



MASSACHUSETTS

# Workforce Investment Act

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**WIA Communication No. 04-08**

☒ **Policy**   ☐ **Information**

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**To:** Chief Elected Officials  
Workforce Investment Board Chairs  
Workforce Investment Board Directors  
Title I Administrators  
Career Center Directors  
Title I Fiscal Officers  
DCS Regional Directors  
DCS Area Directors

**cc:** WIA State Partners

**From:** Susan V. Lawler, Commissioner  
Division of Career Services

**Date:** February 12, 2004

**Subject:** Connecting Claimants to Career Centers

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## **Background:**

Consistent with its desire to strengthen the role of the workforce development system to effectively connect workers to employers, the Administration, in collaboration with the Career Center system, has developed an intervention model to improve services to permanently separated unemployment assistance claimants. Of all unemployment claimants, those who are “permanently separated” are most at risk of:

- not finding new employment in their regular occupation, and
- exhausting their unemployment benefits.

National studies of current state efforts to assist those who are permanently separated and most likely to exhaust benefits, consistently identify two factors which appear to have the most significance in reducing the length of the average unemployment insurance claim:

- early intervention of targeted reemployment services, and
- mandatory participation in the workforce development service system.

The Administration believes that the Massachusetts One-Stop Career Center system can, and must, play a stronger role by helping permanently separated claimants find new and appropriate employment opportunities. In order to gain the necessary background knowledge, the Commonwealth recently completed a review of the manner in which 115,997 “permanently separated” Massachusetts workers who filed a claim during FY 2003 were served through the One-Stop career Center system. Findings include:

- Only 49% of permanently separated claimants (48,727) were selected for the profiling pool.
- Only 26% of permanently separated claimants (30,250) were sent letters informing them of the requirement to attend a mandatory “Re-employment Opportunities Seminar” (REO).
- Only 16% of permanently separated claimants (18,025) actually attended a REO.

A reason for the low participation levels of permanently separated claimants is the somewhat narrow focus of the current Profiling Program as implemented by the Commonwealth in 1996. As originally implemented, only those permanently separated individuals who had been employed in “declining” industries were targeted for structured reemployment services under the Profiling Program. Of those, the number actually notified to attend a mandatory REO Seminar was further reduced by the limited weekly REO attendance capacity of the career centers.

As a result, a significant number of permanently separated individuals were never targeted in a formal way for the array of job search, placement and training services available through the One-Stop Career Centers. Additionally, the softening of the economy over the past couple of years has contributed to a significant increase in the number of individuals exhausting their unemployment benefits. This, in turn, has caused a dramatic depletion of the Unemployment Trust Fund.

### **Connecting Claimants to Career Centers Initiative:**

Based on current experience and supported by the results of studies referenced above, the Administration, in conjunction with DWD, DUA and DCS, has decided to implement a revised program targeted to permanently separated claimants with an implementation target of January 4, 2004. To reach that goal, the service model was divided into two phases.

### **Phase I**

**Phase I was initiated on September 29<sup>th</sup>.** As of that date all new “profiled” claimants began receiving letters requiring that they schedule and attend a REO within a 3 week period. Career centers have increased their capacity to conduct REO seminars in order to accommodate the increased attendance.

Under Phase I, the number of permanently separated claimants receiving the REO notices is expected to increase from approximately 30,000 individuals (on an annualized basis) to 45,000 – 48,000 (or by 50 – 60 percent).

## **Phase II**

A steering committee consisting of workforce development practitioners and administrators was established in September to develop recommendations for a revised program of services that would “Connect Claimants to Career Centers”.

The steering committee was asked to recommend a redesigned program of tangible, quality services for permanently separated claimants that is consistent with the principles of early intervention, mandatory participation (including sanctioning options) and federal profiling requirements.

The full steering committee has been meeting since September and has established workgroups concentrating on three aspects of this new approach to services for UI Claimants:

- Program Design (Overall Claimant Program Design and Seminar Design)
- UI Policies
- System Support

The mandate of each workgroup was to develop specific recommendations related to its’ area of concentration. The workgroups presented their recommendations to the full steering committee on November 4<sup>th</sup> and are presently finalizing details of redesign efforts, policy changes and system modifications.

The general elements of the program redesign include:

- An advertisement marketing career center services will be on part of the Unemployment Insurance booklet mailed to all permanently separated claimants within one week of filing their claim as part of the UI information packet.
- A new, mandatory “Career Center Seminar” (replacing the REO), including the completion of a job search inventory component which is designed to enhance and encourage the claimant’s connection to the career center.
- Automated notification to each permanently separated claimant, based upon the issuance of their first benefit check, of the requirement to attend a mandatory “Career Center Seminar” within 3 weeks of the date of their notice.
- A one-week disqualification of unemployment benefits for any permanently separated claimant who fails to schedule and attend the mandatory seminar within the allowable 3 week window.
- Issuance of a second notice to attend the mandated seminar to individuals who fail to attend the Career Center Seminar within the allotted 3 week window.
- A second one-week disqualification of UA benefits for any individual who fails to attend the seminar within 3 weeks of receiving the second notice (for a maximum of two weeks disqualification during an individual’s eligible benefit period).
- Encouraging notified claimants to utilize the automated telephone scheduling system to schedule seminar attendance. This will be automatically posted to MOSES.

- Designation of ten Call Center UI Agents to answer calls from claimants who had trouble with or are unable to use the automated telephone scheduling system. These agents located in the Boston and Brockton Call Centers will be able to schedule, re-reschedule, or exempt claimants directly into the MOSES System.
- Periodic issuance of marketing letters which encourage the use of career center services.

### **Phase II Timelines:**

#### **December 31, 2003**

Complete program and systems design, Unemployment Policy Issuance, systems testing and field training.

#### **January 2, 2004 – March 31, 2004 (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, Calendar Year 2004)**

Implement a gradual increase in the number of permanently separated claimants required to attend the mandatory seminar to a level of approximately 64,000.

Test the capacity of the new system through the first quarter and assess the impact of the new claimant program.

#### **April 1, 2004 – June 30, 2004 (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter)**

Increase the number of mandatory participants to the projected full level of approximately 100,000.

### **Action**

#### **Required:**

The Career Center Seminar, a component of the Re-employment Services Program, is the entry-point for all permanently separated claimants and as such is a required Career Center CORE service. It is expected that all Career Centers and satellites will deliver the seminar as designed. It is important that a consistent statewide service be provided so that all claimants are treated equally since this could affect their unemployment benefits. Actions required are as follows:

- Career Centers and satellites must offer sufficient numbers of seminars to accommodate the permanently separated claimants from their area within the required 3 week timeframe.
- Career Center staff should review weekly capacity reports indicating the number of seminar slots available and the number of claimants receiving letters to insure that a sufficient number of seminars are being offered.
- Accurate and timely information must be documented in MOSES, such as Career Center Seminar scheduling, rescheduling, attendance, non-attendance etc. A total of 1.5 hours of service will be automatically entered into the record of every customer who attends the Career Center seminar. No

additional services may be added to the customer's MOSES record as a result of attendance at a Career Center seminar without prior approval from DCS.

**Inquiries:** Questions related to this issuance should be directed to Alice Sweeney at 617-626-6449, [asweeney@detma.org](mailto:asweeney@detma.org) or Margaret Ryan at 617-626-5703, [mryan@detma.org](mailto:mryan@detma.org) .

**Filing:** Please file this in your notebook of previously issued WIA Communication Series Issuances as #04-08.

## Claimants Connecting to Career Centers

Please Note: All Career Center Seminar (CCS) services and Career Center Registration must be accurately documented in MOSES.

