



# HEALTHCARE OMBUDSPERSON PROGRAM

## HEALTHCARE CONNECTION | JULY 2025

### HEALTHY EYES ALL YEAR LONG

July is Healthy Vision Month, making it a great time for you and your family to have your annual eye checkup. This observance, designated by the National Eye Institute, encourages people to prioritize their eye health and learn about vision protection.

Eye health is much more than prescriptions, eyeglasses, and lenses. Your eye doctor will screen you for eye diseases like glaucoma, macular degeneration, and cataracts. These diseases cannot be detected without an eye exam. Your doctor will also examine your eyes for early indicators of hypertension, diabetes, and even multiple sclerosis.

You may think you have 20/20 vision, but if you have not had your eyes checked recently, you cannot be sure you are seeing as well as you used to. Vision changes with age, injuries, illness, and even pregnancy. Only an eye exam can ensure you are seeing clearly.

Fortunately, our excellent benefits ensure that eye care is part of our health coverage. Not only is your annual eye health examination covered under your health benefits, under your CWA contract you can be reimbursed\* the cost of your copay up to \$45 by submitting the receipt to your employer's human resources. If you require glasses or contact lenses, consider going through a partner of Horizon Blue 365 or Aetna to maximize discounts on eyewear. Similar to the provider copay, save and submit your receipts to human resources to be reimbursed\* up to a \$90 for the lenses.

\* Review **Article 20.D** of the 2023-2027 CWA Contract for more information including timeframes for reimbursement.



### HEALTHCARE 101: BUZZWORDS



#### 20/20/20 Rule: Taking Breaks for Your Eye Health

The **20/20/20 rule** is a great strategy for maintaining workplace safety and promoting good eye health. Every **20 minutes**, look away from your screen and focus on something **20 feet** away for **20 seconds**. This practice helps relax your eye muscles and prevent strain. Additionally, stretching and walking around your office can also help rest your eyes and refresh your mind.

## OMBUDSPERSONS IN ACTION

Janet, a Local 1032 member at the Department of Transportation, was going through a life-changing situation, needed to re-evaluate her current benefits choices, and needed assurances that those changes were being implemented correctly. Frustrated after being bounced around from human resources, to websites, to waiting on hold for hours waiting to speak to representatives on the phone, she reached out to Donna Meredith, her Local's Healthcare Ombudsperson. "Donna was so thoughtful and kind to me. I will never forget the assistance she provided, staying on the phone with me and Pension and Benefits for over an hour," said Janet.

Donna's personal touch made Janet feel heard and important, when others treated her like a number. "Donna's support, at a time in which I was very stressed, made everything easy for me. I am blessed to have been introduced to her, and the members are blessed to have a CWA Healthcare Ombudsperson."

Navigating our health benefits can be intimidating and time-consuming. That is one of the reasons why CWA negotiated with the state to create the Healthcare Ombudsperson program. Treating all of our members with empathy and giving them the assistance and support they need in times of need are cornerstones of the program, and if you are having a hard time dealing with insurance or finding the care you or your family needs, don't hesitate to reach out to your Local's Healthcare Ombudsperson for assistance.

***"You were so thoughtful and kind to me. I will never forget the assistance you provided, staying on the phone with me and Pension and Benefits for over an hour."***

***Your support, at a time in which I was very stressed, made everything easy for me. I am blessed to have been introduced to you and the members are blessed to have a CWA Healthcare Ombudsperson."***

—CWA Local 1032's Janet

If you have any issues with your health insurance, or you have a story you'd like to share about how the Healthcare Ombudsperson for your Local has helped you, please contact a shop steward or your Local's Ombudsperson.

**DID  
YOU KNOW?**

**Sunglasses aren't just for style, they are also important for your health**

*Wearing sunglasses with UV-protected lenses can block out harmful radiation from UVA and UVB rays. Sunglasses help lower your risk of developing conditions like cataracts, reduce eye strain, and enhance your vision in bright conditions. Next time you purchase sunglasses, look for polarized lenses and labels that say "100% UV Protection" or "UV400." Keep in mind that UV protection can degrade over time, so regularly check your sunglasses for damage and replace them as needed.*



## CWA HEALTHCARE OMBUDSPERSONS

**Roman Sohor**  
**Local 1031**  
[roman.sohor@dol.nj.gov](mailto:roman.sohor@dol.nj.gov)

**Leslie Alvarez**  
**Local 1033**  
[leslie.alvarez@dol.nj.gov](mailto:leslie.alvarez@dol.nj.gov)

**Victoria Fisher**  
**Local 1037**  
[victoria.fisher@dol.nj.gov](mailto:victoria.fisher@dol.nj.gov)

**Peggy Johns**  
**Local 1040**  
[peggy.johns@dol.nj.gov](mailto:peggy.johns@dol.nj.gov)

**Donna Meredith**  
**Local 1032**  
[donna.meredith@dol.nj.gov](mailto:donna.meredith@dol.nj.gov)

**Douglas Martucci**  
**Local 1036**  
[douglas.martucci@dol.nj.gov](mailto:douglas.martucci@dol.nj.gov)

**Darcell Medley-Stokes**  
**Local 1038**  
[darcell.medley-stokes@dol.nj.gov](mailto:darcell.medley-stokes@dol.nj.gov)

**Abdul-Basit Haqq**  
**Administrator**  
[Abdul-Basit.Haqq@dol.nj.gov](mailto:Abdul-Basit.Haqq@dol.nj.gov)