



The Helena Public Schools educate, engage, and empower each student to maximize his or her individual potential with the knowledge, skills and character essential to being a responsible citizen and life-long learner.

Board of Trustees – Executive Committee Meeting

May Butler Center | 55 S. Rodney Ave

Tuesday September 24, 2019 – 11:00 a.m.

MINUTES

I. ATTENDANCE

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Terry Beaver, Board Vice Chair Stacy Collette, Human Resources Director
Sarah Sullivan, Past Board Chair

II. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 11:04am by Chair, Luke Muszkiewicz.

III. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT:

None present

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

No changes were requested.

V. REVIEW OF 9.24.19 BOARD WORK SESSION AGENDA

Mr. Muszkiewicz said he anticipated every board member would be in attendance except Mr. Jeff Hindoin. Mr. Muszkiewicz asked if there were any questions on either action item. Mr. Beaver said his questions had been answered regarding approval of a new stop loss provider. Ms. Sullivan added that Ms. Stacy Collette and Ms. Libby Goldes, along with the health plan committee, have worked hard on the changes. Mr. Muszkiewicz confirmed that Ms. Collette will be in attendance to offer a summary of the action items and to answer any questions. He stated the changes to the plan are due to increased coverage of genetic therapy and added a lot of health insurance plans do not cover genetic therapy. Ms. Sullivan asked if experimental treatments will be covered. Mr. McKay answered that FDA-approved therapy will be covered at a maximum of 75% up to \$250,000. Mr. Muszkiewicz added that capping the coverage allows for options but prevents situations that may cause the health insurance plan to become insolvent.

Helena Public Schools Board of Trustees

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Mr. Beaver asked if the district would be liable for genetic therapy if it was not included in the plan. Mr. Muszkiewicz affirmed. Ms. Sullivan asked for the reasoning behind the addition to the plan and whether someone had asked for it. Ms. Collette answered that Allegiance keeps an eye on what is happening in the health insurance industry. She added that the FDA continues to approve more genetic prescriptions, so Allegiance made the recommendation to address genetic therapy into the plan. She continued that if a health care plan does not specifically address something, it's automatically approved. Ms. Sullivan asked if the decision to cover a claim was up to approval by the carrier. Mr. Muszkiewicz answered that, according to the plan, the district would cover 75% of the genetic therapy claim up to \$250,000. Ms. Sullivan asked for confirmation that the \$250,000 cap was just for genetic therapy, and Ms. Collette confirmed.

Ms. Sullivan asked if there was a limit the plan would cover on cancer treatment. Ms. Collette answered for cancer treatment and therapy, Stop Loss would apply. She added that there is no maximum payout on anything other than genetic therapy because that treatment is so expensive.

Ms. Collette said the committee considered exempting genetic therapy completely from coverage, but the concern was that excluding it placed the district in a position where it was not participating in someone's health. She added the district should be supportive of medical and scientific innovations, especially if those innovations help employees and their families have a higher quality of life. She continued that there was a balance between being morally responsible and fiscally responsible.

Mr. McKay asked for confirmation that genetic therapy included only what had been FDA-approved. Ms. Collette confirmed. Mr. McKay asked if the addition to the plan was just for the 2019-2020 plan year or if it would apply to the next plan year. Ms. Collette answered that the district was watching the marketplace to see how the addition affected the member pool before making future decisions.

Ms. Sullivan asked if Medicaid covered genetic testing. Ms. Collette answered that she didn't know, but Medicaid would have until January to make that decision since they are on a different plan year.

Ms. Sullivan expressed appreciation for the work put into this decision from the committee and the choices and opportunities resulting from the decision. Ms. Collette said the committee is composed of a diverse cross-section of individuals who were each encouraged to talk directly to an Allegiance representative to talk about treatment and advice.

Ms. Sullivan asked if the plan covered genetic testing or just therapy. Ms. Collette agreed to find out.

Mr. Beaver asked if the district currently had a list of FDA-approved treatments. Ms. Collette affirmed. Mr. Beaver asked if MS was included on the list. Ms. Collette answered that it was, and that the third party had personal information, not the district.

Ms. Sullivan asked for confirmation that if the district didn't include genetic therapy in its plan, it would likely pay more regardless of Stop Loss. Ms. Collette affirmed. She continued that there have been numerous changes in the last decade that have affected people's health, adding that's what the health care insurance was for – to help. She added that at the same time, the district was responsible for 1,200 lives, so there was need to research plans to stay solvent. Ms. Collette emphasized the need to have as much information as possible and to help people understand what their options are.

Ms. Collette said the district should know how this additional will affect the solvency of the plan. Mr. Muszkiewicz said that if the plan pays 75% of a claim – a maximum of \$250,000 – the treatment could still cost a huge sum, which no one could afford. He continued that if health care costs continue to increase, the district would have to use the general fund, which would make it technically unsustainable. Ms. Collette said the district has two pools to look at: the VA and the state. She added that both pools still infuse health care funds with a lot of other funds.

Mr. Muszkiewicz asked if the committee had any other questions. Ms. Sullivan said she would still like to know if Medicaid covers genetic therapy. Mr. Muszkiewicz confirmed Ms. Collette will be at the Board Work Session to answer questions from the board.

VI. BOARD COMMENTS

No other comments were offered.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 11:42pm by Mr. Muszkiewicz. The next Executive Committee Meeting will be October 8, 2019.