2017

Reference Guide

for Workforce Professionals

Pathway to Reemployment

Framework

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

NASWA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES

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Introduction

Recognizing that how people find work in today's labor market is very different from how it was done in past decades, many states are re-thinking their unemployment insurance (UI) work search polices to expand the scope of actions that meet their requirements. To assist with this effort, a group of state workforce system leaders, in collaboration with representatives from the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) and national and regional Employment and Training Administration (ETA) staff, came together to develop the **Pathway to Reemployment Framework**. This framework consists of a set of resources (toolkit) that provides state policymakers and other stakeholders with a "re-envisioned" approach to work search for unemployment insurance claimants, and a set of strategies and behavioral insights related to UI work search requirements and general reemployment strategies that states may elect to adopt.

The **My Reemployment Plan** (MRP) is a key component of this resource toolkit. It is a generic, interactive job search guide, i.e., a "road map" of sorts that can be adapted to the specific requirements and various economies of states and regions, as well as to the individual needs of each job seeker. It outlines proven steps to successful reemployment in a 21st century job market and may be used by job seekers directly or as a case management tool for professional workforce development staff.

As a Workforce Professional, you know that the practice of circling job ads in the Sunday newspaper is long gone. But, believe it or not, even looking for jobs on online job boards such as Indeed, CareerBuilder, or Monster is not necessarily the most effective way anymore either. Labor markets have changed and advances in technology have revolutionized how employers look for employees and how job seekers look for work. Online talent platforms, professional networking sites, and social media are evolving drastically, perpetuating the shift in labor market dynamics. *This* is why job seekers need a reemployment plan!

Your customers may be out of a job or "underemployed", i.e., have a job that doesn't offer the amount of hours or pay that they need. Or, they may be coming off a layoff. No matter what their situation is, a reemployment plan will help them figure out where to begin and how to make their career exploration and job search experience more successful.

The **Reference Guide for Workforce Professionals** is designed to assist you in using the MRP as a foundational tool in your career coaching activities. It will help you understand how to support work search activities that are effective job search strategies and, thus, improve the customer experience, shorten job hunt timeframes and potential UI claim durations, lower improper UI payment rates, and achieve more suitable reemployment outcomes.

Additional Tools

All Pathway to Reemployment Framework tools are featured on the Reemployment Connections Collection on WorkforceGPS. The Collection is designed to help state workforce agencies and the public workforce system reframe reemployment strategies and policies to adapt to the changes in how job seekers and employers connect. More specifically, it provides state policymakers and other stakeholders with promising practices, behavioral insights, reemployment tools, and other reemployment resources that states may elect to adopt.

Pathway to Reemployment Framework

My Reemployment Plan

Promising State Practices and Lessons Learned

Validation and Documentation White Paper

Opportunities for Improved Service Delivery and Support of Work Search Guide

While not all information contained in these documents may apply to you, it is recommended that you read them all in order to understand the context in which these materials were developed. In other words, you have to know how all pieces of the puzzle work together in order to be able to make or recommend system improvements.

Role of Workforce Professionals

Service Provider and Resource Connector

As a Workforce Professional, your main job duty is to facilitate a customers' return to employment through informed career decision making, based on comprehensive, individual assessments. In order to fulfil this role effectively, it is necessary that you build as broad a knowledge base as possible in the following areas (depending on your specialization):

- Informal and formal assessment approaches, including specific population needs (e.g., Veterans, individuals with limited English proficiency, etc.)
- Labor market information

- Career planning processes that include developing, monitoring, and evaluating training and/or employment plans and progress
- Training and skills upgrading programs
- Support resources through American Job Centers and other partners and community based organizations
- Case management and referral skills, including records management
- Cutting-edge job searching techniques

It is not expected that you become an expert in all of these areas. However, it is necessary that you be able to recognize when your customers' needs fall within any of these categories and be able to provide appropriate, quality referrals (if you are not able to meet these needs yourself). For example, if a customer's assessment results indicate the need for additional assistance with job placement due to a disability, you *may* not be able to provide this support yourself (depending on your specialization and entity or program of employment). But, as a skilled Workforce Professional, you should be expected to know where to refer such a customer for more in-depth, specialized services.

Counselor and Information Provider

A course of action that is best for an individual from a professional standpoint and what an individual thinks *they* need and want may not always be the same thing. Additionally, assessments can give you a lot of information about an individual, but they cannot tell you *everything* and they can definitely not predict the future.

> *The goal is to find a healthy balance between your professional judgement of what is needed for your customers (e.g., a specific career track, a training plan, or a reemployment plan) and your customers' thoughts and ideas of what they're willing to submit themselves to.*

By no means should you ever force a customer to take a certain course of action! Being this prescriptive will add no value to your relationship with the customer, it is likely going to be misinformed, and it will increase the chances for unsuccessful outcomes. On the other hand, simply asking "What would you like?" is not an appropriate means of career counseling either. In order to find a reasonable compromise, consider the following strategy:

- First and foremost, be sure you are as well-rounded as possible in the knowledge areas described in the Service Provider and Resource Connector section above. If you feel that you are lacking the necessary knowledge in a certain area, request more training!

- Provide each customer with all the information they need to make informed decisions and design their own plans first. When determining their own path, it is much more likely that the customer will follow through, believe in the value of what they're doing, and be successful.
- Use all the appropriate effective communication strategies described in the Communicating Effectively section below.
- Whenever a customer's ideas and your recommended plan of action do not match, try to negotiate a reasonable middle ground. This includes providing your rationale for recommending a certain course of action, based on individual assessment results and/or progress (or lack thereof) in an ongoing plan.

Mastering the art of successful career counseling comes with experience. Try and look for tips and helpful advice from your peers who may have done it longer than you have. Be empathetic, trust your instincts, and remember always that there is no cookie cutter approach!

Workforce System Advocate

As a Workforce Professional, you work on the front lines every day. Within the workforce system, you are uniquely positioned to see firsthand where things are working and where they're not. While there may be administrative levels above you that have the decision-making power that ultimately designs and shapes policies and procedures, it is imperative that you have a clear understanding of how the information that *only you* can provide may influence decision-makers.

Your insight may impact, for example:

- Standard operating procedures and policies within your own or other divisions of your organization,
- Service delivery methods to your customers, or
- Potential pilot projects and/or new grant opportunities.

Your job is to provide the best possible service to your customers. Therefore, you must become an advocate for the workforce system as a whole.

Constant progress and improvement is the motto!

Needs Assessment and Plan Development

Needs Assessments and Different Types of Job Seekers

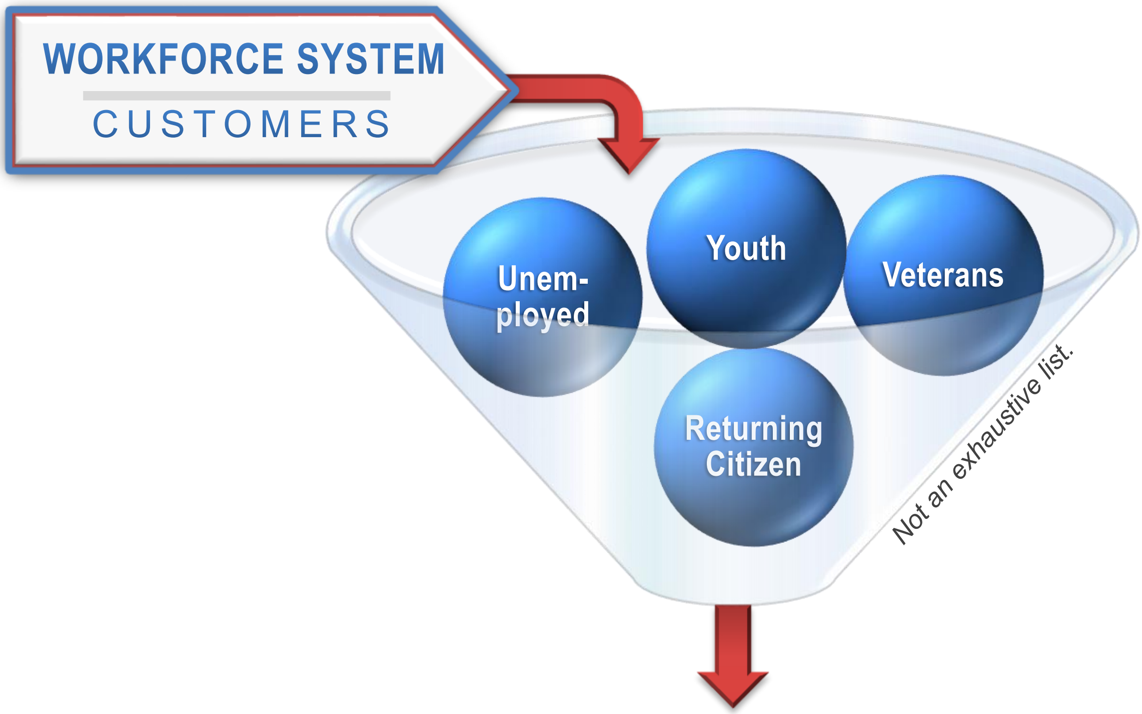
As a Workforce Professional, you are probably familiar with the broad variety of customers seeking employment or reemployment. Here are just a few examples:

- Unemployed Adults or Youth
- Long-term Unemployed Adults or Youth
- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) program participants
- Dislocated Workers
- Incumbent Workers (including Rapid Response)
- Veterans
- In-school and Out-of-school Youth
- At-risk Youth
- Recent Graduates
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with limited English proficiency
- Returning citizens

The assistance needs of these individuals and the services, benefits, and supports available to meet these needs vary greatly. Therefore, it would be unwise to assume that there is a one-size-fits-all approach to providing reemployment services. For customers in need of career coaching (i.e., who are not suitable candidates for self-directed work search), the importance of a dedicated, in-depth individual assessment cannot be emphasized enough! With each new customer, the following should be evaluated:

- **Work history.** For example: types of employment, duties performed, duration of each employment, employment gaps, employer references, etc.
- **Knowledge, skills, and abilities.** This includes transferrable skills and all formal education. A particular point of interest here is how dated someone's education is as many professions require constant upkeep with new developments, discoveries, and industry trends.
- **Values and Interests.** Finding a good match between a job and your customers' values and interests will boost their chances at success!
- **Barriers to employment.** The workforce system, with its combination of partners, is specifically designed to assist job seekers with employment barriers.

The following flow chart shows a recommended approach to determine when to begin using the MRP.



TRIAGE: Is the customer employable in the local labor market or labor market to which he/she wishes to relocate?

No

Refer to the appropriate Workforce Professional or partner for:

- Comprehensive assessment
- Training referral

Begin using MRP within reasonable timeframe *prior* to training completion.

Only with remedial training

Refer to the appropriate Workforce Professional or partner for:

- Comprehensive assessment
- Remedial training
- Simultaneous use of MRP at a less intensive level, as to not interfere with training requirements

Yes

Provide MRP resources for self-directed job search

OR

Refer to the appropriate career coach or workforce system partner for:

- Comprehensive assessment
- Immediate use of MRP at an intensive level

Setting a Plan

The MRP is designed in such a way that it may assist job seekers through their entire job seeking journey or simply provide extra assistance at a certain point in time or with certain specific issues. It is not meant to be “do all or do nothing.” You may use it as part of your job coaching strategy or job seekers may use it independently. Each section includes helpful information for the job seeker to read and study in order to make their job search quest as efficient as possible. Occasionally, they may be referred to external links for information. The following symbols are included throughout the document:

Action Item

Each section includes an action icon. That’s where the MRP outlines activities that will help job seekers in their quest for their next job. If they are receiving UI benefits, the proposed activity *may* fulfil your state’s requirements for active search for work that are a condition of receiving benefits. Be sure to obtain the proper information pertaining to your state’s UI laws and rules and advise your customers to follow them. If a task qualifies as a work search activity, be sure that your customers understand how to maintain suitable documentation demonstrating the completion of the activity.

Documentation

Documentation of reemployment activities are important to you as Workforce Professional, in order to constantly monitor your customers’ efforts and adjust as needed. If your customers are receiving UI benefits, some states accept an attestation that the work search requirement (for UI benefits) was met each week; some states require submission of a description of work searches each week; and yet other states tell UI beneficiaries to keep a written record of their work search which they can be asked to submit to state staff for review. Some states that collect information about work search activities try to verify some portion of the submissions, e.g., a random sample each week or one or two weeks from each individual. No matter what the requirements are in your state, one thing is certain: It’s better to be safe than sorry! The documentation icon will provide suggestions on how to best document proposed activities. The MRP includes the below cautionary notice throughout all chapters. It is your job to make sure that your customers are attentive to this detail.

Confirm the applicable unemployment insurance requirements with your state and be sure to follow them closely to avoid benefit disqualifications or overpayments.

The MRP explains: "Planning is preparing a sequence of action steps to achieve some specific goal. Remember, a plan is like a map. When following a plan, you can always see how much you have progressed towards your project goal and how far you are from your destination. Knowing where you are is essential for making good decisions on where to go or what to do next."

If you are using the MRP as part of your job coaching strategy, you should compare the results of your customers' assessments (see Needs Assessments and Different Types of Job Seekers section above) against the list of reemployment activities in the MRP to decide which activities will provide the greatest benefit and be prepared to discuss these with your customers.

A word of caution: you may not always see eye to eye, and sometimes even the most enthusiastic job seekers will not follow through with the activities prescribed. Therefore, it is important that you counsel your customers in such a way that they develop a sense of ownership in their reemployment plan (consider the information provided in the Counselor and Information Provider section above). For example, let the customer give you a list of the reemployment activities *they* find worthy of pursuing first and then, if their list is different from yours, negotiate additional activities or the re-prioritization of activities. Remember: the goal is to get a certain voluntary commitment from your customers, and their buy-in, in order to ensure the greatest chance of follow-through, dedication, and success.

To obtain some inspiration, consider how voluntary commitment was sought in the below case study[1].

[1] Martin, Steve. "98% of HBR Readers Love This Article." October 2012. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2012/10/98-of-hbr-readers-love-this-article. Accessed June 3, 2017.

Case Study

"Officials in Britain's tax system had a problem: Lots of citizens weren't paying on time. For years Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs had sent letters to the late payers, using traditional threats of interest charges, late fees, and legal action to try to get people to mail in their checks. Some did—but many didn't. So in a 2009 pilot study […], HMRC [Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs] tried a different approach: It changed the language in its dunning letters, drawing on psychological techniques to increase the odds that delinquent taxpayers would pay up.

In one letter HMRC appealed to people's sense of civic duty. "We collect taxes to make sure that money is available to fund the public services that benefit you and other UK citizens," it read. "Even if one person fails to pay their taxes it reduces the services and resources that are provided." Another used actual

These small changes delivered big benefits. In 2008, HMRC had collected £290 million of £510 million in one portfolio of debt—a clearance rate of 57%. In 2009, using the new letters, it collected £560 million of £650 million in a similar portfolio—a clearance rate of 86%. Overall, the new letters, combined with some best practices from the private collections industry, helped HMRC collect £5.6 billion more overdue revenue in 2009–2010 than it had the previous year.

What compelled thousands of previously unresponsive people to mail in checks? The answer lies in a psychological phenomenon that's widely known but poorly understood: People's behavior is largely shaped by the behavior of those around them—what behavioral scientists call social norms. In particular, people are often motivated by their desire to conform with the group, especially if it's a group with which they identify. […]"

How to Support Reemployment Activities

Knowing the Rules Regarding Reemployment Activities

As stated in the Introduction, the MRP "is a generic, interactive job search guide, i.e., a "road map" of sorts that can be adapted to the specific requirements and various economies of states and regions." It provides strategies for building successful reemployment plans in a 21st century job market.

As such, it has been designed with the **potential** to meet workforce programs' statutes or regulations (for example, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Wagner-Peyser (Employment Services), or the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services program). However, program-, State-, or region-specific requirements for reemployment activities must be carefully analyzed by the implementing entities, as some customization of the MRP may be required.

In the Service Provider and Resource Connector section above, we outline a list of areas in which it is critical for any Workforce Professional to be knowledgeable to effectively fulfil their job duties. These are general areas that apply the equally to all Workforce Professionals, regardless of location.

In addition to this, it is imperative that you specifically:

- Become well-versed in the governing statutes and regulations of the workforce program primarily applicable to *your* customers,
- Obtain a broad knowledge base of supporting workforce programs from which *your* customers may benefit (partner programs),
- Know State and local laws that may impact *your* service delivery,
- Be familiar with *your* local workforce investment area's workforce and economic development plans, as these may provide keen insights regarding short and long-term plans for career pathways, talent pipelines, and employer demand in general.

Knowing the My Reemployment Plan

It's clear: in order to use the MRP as part of your career coaching activities, you have to be familiar with its concepts and requirements. Don't make assumptions! This tool was designed specifically for today's dynamic labor marketplace. Even the most seasoned Workforce Professional may learn something new! Consider the below tips to maximize your use of the MRP.

Before including the MRP in your career coaching activities:

- Carefully study the information conveyed in each chapter, including the information provided in the links to external websites. Be sure that you can answer any potential questions your customers may have.
- Familiarize yourself with the reemployment activities required for each chapter and be prepared to provide more detailed instructions for your customers to ensure assimilation to any requirements associated with your workforce program, for example.
- Think about documentation requirements and methods ahead of time and be sure to lay out any instructions in a clear and concise manner. Be mindful that the MRP makes no specific stipulations on the documentation of reemployment activities.

Always remember: The MRP is generic! It is your duty to know – and be able to effectively communicate – all State or region-specific requirements to your customers.

After including the MRP in your career coaching activities:

- Have a list of support resources available for those customers who need a little extra help. This may include resources within your local American Job Center, community-based organizations, additional online resources, or *your* time and availability for one-on-one assistance, for example.
- Make sure that you are always on the same page with your customers as to what they are going to do and when. Set up a system by which you are reminded to follow up on activities and major mile stones.
- Be prepared to constantly monitor and make adjustments to plans based on your customers' progress (or lack thereof). The MRP is designed to be living and breathing document. Careful not to fall into the "checking off boxes" mode! Always remember: MRP activities are supposed to improve customer value, shorten job hunt timeframes and potential UI claim durations, lower improper UI payment rates, and achieve more suitable reemployment outcomes.

Keep in mind, of course, that the MRP may very well be used by job seekers independently, i.e., without the ongoing assistance/monitoring of a Workforce Professional. However, in in those instances it is recommended that you still consider and apply the steps outlined in the "Before" section above. After all, you wouldn't want to provide a resource to your customers with which you are not familiar, right?

Helpful Tips

- Note that not every single topic discussed in the MRP has an activity attached to it. As you study the chapters in preparation for your job coaching activities, consider whether it may be valuable to suggest or assign other, non-MRP activities to your clients (based on an individual needs assessment, of course!). For example, the MRP does not include the development of a career portfolio in its activities, but surely *some* of your customers may benefit from this!
- Once you've designed a reemployment plan in collaboration with a customer, remember that – on the back end – you will have to design your own system for monitoring the customer's activities and progress. This includes, but is not limited to, check-in schedules, contact methods (one-on-one in-person, virtual, phone, group settings, etc.), and possible check-off lists for key components of each activity to ensure compliance with your State or region's requirements. You may also want to consider consulting with experts on certain areas, such as professional resume writers, for example.
- To ensure all of your customers are positioned for a successful job hunt, it may be best to check and make sure that each one has access to all the necessary resources needed for each activity. For example, if a customer is set to build an e-portfolio, they will likely need access to a scanner in order to digitize paper-based documents.

These are minor details that you can easily plan for ahead of time that will save you and your customers a lot of time and frustration in the future. Remember the wise words of Benjamin Franklin: "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail!"

Collaborating with Partners, Community-based Organizations, and Business Services

Coordination across programs maximizes resources, streamlines and enhances access to services, and improves outcomes. Those benefits make it worth the effort to do the hard work of building partnerships, mapping services/customer flow and dissecting processes to develop a truly integrated service delivery model.

Sector strategies, as just one of many examples, are regional, industry-focused approaches to building skilled workforces. They are one of the most effective ways to align public and private resources to address the talent needs of employers as they move from the focus of one job/one job seeker to the transformative model of building regional talent pipeline, addressing skill gaps, and creating meaningful career pathways for a range of workers. This transformative framework for workforce development service delivery is designed to meet the short and longer-term needs of both employers and job seekers on a systematic basis.

In order to effectively implement such strategies, it is necessary to move from a transaction-based system whereby each agency operates its own service delivery functions (on both the job seeker and business services sides), to a unified structure and process of proactive, ongoing, transparent, and effective collaboration by all talent development agencies within a given area.

As a Workforce Professional, you have an integral and active part in designing, implementing, and maintaining such an integrated workforce development system.

WIOA and the American Job Center Network

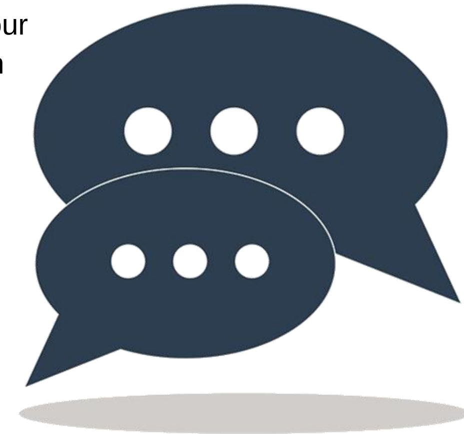
If you work within the American Job Center network, you are probably aware of how impactful WIOA has been – and continues to be – in aligning a wide range of publicly- or privately-funded education, employment, and training programs.

WIOA provides the workforce development system with important tools to enhance the quality of its American Job Centers and strengthens the ability of States, regions, and local areas to generate and respond to regional job growth. It reinforces the partnerships and strategies necessary for American Job Centers to provide all job seekers and workers with the high-quality career, training, and supportive services they need to obtain and maintain good jobs. Such strategies help businesses find skilled workers and access other human resource assistance, including education and training, to meet their current workforce needs.

Communicating Effectively

Ensuring that your customers have all the information they need in order to stay on track with their reemployment plan is essential. It is one of the key components of career coaching. However, *how* you communicate information is just as important for long-term collaboration and success. Here are a few tips:

- Job hunting is stressful, so don’t make assumptions. Not everyone reads everything they receive; no matter how important. This is the time to approach your customers with the utmost empathy. Whether you’ve provided information in a brochure, an email, or the MRP, make sure you keep open channels of communication with your customers to ensure they’re receiving *and processing* all the information they need.
- Some people understand better when you take them aside and talk to them on a one-on-one basis. If possible, try to make time for in-person contact with your customers, and when meeting with them, ensure that you maintain eye contact to ensure your customer is not distracted and allow the message to sink in.



- The truth is that everybody cannot be on same page when it comes to vocabulary. Therefore, to be effective in your communications with your customers, use words that can be easily understood and avoid jargon and acronyms. This goes for both verbal and written communication! Keep it simple!
- Communication is intended to be a two-way street. Don't just talk because you are the "expert." Encourage your customers to open up and ask questions so your assistance can be meaningful and potential problems can be detected early on.
- Body language speaks volumes! Master the art of reading body language when communicating with your customers. Job loss is a highly stressful and deeply personal matter. Some people may simply not feel comfortable talking about their challenges and will need extra encouragement to open up and seek the assistance they need.

Effective communication with your colleagues and partners is as important as effective communication with your customers. Make sure you are not the only person familiar with the history and service plans of your customers. Keep good documentation and sound records of your service strategies, progress, and outcomes. Avoid having a situation where someone else has to fill in for you (You take a day off sometimes, right?) and your customers cannot get the service/assistance they need, because your colleagues are unable to locate records or understand the service history.

Tying in Reemployment Efforts with Unemployment Insurance Benefits

The purpose of this reemployment tool is to help job seekers find reemployment in the 21st century job market. Many job seekers may be beneficiaries of unemployment insurance, a vital resource that enables job seekers to support themselves while looking for a new job. A key component of receiving unemployment insurance is that unemployed workers must be able, available, and actively looking for work in order to be eligible for benefits. Through laws, regulations, and policies, each state defines what "work search" means for UI eligibility purposes. The specific kind and number of work search actions required vary from state to state and sometimes even vary within a state, depending on labor market conditions. Direct contact with potential employers (to fill out applications, submit resumes, or go to an interview, for example) meets the job search requirements for most states, and some states accept other forms of job search such as uploading resumes to on-line job websites and participating in job fairs.

Additionally, UI beneficiaries have documentation requirements for their job search activities. Some states accept an attestation that the requirement was met each week; some states require submission of a written description of work search contacts each week; other states tell beneficiaries to keep a written record of their work search which they can be asked to submit to state staff for review. Some states verify some portion of the submissions, such as a random sample of work search documentation each week or one or two weeks of documentation from each individual.

If you are a Workforce Professional within the UI program the information in this section will not be new to you. However, if you are employed with any other workforce-related program or entity, and if your customers are drawing unemployment insurance, it is essential for you to learn and follow your state's rules and policies regarding the following:

a) Are there a required number of job search activities you must perform every week? If yes, how many?

b) Are there a required number of employer contacts you must perform every week? If yes, how many?

c) What are the allowable activities and/or methods of employer contact that will count towards the above requirements?

d) What are acceptable methods of documentation for these activities and/or employer contacts?

Failure to follow the state's requirements can result in loss of benefits or you may risk being overpaid and having to pay money back.

States provide the answers to all of these questions on their UI websites and, in some cases, in paper brochures.

From time to time, state UI agencies may require beneficiaries to report to an American Job Center, or One-Stop Career Center, to assess their eligibility for benefits, need for reemployment services, or other purposes. You should alert your customers to the fact that, if they receive a notice directing them to report to an AJC on a certain day or during a specified week, they must be sure to go, or call if they need to reschedule. **Failing to report to an American Job Center when notified to do so would likely cause the customer's benefits to be suspended.**

Likewise, if your customers receive correspondence from your state UI agency asking for information related to a claim or eligibility for benefits, they must be sure to respond promptly. If a question comes up about eligibility for benefits, it must be resolved for them to continue to receive the payments they are entitled to.

Detailed documentation of your customers' reemployment activities will help them with staying organized and on track with their reemployment plan. Knowing what they did and when helps them (and you) identify patterns that you may either build on, if they've proven successful, or consider revising, if they've not yielded any results.

However, for UI program purposes, the types and quality of your customers' documentation may have a direct impact on benefit eligibility. Therefore, we recommend that reemployment activity documentation be maintained in such a way that it is:

1. Organized by date and activity type.
2. Easily accessible and shareable.
3. Safe from destruction, tampering, loss, theft, etc.

Let's examine these criteria a bit closer in the next section.

Effective Record-keeping

Organized by Date and Activity Type. Each UI benefit payment received is tied to a specific claim week. Within this claim week, customers must have met your state's work search requirements. Therefore, it is important to be able to prove that a) the required number of work search activities was completed within the specified claim week, and b) *allowable* work search activities were completed.

Easily Accessible and Shareable. As mentioned before, some states require beneficiaries to keep a written record of their work search which they can be asked to submit to state UI staff for review at any given time. Some states that collect information about work search activities try to verify some portion of the submissions, e.g., a random sample each week or one or two weeks from each individual. Therefore, it is important that your customers can easily access the information and be able to share it with UI staff, when needed.

Safe from Destruction, Tampering, Loss, or Theft. This one is clear. If your customers are not able to verify their work search activities when required, they may be determined overpaid. Overpayments must be reimbursed to the state UI agency. Keeping documentation safe will save your customers a lot of unnecessary headaches.

There are various ways to fulfill these recommendations. Consider the following options, for example:

1. **State Labor Exchange Electronic Document Management Systems**
   An electronic document management system (sometimes referred to as EDMS) is a software program that manages the creation, storage, and control of documents electronically. Some state labor exchange systems or state job banks have this feature, which allows customers to store certain documents and/or files online within their state labor exchange system profile. You may find your state's labor exchange system by visiting the National Labor Exchange website and clicking on your state.

   If your state labor exchange system features electronic document management capabilities, we highly encourage you to use it as your document/file management system. This way, you and your customers have easy access to the same information and the need for constant back and forth communication regarding documentation requirements is effectively eliminated.

2. Cloud Storage

Cloud storage is a model in which data is maintained, managed, and backed up remotely and made available to users over the internet. Examples of cloud storage providers include SugarSync, box, and Dropbox. Another option may be Google Drive, which gives you 15 GB of free Google online storage and conveniently works in connection with other services such as Gmail (e-mail) and Google Docs (an online "MS Office-like" suite of tools). Google Drive also has a feature that can make your documents and files available offline so you can view them without an internet connection.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Documents/files are stored online, i.e., they can be accessed from any computer, tablet, or smart phone that has an internet connection • Documents/files are always backed up • Ability to invite others to view and/or download any documents/files (with or without editing privileges) • Documents/files can easily be shared as an e-mail attachment • Ability to collaborate on the same document/file at the same time • A limited amount of cloud storage is available free of charge	• Service requires you to sign up • Documents/files are *usually* not accessible without an internet connection • Security/privacy risks

3. USB Flash Drives

A USB flash drive, also known as a flash drive, USB stick, thumb drive, or a variety of other names, is a small, portable, rewritable storage device. These drives are inexpensive and available with various different storage capacities from many retail or online stores.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Documents/files are portable, i.e., they can be accessed from any computer or tablet with a USB port • Documents/files are accessible without an internet connection • Drive is transferrable • Documents/files can easily be shared as an e-mail attachment	• Drives are easily lost, stolen, or forgotten • Documents/files have to be backed up in a secondary storage location • Storage capacity is limited • Drives must be purchased • Security/privacy risks

4. Hard Copies

If your customers are most comfortable with hard copy documents, such as activity journals and documentation notebooks that include copies of resumes/job applications, printouts of online activities, etc., this is certainly an option, but probably not the most effective one. It is much harder to organize, store, access, transport, search, and/or share hard copy documents. It is much cheaper to store records in electronic format than it is in hard copy. Remember that your customers will not only have to have printer paper and ink, but will also need an entire organizational system, file folders, notebooks, labeling mechanisms, etc. Such a system is cumbersome and may become hard to maintain over longer periods of time.

Regardless of which documentation mechanism your customers opt for, it is essential that you remind them that they should – *at all times* – maintain:

- Tracking documents for work search activities, employer contacts, networking activities, etc., and
- Detailed backup documentation of each activity, such as:
    - Copies of the resumes they uploaded to online job banks.
    - Screenshots of online work search activities.
    - Copies of job applications.
    - Relevant e-mails.