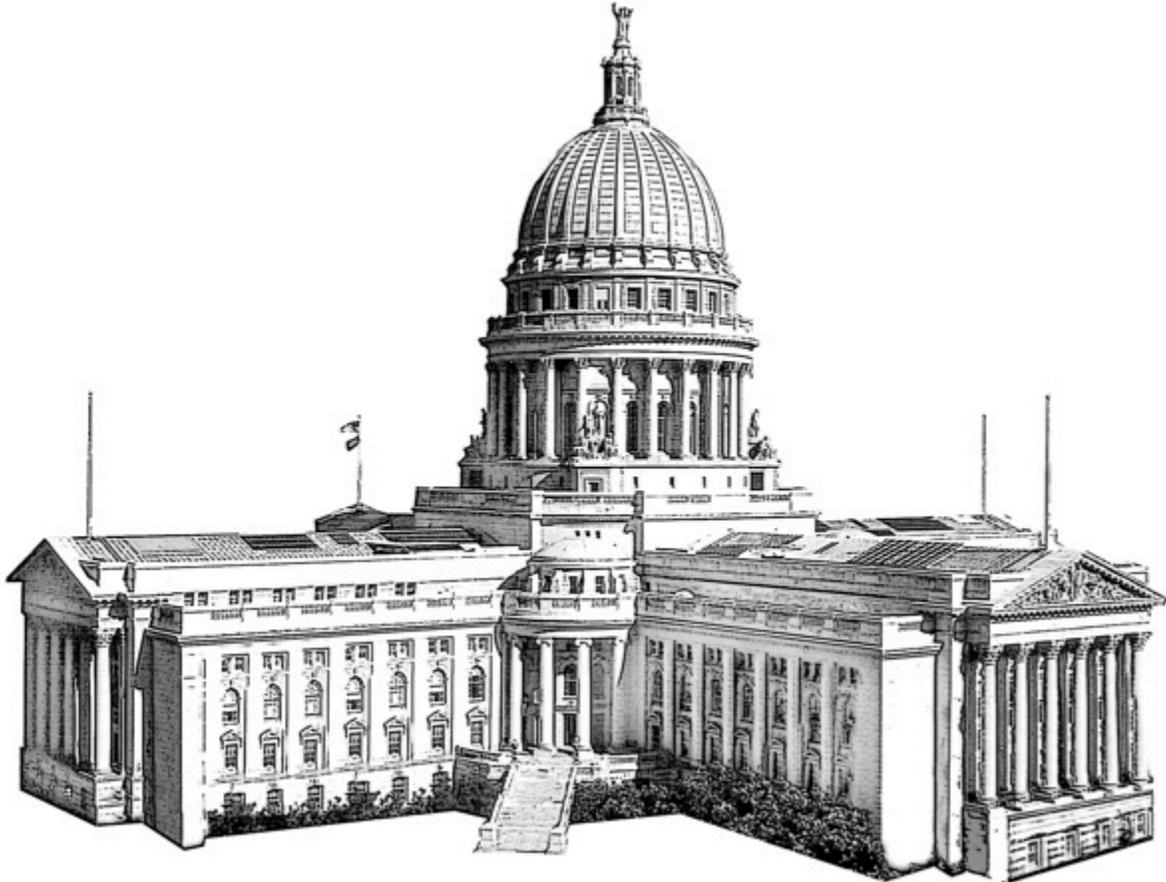


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# ACE Newsletter

## July 2022

### **Meeting with Jen Fogel, new administrator of the Division of Personnel Management (DPM)**

ACE requested a meeting with Jen Fogel soon after she was appointed as Administrator of the Division of Personnel Management in the Department of

Administration.

ACE President Sally Drew and board member Jack Lawton met with Secretary Flogel on May 12. They explained ACE's areas of interest as the civil service system, employee compensation, health and retirement benefits, and other issues of concern to current and retired state employees. They also described the types of activities ACE employs in advocating on public employee issues -- hearing from and providing information to members, researching issues, working with DPM and other executive agencies, writing to and testifying before the legislature's Joint Committee on Employment Relations, communicating with the Governor's Office, and networking with other groups on issues of mutual concern.

Secretary Flogel seemed open to having ongoing meetings with ACE in the future.

Other topics discussed during the meeting included the following:

**Work Rules.** Sally alerted DPM to issues ACE has heard about from current employees relating to work rules. DPM publishes work rules that apply to all agencies statewide, and agencies can add their own policies and procedures. For example, policies relating to remote and in-person work differ between and within agencies. Employees have reported not knowing where to find the work rules, especially those that are agency-specific and when coming from another agency or outside state employment. Employees have reported having difficulty getting help in navigating difficult situations involving work rules and their interpretation.

**Human Resources Consolidation.** Human resource functions that were once attached to individual state agencies have been consolidated in DPM. Secretary Flogel is aware of the challenges associated with sharing services and providing customer services. She hopes that her experience can help her take on the challenge of merging these two concepts. Jack pointed out that the state's pre-

consolidation human resource structure had 426 FTE and the DPM currently has about 355.

**Workforce Analysis.** Jack Lawton noted the lack of workforce planning data in DOA's recent workforce reports and described his experience in attempting to obtain DPM data in his research activities. The lack of a robust reporting function in the payroll system has been especially difficult due to the amount of erroneous data in payroll and lack of staff time and expertise to deal with it. (As ACE members know from past newsletters, we use payroll information from DPM to analyze trends in employees' quitting, being fired among other actions. This has involved a lot of data conversion and error correction effort.)

Secretary Flogel said that DPM has recently hired a new Human Resources Information Technology Specialist, which should help. Jack offered to assist in the development of a reporting system.

**State Government Facilities and Workforce.** Chris Patton, Deputy Secretary of DOA, joined the meeting to talk about *Vision 2030 for State Government Facilities and Workforce*. ACE had expressed concerns about this plan in a letter to the Governor in March 2022. (See ACE April Newsletter: <https://acemployees.files.wordpress.com/2022/05/ace-newsletter-2022-04-22.pdf>). Deputy Secretary Patton indicated that, while he does not yet know if the *Vision 2030* document will be revised, DOA does have an enterprise planning effort underway for the capital budget.

DOA is also looking into what modern workspaces for employees need to look like and planning the transition from primarily remote work during COVID. As did the *Vision 2030* document, he referred to the possibility of needing less workspace. Individual agencies may also transition from remote work back to in-person work, as necessary. He acknowledged that remote work remains popular with many employees and agencies and has both advantages and disadvantages.

The ability to make the workforce more geographically diverse is an advantage. Training managers and supervisors to manage the work force well remains a challenge in some circumstances.

Under the leadership of the Division of Facilities and Transportation Services, DOA currently has workgroups looking at the following areas:

- Parking
- Performance management of employees and assessment of productivity in a hybrid work environment, with both remote and in-person work.85% of employees appear to be in favor of a hybrid work pattern.
- Modern workplace characteristics, including the designs best suited to hybrid work environments.
- Ventilation and air quality in state facilities (which are also WEPC concerns).A pilot project taking place in a Waukesha state office building looking at HVAC.

### **Letter to Group Insurance Board about *It's Your Choice Benefit Guides***

The ACE Board has frequently discussed problems in finding complete information important to making decisions about group health insurance. Attempting to summarize these issues, ACE wrote to Secretary Voelker in June 2022 about our main concerns. The text of the letter is below:

*June 7, 2022*

*Mr. John Voelker, Secretary  
Wisconsin Department of Employee Trust Funds  
P.O. Box 7931  
Madison, WI 53707-7931*

**Re: Suggestions for the 2023 It's Your Choice Health Benefit Guides**

Dear Mr. Voelker:

Wisconsin offers excellent health care benefits but getting information and choosing among them can be frustrating. ACE has become aware that a number of people find the health benefits decision guides particularly confusing, especially since the booklet was redesigned to include more visuals and less detailed content. We offer the following suggestions for the 2023 guides to help make the decision process easier. Since the guides for current employees, retirees and COBRA continuants, and local plans have similar formats and content, our comments generally apply to all three.

1. **Organize and label material more clearly to make navigating the document easier.**
  - Include a table of contents, possibly on the front cover.
  - Format the document to more clearly identify chapters and distinguish between sections within a chapter (e.g., the “with Medicare” and “without Medicare” sections in the retiree booklet).
  - Rearrange some of the material to make the guide's organization more apparent and to improve the flow. For example, put information about important health issues such as COVID, Well Wisconsin, “Need Care Fast,” and “Get Your Meds Delivered to Your Door” that are not directly related to the health benefit decision towards the end of the document. Include the information about Benefits Mentor at the end of Step 1: Choose a Plan Design, following the information about the different types of plans and their respective out-of-pocket costs, at the point where people would use the tool to help in choosing a type of plan.

- *Include a chapter on the enrollment process (Step 4).*

**2. Expand the introduction** to include information about the intended audience, contents, organization and use of the decision guide. Include similar introductory information for each chapter.

**3. Define and briefly explain all of the available plan types** near the beginning of the chapter titled *Step 1: Choose a Plan Design*. Describe each plan design option, what distinguishes it from other options, and the types of needs it is best suited to meet. In the retiree booklet, distinguish between Medicare Advantage plans and those that are supplements to regular or traditional Medicare.

The following excerpt from FAQ on the Benefits Mentor webpage is an example of the type of information that would help:

*"The Access Plans are more costly because they offer a national provider network and coverage if you use non-network providers. These are the plans that people tend to select when they want to have access to out-of-network providers like Mayo Clinic, John Hopkins, or other specialty providers. They are also the plans that retirees who live outside of Wisconsin may select. These two groups tend to have higher than average claims costs, which has directly led to higher premium costs."*

**4. Explain basic concepts, terms and acronyms.** For example, define "plan design," "deductible," "coinsurance," "maximum out of pocket," and "IYC."

**5. Include the following and look for other places where a little more explanation or information could be helpful to users.**

- *Identify factors to consider in selecting a plan design and plan.*

- *Explain that "Benefits Mentor is designed to help you choose a plan design based primarily on your estimated out-of-pocket-costs" (from the FAQ on the Benefits Mentor web page).*
- *Add a chapter on how to enroll as Step 4.*
- *Include action steps for people who have only Medicare enrollees on their plan to the Enrollment Checklist in the Guide for Retirees and COBRA Continuant. The current checklist addresses only those who are either not on Medicare or have both Medicare and non-Medicare members on their health plan.*

**6. Provide links that are specific to the locations where the additional information can be found, rather than simply referring people to the ETF website.** *Recent decision guides have been high level, with more visuals and less detail than previous editions. Because the booklet is so high level, information to help readers locate the more detailed information they need in order to make their decisions would be particularly helpful.*

*Searches on the ETF website do not always turn up the relevant information. For example searches for health plan provider networks yield information about the major health systems in each plan and the counties they serve, but not names individual physicians. In another example, the guide refers to quality indicators for prevention, wellness, disease management, and customer satisfaction. Searching for health plan quality ratings, with filters for an active employee audience and group health insurance, yields a link to a 2019 meeting of the Group Insurance Board and information about Medicare health plan premium rates.*

*Links to the following information would be especially helpful:*

- *The more detailed schedule of benefits for each program option*
- *The provider network for each plan*
- *Quality ratings for each plan*

- *How to transition care with a new health plan under different scenarios (ET-2175)*
- *Benefits Mentor*
- *How to enroll and enrollment forms*
- *Frequently asked questions*
- *Where to get help*

*Because users cannot link directly from a hard copy booklet, consider creating a page on the ETF website to which readers could be referred that lists the topics and links to places where the more detailed information can be found.*

***7. If necessary to save space, consider deleting information that is not relevant to the health benefits decision.*** *We understand that the decision guides are probably the most read ETF documents and are a great place to have information about important health issues such as COVID, Well Wisconsin, and “Need Care Fast.” If including the additional information we suggest makes the document too long, consider deleting information that is not directly relevant to selection of a health plan and find other ways to convey this important information.*

*Thank you for your consideration.*

*Sincerely,*

*Sally Drew  
President*

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