



To: Members of the Retirees Committee

From: Elizabeth Rogers, Chair

Subject: Summary of the August 21, 2025 Retirees Committee Meeting

Committee Chair: Elizabeth Rogers called the August 21, 2025 Committee meeting to order at 11:31 a.m.

ACERA TRUSTEES, SENIOR MANAGERS AND PRESENTING STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Committee members present were Elizabeth Rogers, Keith Carson and George Wood. Also, present were Ophelia Basgal and Ross Clippinger. Committee members Henry Levy, Steven Wilkinson and Board member Tarrell Gamble joined the meeting after roll call.

Staff present were Victoria Arruda, Human Resource Officer; Carlos Barrios, Assistant Chief Executive Officer; Mike Fara, Communications Manager; Jessica Huffman, Benefits Manager; Harsh Jadhav, Chief of Internal Audit; Vijay Jagar, Chief Technology Officer; Lisa Johnson, Assistant Chief Executive Officer; David Nelsen, Chief Executive Officer; and Jeff Rieger, Chief Counsel.

PUBLIC INPUT

None.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Adoption of Dental Plan Contributions for 2026

Staff reported that there is an increase in the 2026 renewal rates for the dental plans, which increased the dental plan coverage premium to \$54.35 for the PPO plan and \$19.96 for the DeltaCare USA plan.

It was moved by Ophelia Basgal and seconded by George Wood that the Committee recommend to the Board of Retirement a motion to continue the dental plan contributions for Plan Year 2026, which provides a monthly subsidy equal to the single-party dental plan coverage premium of \$54.35 for the PPO plan and \$19.96 for the DeltaCare USA plan for retirees who are receiving ACERA allowances with ten or more years of ACERA service, are service connected disability retirees, or are non-service connected disability retirees as of January 31, 2014. This is a non-vested benefit funded by contributions from the ACERA employers to the 401(h) account. After contributions are made in accordance with the County Employees Retirement Law, ACERA treats an equal amount of Supplemental Retiree Benefit Reserve assets as employer contributions for pensions.

The motion carried 8 yes (*Basgal, Carson, Clippinger, Gamble, Levy, Rogers, Wilkinson, Wood*), 0 no, 0 abstentions.

2. Adoption of Vision Plan Contributions for 2026

Staff reported that there is no change in the 2026 renewal rates for the vision plans, and the premiums remain the same.

It was moved by Keith Carson and seconded by George Wood that the Committee recommend to the Board of Retirement a motion to continue the vision plan contributions for Plan Year 2026, which provides a monthly subsidy equal to the single-party vision plan coverage premium of \$4.63 for retirees who are receiving ACERA allowances with ten or more years of ACERA service, are service connected disability retirees, or are non-service connected disability retirees as of January 31, 2014. This is a non-vested benefit funded by contributions from the ACERA employers to the 401(h) account. After contributions are made in accordance with the County Employees Retirement Law, ACERA treats an equal amount of Supplemental Retiree Benefit Reserve assets as employer contributions for pensions.

The motion carried 8 yes (*Basgal, Carson, Clippinger, Gamble, Levy, Rogers, Wilkinson, Wood*), 0 no, 0 abstentions.

INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Report on Dental and Vision Plans Experience and Utilization

Staff and Segal provided information on the ACERA-sponsored dental and vision plans premiums for Plan Year 2026 renewals.

For the dental plan, based on the single retiree premium rates, the projected annual cost to provide this non-vested benefit for Plan Year 2026 is approximately \$5,817,624. The DeltaCare USA plan was estimated at approximately \$76,407, resulting in a total estimated cost for both plans of approximately \$5,894,031.

For the vision plan, based on the single retiree premium rate for Plan Year 2026, the projected annual cost to provide this non-vested benefit for 2026 is approximately \$509,763. Since VSP provided a three-year premium rate guarantee, there are no changes in the premiums.

2. Delta Dental Overview Tools and Resources

Segal and Delta Dental provided an overview of tools and resources that are available to retirees. Ana Mezei, Delta Dental, reviewed challenges that are shaping the industry such as economic pressures, attrition and office closures, shortage of staffing, insurance

independence and the retirements of many doctors within the next ten years. To help combat these concerns they continue initiatives such as voluntary termination intervention, administrative simplicity, a differentiated provider partnership mode, a Provider Advisory Council and more. To help maintain the network size, young dentists are continuously being recruited. Delta Dental's Community Care Foundation cares for the next generations of dentists by investing in new dental professions. Delta Dental also reviewed Alameda County specific statistics and shared that one dentist went insurance independent, thus impacting 31 total patients.

Addressing Trustees questions, Delta Dental clarified that insurance independence meant that a dentist no longer wished to receive payments from any insurance carriers. This can make it administratively easier for the practitioner who would no longer need to file claims. Some providers will continue to bill Delta Dental out of courtesy, but it really depends on the provider. This can be seen more in established dentist practitioners and/or affluent areas. Delta Dental's guideline is to try to process 98% of the claims within 14 days, depending on the complexity of the claim following all HIPPA regulations.

Additional instructional videos are being created by Delta Dental and will be provided to ACERA to help members navigate sign-ups and the website.

Trustee Basgal shared she received an email from Delta Dental stating that they would be starting a two-tier authentication to log-in to the Delta Dental system. Delta Dental confirmed the transition and shared that this was in effort to keep members private information secure.

Trustee Gamble asked what other plans ACERA had looked into during the recent RFP. In response, Steve Murphy, ACERA's Benefits Consultant from Segal, shared that staff had reviewed a range of vendors, with Cigna, MetLife, and Delta among some of the final bidders. ACERA staff said that if another provider had offered a larger dental network or lower costs, the temporary disruption might have been worthwhile in the long run. However, Delta Dental was selected as ACERA's provider because, at this time, it offers the largest network, most competitive pricing, and would cause the least disruption to our members.

Trustee Carson asked questions with regards to the disruption caused by the Pandemic and how Delta Dental is retaining older dentists. Delta Dental reported that the pandemic led to an increase in early retirements among dentists and people moving or possibly closing practices. Provider Ambassadors are dedicated individuals who proactively reach out to dentists upon receiving notice of voluntary termination. These ambassadors offer support and resources to help dentists navigate the challenges they're facing. Additionally, the Delta Dental Community Care Foundation plays a vital role in recruiting and retaining new dental professionals to help maintain the network and decrease staffing shortages.

Trustee Carson inquired about how Delta Dental plans to address policy changes that could impact the growth of its provider network. Delta Dental explained that its network structure—anchored by both a PPO plan and Premier programs—supports the growth and flexibility for its providers. To ensure fee structures remain for the area, a Market Field Review is conducted annually.

Delta Dental emphasized its commitment to being a healthcare partner by collaborating with vendors such as Epic. One example is the Harmony Clinic, a joint initiative between Delta Dental, Epic, and the American Heart Association, aimed at serving the community through integrated care.

ACERA staff also connected with another CERL system to discuss shared industry challenges. Segal acknowledged that these are systemic issues that require long-term solutions but affirmed that steps have already been taken to address them.

Trustee Basgal expressed interest in tracking member enrollment in the SmileWay program to ensure members are utilizing the service. In response, Delta Dental shared they are producing a video to promote awareness on how to sign up and check eligibility.

Delta Dental will also participate in the upcoming ACERA Health Fair and continue collaborating with ACERA staff with its email outreach.

Trustee Rogers raised concerns about the potential loss of providers due to administrative challenges related to claims and filing. Delta Dental responded that it is actively working with Provider Ambassadors to offer support and guidance to providers, helping them navigate and overcome these issues.

3. Transitioning Member Communications to Secure Messaging in MemberDirect

Staff provided information on plans to phase out all email communications from the public facing email address of info@acera.org to a secure message center in Member Direct on September 1st. The message center in member direct is an authenticated encrypted platform and it protects members sensitive information. It also supports secure file attachments. Staff hope that this will eliminate some redundant internal workflows and member engagement with the portal.

4. Semi-Annual Report on ACERA's Wellness Program

Staff reviewed the 2025 wellness initiatives, which include addressing chronic conditions through virtual resources provided by ACERA's insurance carriers. Staff also provided a report on ACERA's 2025 wellness email campaign and the campaign performance covering various key metrics. Information on Delta Dental's SmileWay Wellness program and the Delta Dental cost planning tool has been added to the website for retirees.

Staff provided an update regarding the OnePass search tool, which was not displaying premium gyms available to members. As a temporary workaround, users were advised to log out and use the search tool while ensuring the "Show Premium Gyms" checkbox is selected. A support request has been submitted to the vendor to resolve the issue.

Trustee Basgal shared they received an email about new BOLD online exercise program that promotes fall prevention. Staff will gather information on the program and will promote it at the health fair and through wellness emails.

The 2025 Health and Wellness Fair is scheduled for October 23, 2025, and will be a hybrid event, combining an in-person event with virtual presentations. The in-person event will be held at DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Pleasanton at the Club in Pleasanton, CA.

MISCELLANEOUS UPDATES

Staff provided an update on the cleanup process of identifying individuals over age 65 who should be under the Medicare or KPSA 65 plan. ACERA has signed up with Kaiser to use their "Medicare Mandate" program. Effective October 1st, Kaiser will begin identifying and removing individuals who are not enrolled in Medicare or the KPSA 65 plan at no additional charge to ACERA. Retirees are consistently informed about the need to transition to an over-65 plan through direct communication from Kaiser, ACERA Medicare presentations and the eligibility information on the Medicare cards. Kaiser will actively encourage non-compliant individuals to enroll in the KPSA 65 plan and will notify ACERA of any individuals who are removed due to non-enrollment. Staff will continue to monitor the transition process, maintain clear communication with affected retirees, and track updates from Kaiser.

TRUSTEE REMARKS

None.

FUTURE DISCUSSION ITEMS

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting is scheduled for September 3, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.

MEETING ADJOURNED

The meeting adjourned at 12:28 p.m.