



# MNSure Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

---

**Wednesday, October 19, 2022, 1 – 4 p.m.**

**Hybrid: Remote via WebEx and in-person**

**355 Randolph Avenue, Suite 100, St. Paul, MN, Mississippi Conference Room**

**Participants in attendance:** David Fisher, Jessica Kennedy, Cynthia MacDonald, Suyapa Miranda, Stephanie Stoffel, Dr. Daniel Trajano, Andy Whitman

**Staff in attendance:** Angela Benson, Libby Caulum, Nate Clark, Joel Ingersoll, Kari Koob, Mary Robinson, Dave Rowley, Christina Wessel, Morgan Winters, Mike Wright

**ASL interpreter Jamie Schumacher and Dee Ramnarine**

## Meeting Topics

### Welcome

*Stephanie Stoffel, Board Vice Chair*

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. by Vice Chair Stephanie Stoffel. Vice Chair Stoffel read MNSure’s purpose: The purpose of MNSure is to ensure that every Minnesota resident and small business, regardless of health status, can easily find, choose and purchase a health insurance product that they value and does not consume a disproportionate share of their income.

MNSure’s chief legal counsel, Dave Rowley, conducted a roll call for attendance and David Fisher, Jessica Kennedy, Cynthia MacDonald, Vice Chair Stoffel, Dr. Daniel Trajano and Andy Whitman were present.

### Public Comment

None.

### Administrative Items

*Stephanie Stoffel, Board Vice Chair*

Vice Chair Stoffel introduced one administrative item for today: to approve the September 14 meeting minutes.

**MOTION:** Mr. Whitman moved to approve the meeting minutes. Dr. Trajano seconded. Mr. Rowley took a roll call; all members present voted in favor and the motion passed.

Vice Chair Stoffel turned the meeting over to Board Chair Suyapa Miranda, who had joined the meeting in progress.

## **CEO Report**

*Nate Clark, MNsire Chief Executive Officer*

MNsire's tenth open enrollment period will start on November 1, 2022 and run through January 15, 2023. At the next board meeting in November, MNsire will report on exchange activity and operational performance.

Mr. Clark provided an overview of MNsire enrollment data through September 30, 2022 (slide 5). Since November 1, 2021, over a quarter million Minnesotans have signed up for coverage through MNsire, including:

- 149,291 qualified health plan (QHP) sign-ups
- 115,700 Medical Assistance (MA) applications
- 12,109 MinnesotaCare applications

Nearly 60% of QHP-enrolled households are receiving tax credits averaging approximately \$512/month per household. To date, Minnesotans have received a cumulative \$203 million in tax credits.

Turning to effectuated enrollments (slide 8), MNsire's enrollment has declined about 3.5 percent since January, which is consistent with historical trends and assumptions in MNsire's financial plans. Mr. Fisher asked about a discrepancy between the number of QHP sign-ups on slide 5 (149,291) and on slide 8 (149,277). Mr. Clark attributed it to a typo and said it would be corrected. Mr. Clark reported premium withhold revenue totals (slide 9) and noted actual premium withhold totals are tracking about \$200,00 ahead of forecast. Mr. Clark also shared that he participated in a media event hosted by Protect Our Care in St. Paul at the State Capitol on October 13 alongside elected officials and other stakeholders.

Mr. Fisher asked a question about slide 10 and the relatively lower service level (measured as percent of calls answered within five minutes) in July and August compared to September. MNsire Chief Operating Officer Morgan Winters responded that in the months of July and August, MNsire's Contact Center is in the process of increasing staffing levels in preparation for open enrollment, which is why the service level increases as we get closer to November 1.

## **Business Operations Update**

*Morgan Winters, MNsire Chief Operations Officer*

### **2023 Market Outlook**

At the end of September, MNsire and Minnesota Department of Commerce reported final QHP rates for 2023. Final average rate changes ranged from a 2% decrease to a 22% increase. Costs for MNsire enrollees, on average, will be lower in 2023 in large part due to the extension

of enhanced benefits (larger tax credits) from the Inflation Reduction Act. MNsure projects eligible enrollees will see a 3.5% average decrease in premium costs for January 2023.

Regarding the increased rates from Quartz in rating area 1 (southeastern Minnesota), Mr. Winters noted that this rate change is a needed market correction. Quartz entered the market with very low rates in 2022, which resulted in much lower tax credits for enrollees in rating area 1 (enrollees had reduced buying power). The rate increase will correct this issue as MNsure enrollees in rating area 1 will see larger tax credits in 2023 and about a 10% decrease in premium costs, on average, after tax credits are applied. Dr. Trajano asked whether Quartz added Mayo Clinic to its network; Mr. Winters responded that it did not. Mr. Winters added that Quartz still has the lowest cost plan in the rating area, but now the difference between Quartz and its competitors is not as large.

All of MNsure's current carriers are returning and offering plans for 2023, and MNsure has added one new dental carrier, Guardian. Minnesotans will have 41 more medical and dental plans than last year. There is also some modest network expansion, especially from HealthPartners. Minnesotans will have at least two insurers to choose from in every county, with three or more choices in nearly every county (83 out of 87 total). Mr. Whitman asked to follow-up with Mr. Winters after the meeting about rates and medical loss ratio in southeastern Minnesota as competition has changed in that area.

### ***Open Enrollment Readiness***

In preparation for open enrollment, MNsure has completed all eligibility and enrollment renewals and all MNsure enrollees have received notices with updated plan information, tax credits, and insurance premiums for 2023. The Contact Center has completed hiring and training, with over 90 agents ready to take calls on November 1. Mr. Winters also shared business hours for the Contact Center throughout open enrollment, which are available on the MNsure website:

[Contact Us](#).

Notable improvements for 2023:

- “Family glitch” fix, which has been discussed in prior board meetings and will be implemented in the coming months
- Updates to improve customer service for Minnesotans with limited English proficiency, providing expanded information in Spanish, Hmong, and Somali
- Expanding access to consumers who are experiencing persistent barriers to applying for coverage, particularly those who face challenges completing the remote identity proofing verification process: lower income people, recent immigrants, and people experiencing homelessness are disproportionately impacted. MNsure is addressing the barrier by releasing a new online tool that allows consumers to upload a picture of their form of identification, reducing the need for printing and mailing documents.

## Marketing & Communications Update

*Libby Caulum, MNSure Senior Director of Public Affairs*

MNSure's current marketing budget is \$2.1 million. About \$1.4 million of the budget goes directly to media buying (placing ads) for open enrollment; the remainder is used for our year-round awareness campaign and the development and creation of the ads themselves. MNSure's current marketing partner is MOD & Co., a Minnesota-based agency. Campaign goals for open enrollment are outlined on slide 19. MNSure's market research helped focus our approach, with key messages including:

- Financial help is available through MNSure
- The value of coverage (for example, essential health benefits)
- Free help is available through our brokers and navigators

MNSure uses data from SHADAC to identify geographic communities (zip codes) with the highest rates of uninsurance. MNSure's target audiences also include communities of color, people in occupations with high rates of uninsurance, and people who are newly eligible for savings (because of the enhanced benefits and the "family glitch" fix).

Ms. Caulum provided a small sample of MNSure's ads (slide 21) and explained the adaptability of the "I'm covered" tagline. MNSure will have ads in Spanish, Hmong, and Somali as well. Mr. Fisher asked about the frequency of ads on TV, radio, etc. and whether we're confident that we're getting the message to people who need health insurance. Ms. Caulum responded that we use the \$1.4 million on ad buys to saturate the market to the best of our ability during open enrollment. This year, some ads will begin after November 9 because of the election and advertising prices leading up to Election Day (November 8), allowing MNSure to spend more money around coverage deadlines in December and January.

Chair Miranda asked about the level of funding this year and the reach of previous ad campaigns; Ms. Caulum responded that MNSure has slightly more funding this year and that she could provide more information about ad views following the meeting.

Dr. Trajano asked about the funding source for ad campaigns. Ms. Caulum responded that the marketing budget primarily comes from premium withhold dollars (about 65%), with another 35% from an interagency agreement with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) for outreach to public program enrollees that occurs alongside marketing to QHP-eligible Minnesotans. This year, MNSure has some additional funding from the American Rescue Plan from state government.

Dr. Trajano asked whether there is any possibility for state surplus dollars to increase MNSure's marketing budget and noted the fiscal benefits for the state if the uninsurance rate drops and more Minnesotans enroll through MNSure. Ms. Caulum noted most people who are uninsured are public program eligible and that DHS is seeking additional funds for advertising to raise

awareness at the end of the public health emergency. Typically, MNSure has not had any ongoing state appropriations for advertising or any other part of the agency's budget.

MNSure's campaign during open enrollment will include targeted ads (social, digital, out-of-home) to reach key populations and raise awareness statewide through TV, radio, billboards and other digital ads. MNSure is also partnering with broker enrollment centers to advertise their services in the communities they serve. MNSure's communications team also uses owned (e.g. emails, texts), earned (e.g. press releases, media relations), and social media to reach consumers. Chair Miranda asked about using influencers in the campaign; Ms. Caulum responded that yes, MNSure will be working with two influencers this year.

Mr. Fisher asked for the name of the marketing vendor again and about the number of Minnesotans of color who lack health insurance. Ms. Caulum responded that, in terms of actual numbers of individuals, there are more White Minnesotans who are uninsured, but the uninsured rate is higher for Minnesotans of color – meaning they are overrepresented in the uninsured population. Chair Miranda asked where the statistics about uninsured Minnesotans come from, and Ms. Caulum answered that they come from Minnesota Department of Health and other sources like State Health Access Data Assistance Center (SHADAC).

Dr. Trajano reiterated that there are large disparities between different racial and ethnic populations in Minnesota, and said he appreciated that MNSure's campaign was focused on closing those gaps. Vice Chair Stoffel asked if our media partners provide any public service announcements for free. Ms. Caulum explained that MNSure does not get any ads placed for free on the paid side, but we do a lot "in house" to earn media coverage.

Mr. Fisher asked a follow-up question about why Hispanics have a much higher uninsured rate. Dr. Trajano responded that mixed immigration status within households may be a factor. Ms. Caulum added that MNSure partners with navigator organizations that work specifically with Hispanic communities, but access and knowledge of options is always a challenge. Mr. Fisher asked whether it's too forward for our ads to say this information will not be shared? Ms. Caulum responded that we could consider this and look into how other states are communicating.

## **Assisters & Outreach Update**

*Christina Wessel, MNSure Senior Director of Partner Relations*

Over the last six weeks MNSure's Consumer Assistance Program team has focused on educating partners, including four online "assister assemblies" with great turnout. MNSure has partnered with both medical and dental carriers to offer informational webinars for navigators and brokers to talk through their products and answer questions. MNSure also requires all assisters to complete annual data privacy, security, compliance and ethics training to recertify for the next plan year. The deadline for recertification was last week; this ensures that MNSure's directory is up to date before open enrollment begins.

As of today, MNSure has 1,013 brokers certified and ready to assist consumers; roughly two-thirds have been certified since 2019. This fall, MNSure has been actively recruiting to expand

the certified broker workforce, and about ten percent of certified brokers are brand new this open enrollment.

Over the last two years, MNsure has seen about a 15% decline in the number of certified navigators. One factor that has contributed to this is the extension of public program eligibility during the COVID-19 public health emergency. As consumers have not needed to renew or re-enroll in public coverage through Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare, navigator organizations have seen a drop in per-enrollee payments. MNsure's annual navigator grant program also supports this critical infrastructure, issuing more than \$4 million in grants to support 39 organizations this fiscal year. The funding supports an organization's ability to retain staff and conduct effective community outreach. Ms. Wessel also noted several upcoming outreach events hosted by navigator organizations and the 18 broker enrollment centers that offer walk-in assistance.

## **IT and Executive Steering Committee Update**

*Mike Wright, MNIT Interim Chief Business Technology Officer for DHS and MNsure*

### **Open Enrollment Preparations**

MNIT and appropriate staff from technical teams will staff a virtual command center during the hours the MNsure Contact Center is open, starting one hour before the Contact Center opens and remaining online until the call queue is cleared each day.

Mr. Fisher asked about the number of staff for the MNIT command center; Mr. Wright responded that there will be multiple staff (about a dozen) from different teams supporting various aspects (for example, phones, servers, local application support). Vice Chair Stoffel asked who has access to the MNIT command center; Mr. Wright responded its set up in Microsoft Teams so it would be accessible to anyone within the state of Minnesota Executive Branch agencies and external parties by invitation.

MNIT and MNsure's Business Operations team have met and confirmed their support agreement, including service levels goals and incident reporting. MNIT will be available to immediately assess and triage any system issues that are reported. Mr. Fisher asked Mr. Winters whether he is satisfied that MNIT support is sufficient from an operations and customer service perspective; Mr. Winters responded that MNIT provides exceptional support every year.

### **Roadmap**

Mr. Wright shared the METS portfolio roadmap (slide 30). In the table at left, there are currently three projects to ensure systems continuity (considered "lights on" work). In the table at right, there are five development projects that impact MNsure. There is just one change since the last board meeting: infrastructure improvements – compliance/audits have been marked complete. No additional audit work is expected for federal fiscal year 23.

## **Closed Session**

*Suyapa Miranda, Board Chair*

Chair Miranda proposed that the board move into closed session to evaluate the performance of MNsure CEO Nate Clark.

**MOTION:** Mr. Fisher moved to enter into closed session to evaluate Mr. Clark's performance. Mr. Whitman seconded. Mr. Rowley took a roll call; all members present voted in favor and the motion passed.

## **Reconvene & Closed Session Report**

*Suyapa Miranda, Board Chair*

Chair Miranda reconvened the board in public session at 3:22 pm. Board members met in closed sessions and agreed MNsure CEO Nate Clark's performance has been outstanding and unanimously approved a 2.5% annual salary increase, retroactive to July 1, 2021, and July 1, 2022. At the next board meeting, members will take a vote on forming an ad hoc committee for the CEO performance evaluation.

## **Reporting, Measurement & Evaluation for MNsure**

*Nate Clark, MNsure Chief Executive Officer*

The policy on reporting, measurement and evaluation was first approved by the board in August 2013. Goals and measurements have focused on operational performance since MNsure was a new state-based exchange, and reporting to date has focused on service delivery, technology, and other operational metrics.

MNsire leadership and staff are proposing that the board adopt additional goals and outcomes for 2023 that reflect MNsure's progress toward achieving its strategic priorities (slides 39-45):

1. Refine strategies designed to reach and support underserved populations
2. Advocate for proposals in the 2023 legislative session that further MNsure's mission
3. Implement the "family glitch" fix: ensure families with access to employer-sponsored insurance can access Affordable Care Act subsidies when the insurance is affordable for the employee only, but not for the entire family
4. Increase the share of enrollments handled by brokers to 45%
5. Increase the number of MNsure-certified brokers in Greater Minnesota counties where they are currently underrepresented
6. Design and launch a diversity, equity and inclusion program for MNsure
7. Design and launch an employee engagement program

Regarding the legislative proposals, Mr. Fisher asked about the scope (encompassing IT modernization, access and affordability of health insurance) and potential workload for MNsure staff. Mr. Clark responded that MNsure's legislative proposals will carve out specific actions to

improve affordability and access that are manageable for the agency. Chair Miranda added that she views these goals as building blocks for longer-term efforts that may not be accomplished in the first calendar year and continue into the future.

Concerning the “family glitch” fix, Dr. Trajano commented that he understands that over 60,000 Minnesotans may newly qualify for subsidies following the federal rule change and that we could potentially measure quantitative progress against that target.

Dr. Trajano asked how MNsure views the goal of increasing the share of broker enrollments compared to improving the consumer experience of online enrollment for consumers, and also about broker reimbursement fees. Mr. Clark responded that MNsure does not pay any broker reimbursement (i.e., direct payments tied to enrollment); rather, the carriers pay brokers. However, MNsure does have a broker enrollment center initiative that includes a financial partnership with brokers for advertising. Secondly, Mr. Clark noted that increasing broker share and improving the enrollment process for consumers are not mutually exclusive; states that have a much higher share of broker enrollments also have advanced IT and automation compared to MNsure.

Chair Miranda noted that while the diversity, equity and inclusion goal applies to MNsure’s staff and internal operations, increasing the focus on diversity and inclusion will also be a board priority.

Today’s goal was to present the suite of proposed goals and outcomes for 2023. Assuming the board agrees to adopt these goals, MNsure staff will provide a quarterly progress report, at minimum (slide 47). Mr. Clark also proposed adding measuring progress towards these goals to MNsure’s annual report.

## **New Business**

No new business.

## **Adjourn**

*Suyapa Miranda, Board Chair*

**MOTION:** Chair Miranda asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Whitman moved to adjourn; Mr. Fisher seconded. Mr. Rowley took a roll call; all board members present were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 3:59 p.m.