	Jan-19	Jan-20	Jan-21	Jan-22	Jan-23	Aug-23	Oct-24
Filled	332	337	343	337	344	335	352
Open	43	59	63	81	84	107	64

4. Remote Work

Current communications from manager to hybrid employees say that there will be more cubicles and they'll soon be required to report 5 days a week.

- Do you have a plan and schedule?
- Satellites?
- Management

BH: We're continuing to build out. Field would remain filed. WFH would continue for space constraints. Other with 40 miles stats. So consistent with that policy as we build out and have space for employees we will come back to the office. Building out in the current spaces we have. Not intending to increase footprint. We don't know who, it's all just in the process.

U: Where are we in each?

BH: Toledo is in process. Decent footprint and is in the process.

JK: Will there be air quality check. We have concerns of asbestos etc. They ripped up the carpet. Curtain. If I'm told we're going back I'm not unless quality is checked. Also, three people have been told to remove their bureaus stuff from there.

BH: We will pass that along, we had not heard that. Absolutely flag those concerns with leadership. As we get it ready we will notify people. But we're not super close. Be surprised if in two months

AT: is ODH getting anything back from Governor for not following order?

BH: no, but I'm not sure it aid that.

AT: yes, it said

BH: I'm am not hearing that we're not following his order.

AT: so the policy they're putting in place we no clear plan and timeline. Why not just continue remote work

BH: I don't want to get too far into the weed because of pending grievances

MN: does routinely mean five days? I was routinely doing 2 days.

BH: its open to interpretation.

MN: are there any thoughts of any spaces for employees outside of 40 miles? Two years from now ill there still be a 40 miles or would their be a local office? Return to office is costing me \$200 a month. When I say alternative option I mean something that is easier than what currently having to do.

EC: where is the key coming from for these cubes? Not meant to be additional cost but then we might have folks not having jobs. Which is more important?

BB: its different pots. There may be money still in the pot for capital improvement. I was told

AT: did you have a plan for this before executive order? They said we'll eventually be back. It was continuous. All of a sudden now everybody is back. Its chaotic.

BH: if there was a plan to bring people back prior to the executive order I was not aware of it. Where I was the governor said what he said and we tried to comply.

Chris: has there been or willing to sign a lease for that to happen. Alternative work location, If you're in Akron etc. In alternative locations like DOHs.

Ben: I can't speak to it. Not that know of.

Bill: we're constrained to 246 north high. As of July 22, at 1:41 right, no new satellites.

Ben: only Akron. Nowhere are ewe trying to expand our footprint

5. Situational Consideration Day

- Effective July 24.
- What is this, how does it work?
- What about the vital need for state workers to be in the office to serve the people of ohio effectively?
- The examples: weather or building issues. Why is employer issue using up my benefit? Snow emergency wouldn't count?
- What are the parameters? What are management going by? You have said it is not a policy, then how is it going to be regulated?

Effectively: how to we control favoritism and retribution?

BH: All I can say is that we are trying to give flexibility to employees where there was not. If an employee feels it not being don't fairly then thy are fee to bring to HR. Instruction, we gave was that unless you have a legitimate strong business reason you should gran the day. We've not even started yet though.

We will troubleshoot when it occurs. We are open to communication.

CB: when communication ceases the grievance can begin.

BH: again, our instruction was approve the day unless there is a strong business reason not to.

BrB: So could I do every other Thursday?

BH: No, we're not doing a hybrid schedule. if they come back for the next one and there's not a good

EC: is it a trial for additional days?

GD: emergency days etc.?

BH: they would be separated as an agency wide consideration. E.g. Red White and Boom. People would still be eligible over and above. And its office employees in the office five days a week. So wouldn't apply to field.

GD: but that would be something that in advance can be requested

6. 246 Building working conditions

Union concerns:

- Room availability
 - Rooms being used inappropriately
 - Lack of private space for confidential calls
 - Hybrid and management not using hot desk, taking whatever available space regardless of intention and/or booking out a whole room(Hybrid staff report similar complaints, even if they all came back the problems would still exist.)
- Atmosphere on floor is almost hostile – complaints from management of noise but nowhere to effectively collaborate on the go
- Need better guidance on uses of rooms, touchdown space, noise levels
- Health and Safety: Airflow problem: people get sick when they come back to the office. Air quality and water quality is poor
- Choosing not to hot desk. Hybrids are not using touchdown space (management level especially)

Recommendations:

- Increase height of cubicles
- Don't let people book out rooms for whole day for just themselves – using it as a personal office.
- Noise: Mgt need to realize office reality, have realistic guidelines or none but change of attitude.
- Private phone booths with computer access?
- Room use minimum numbers to use.

Discussion:

EC: there's additional folks. Conf rooms are either being used properly and there's not enough of them. Or they're being used improperly by people wanting their own space or needing privacy,; leading to others using cubes and collaboration and others feeling disrupted. We want a productive work environment.

Nelson: When in Teams call I forget in an office, and I may be loud or may be broadcasting. I've asked what it was like before and of course we didn't do teams

BB: we didn't have voice and video

BB: H&S issues. We have a quarterly H&S meeting that no-one wants to come to. Last meeting we had one we offered David Martin but he was busy. So we tabled it.

Air quality: anytime were communicated to we're on it. We hear people are falling ill so we called in BWC to do a building quality check and it came back within parameters. DAS manages the building. The current building manager is very responsive.

Columbus water sucks. I bring my own from my well. We have filtration in station. But its Columbus water.

BB: Sound: good idea. Mr. Hunt was taking notes. Phonebooth good. If a certain area is too loud we can look at it. But you can also plan all your calls for a situational day.

For the cubes; they've never been a different height. They're all OPI DRC inmate cubes. Difference was width and stuff. Part of what we're dealing with is being back in the building. But if you're seeing here one person has booked a room we'll look into it. We had it on 6th floor two people doing it. My cell phone is always on. We can look into a blue egg room kind of thing.

EC: As your building out is there a certain ratio of staff to conference rooms. As we're increasing density we don't have the space for conferencing. We've also schedule meeting space on other floors and got some pushback. Is there a rule on this?

BB: will check.

EC: phone booth in the basement?

GD: I don't think we want a situation where we're reporting on each other. So noises and inappropriate use of spaces/offices.

Emphasize the availability of current headphones, and also the permissibility of them

Use of hotdesking/touchdown areas. They don't have situational days.

BB: if there is a way to figure out a quiet space how to best work it in your bureau then talk with your management and if not with Ben and Bill. Can also talk with delegates.

U: desk and cubicles are not appropriate: outlets, chairs, desk, broken. Now adding more cubicle space.

BB: Once they've laid everything out they'll work on everything is appropriately repaired. If issue, then report to management.

BH: Anyone who receives customer calls, I like the idea of headsets. Just request.

7. Surveyors: drive time to lunch and back when nothing is available.

New trainees would like guidance on travel for lunch in their personal vehicle. They're being told the need to deduct their lunch mileage before submitted. I cannot say where it says lunch miles in personal vehicle are reimbursed. Also, people being told as soon as you walk out of facility clock out you don't get travel time for your lunch. Have you been to Edgerton.

BH: my understanding is travel to lunch is non compensable. If in personal vehicle the mileage doesn't count.

AT: can you look into this, and reason: Edgerton ohio. The nearest restaurant anyplace is in Indiana, and we're not supposed to cross state lines in state car.

Geoff: if it is non compensable?

Angela: During covid we were allowed. Now we're getting several different answers.

Geoff: can we extend lunch to accommodate, unpaid, as long as we're doing the full number of hours?

Ben: yes, I would say that's reasonable if you raise it with your manager

Angela: Although you must be on the clock to drive the car?

BH: Yes you're in an unpaid status per DAS guidance to be able to drive somewhere reasonable to get something to eat. But cannot go somewhere unreasonable.

GD: surely that would be the same for lunch?

BH: my instinct is yes but I'll try to get you something more concrete. Simple solution is you get extra if you need it and extend your day. But I will confirm.

Topic	Discussion / Outcome	Follow-ups & Responsible Party
Housekeeping	Agreed on two-week check-in for outstanding issues on membership/NEO day (8/11). Next APC scheduled for October 28.	None.
1. Budget	State budget passed; ODH operations preserved, no layoffs anticipated. Federal budget uncertain; large portion of ODH funding is federal. Vacancies may be held open as a buffer. Communication balance needed between transparency and avoiding panic. Only leadership/HR authorized to communicate official funding/layoff info.	Leadership to consider more proactive acknowledgement of uncertainty.
2. Probationary Removals	~30 removals since Jan 1, 2025; budget factor in only two cases. Budget not primary driver; performance is main reason. Union emphasized contract rights and proper layoff process.	Management to remain mindful of contractual rights.
3. Current Filled/Vacant Positions	Vacancy rate: 12.5% (50 open of 400). Hiring limited by budget and overall position cap. Prioritization done by bureau chiefs and leadership. Higher attrition recently; plan to increase hiring now that budget is set.	Geoff to review vacancy report and send to delegates. Continue to monitor in your areas. Raise concerns if needed.
4. Remote Work	Gradual return-to-office; field staff remain in field, WFH continues for space constraints. Toledo build-out in process; concerns about asbestos/air quality. No new satellites beyond Akron. Timeline unclear; 40-mile radius rule applies.	Management to investigate air quality/asbestos concerns in Toledo. Confirm plans for any additional alternative work locations.
5. Situational Consideration Day	Effective July 24; intended to approve unless strong business reason not to. Not for regular hybrid schedule. Emergencies handled separately. Trial basis; will troubleshoot issues.	Management to clarify parameters to avoid favoritism/retaliation. Monitor usage and report back after trial. Can request the days and expect approval unless strong business reason against.

Topic	Discussion / Outcome	Follow-ups & Responsible Party
6. 246 Building Working Conditions	Issues: lack of private space, noise, room misuse, poor air/water quality, broken furniture. Management open to ideas (phone booths, cubicle height, better room booking enforcement). Air quality check passed; DAS manages building. Repairs to follow cubicle reconfig.	Management to check rules on booking across floors. Explore soundproof booths/quiet spaces. Ensure cubicle/furniture repairs post-reconfig.. Remind staff to request headsets if needed.
7. Surveyors – Lunch Travel	Lunch travel in personal vehicle is non-compensable; mileage not reimbursed. Cannot cross state lines in state car. Possible to extend unpaid lunch for reasonable travel.	BH to provide written clarification on lunch travel and mileage rules. Confirm if unpaid extended lunch universally allowed.