

Meet and Confer Meeting – DHS - 05/01/25, 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM

Attendees:

Lombard, Kenneth (DHS); Conover, De Anna C (DHS); Page, Jessica A (She/Her/Hers) (DHS); Worthington, Jenn (DHS); Britton Mikkelsen (MAPE) bmikkelsen@mape.org; Rolfson, Tonja (DHS); Bernstein, Faye K (DHS); Czech, Laura M (DHS); Malec, Sheila A (DHS); Adams, Dylan B (He/Him/His) (DHS); Nelson, Kitra (She/Her/Hers) (DHS); Pochardt, Mark (DHS); Torres, Nancy (DCT); Felegy, Shannon A (DHS), Williams, Jessica E (DHS), McKay Cate K (DHS); Wilson, Felicia-Marie (DCT); McHugh, Richard J (DHS)

Introductions 10:30

General overview given by Tonja regarding the RTO.

- 5 years of primarily telework at DHS
- Governor's order did not consider employee perspectives.
- Many employees will struggle with this order. It is arbitrary and ableist.
- DHS has been downsizing office space and resources for the past 5 years.
- We need more solid guidance from DHS as well as more flexibility.

Stories

Britton gives general housekeeping rules.

- Cate:
 - one of the only people on her team who worked at DHS before the pandemic.
 - The newer employees agreed to work at DHS because of the telework benefit. She fears a harder time recruiting with this policy and that some coworkers will leave.
 - Telework allows her to more easily care for her child who has extra health needs. She may have to leave DHS with the RTO order.
 - She does not feel like we have enough information to plan to come to work in 4.5 weeks.
- Jessica W:
 - has never been to the office, and her work does not require it.
 - 10-year waitlist to get a parking pass at ELA.
 - \$90 per month to park plus commute would be a huge financial burden for her family. Commuting will also take away from her ability to be with her family.
 - 5 years of telework. People have reoriented their lives around teleworking.
 - Too little time now to get childcare for her youngest kids.
- Shannon :
 - RTO will not help her work

- Almost every aspect of her family’s lives will need to change because of the RTO order.
- Her husband will no longer be able to continue his job. The economy is precarious right now.
- No daycare nearby has openings. Daycare would also cost \$3000 per month, which is over a quarter of her pay.
- She will still be on Teams calls because her job involves working with external stakeholders.
- Yearslong waitlists to switch appointment times for child with disabilities.
- ADA accommodations can only be for employees, not if they have a family member with needs.
- Shannon would have to take sick or vacation time to be able to take her child to appointments, which could have an impact on her ability to do her job.
- 50-mile radius rule is arbitrary and punishes a huge number of employees while not impacting others. This is not fair nor equitable.

Response from management:

- Jessica P-
 - “Thank you for sharing your stories.”
 - Mentioned EAP for help finding childcare, managing finances, counseling, etc.
 - Felicia and Kitra both mentioned that EAP is not that helpful. It can help employees find resources but does not make them affordable or available.
 - “We will have chairs for everyone.”
 - Chief Admin Officers are currently working on planning enough space/resources for employees.
 - FAQ page is available on InfoLink. There is an email inbox where people can submit questions too.
 - Parking is available in a variety of state and private lots/garages.

- De Anna-
 - This order was a directive. Management at DHS did not have input in the change in policy.
 - Mentioned the Pulse Survey and how management is trying to use that information to inform future planning.

- Tonia-
 - Discusses that we need to know now what the planning is to make decisions. She urges to have a delay on this to allow more time to review and plan. People need to know.

- Shannon F-
 - Asks management to use their voice where appropriate.
 - Resentments are building amongst colleagues due to the changes being done to the policy.

- States Keith Ellingson's office will not abide by the RTO policy and that several other agencies have delayed the June 1st timeline.
- De Anna –
 - Wanted to mention that she is trying to relay these concerns and advocate for workers.
- Britton-
 - States we need dates and quickly.
- Jessica Page-
 - States she will get our questions we had submitted in the agenda back to us as soon as possible.