**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Case Management**

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LAURA CASERTANO: I want to welcome everyone to today's webinar. And again, if you haven't done so already, please introduce yourself in that chat on the bottom left-hand corner of the screen. If you joined us a little bit late, please make sure to introduce yourself.

But for now, I'm going to get myself out of the way. I'm going to pass things over to your moderator today, Susan Worden. She's a program analyst for the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Susan, take it away.

SUSAN WORDEN: Thanks so much, Laura. And I am joined today with my ETA colleague Amanda Poirier who is the region one TAA lead for trade and TRA. Amanda, want to say hi?

AMANDA POIRIER: Hi, folks.

MS. WORDEN: OK. Great. So in the opening screen you had an opportunity to enter in information as to whether or not your background included state workforce and local workforce experience. We wanted to get some perspective on that to help us to get context of who we've got in the audience.

We certainly do welcome the opportunity to speak to both locals and states. Unfortunately, our room size is sometimes limited. We are working to expand that so that we can include a larger audience of both state and locals, but we appreciate your giving us feedback on what comprises today's audience. It looks like the majority of folks are from state workforce and – but we do have a good number of people who have local workforce experience as well. So thanks for that information.

Right now, we've got a polling question open on the screen that we'd like you to answer. Before you enter any information, let me just give you some instructions. We're looking for one or two words that represent your biggest challenge for implementing and maintaining successful case management, and if you do two words, if you would please hyphenate it. We're going to try to create something called a word cloud that really kind of helps us get a sense of the scope visually of the types of challenges you represent and how often those are repeated.

And we have some examples on the screen for your context that would include enrolling participants. I'm trying to remember what the other one is. Maintaining participants – sorry. I can't – I don't have the screen open in front of me. And there was a third example which was – I'm trying to remember what it was. Third example was coordinating services, but that's not the limitation. If you have large – if you have other issues, please just provide them. We just wanted to give you examples.

OK. And so let's just give a minute for folks to enter in information, and then maybe we can change the view so we can – I can see. It looks like enrolling folks is a big issue. Again, remember, if you do more than one word, try to hyphenate because that will keep the words connected. Too many rules. Unfortunately, we have limited control over modifying that. We have a lot of statutory and regulatory requirements, but certainly appreciate that kind of feedback because it helps us to understand what the impediments are. OK.

So, Laura, is there a way that we can minimize what we're seeing in terms of what folks are entering and I can focus just on the graphic?

MS. CASERTANO: And you can – do you see the drag box of the text? You can drag it up and down.

MS. WORDEN: Oh, I see. Sorry. All right. Thanks for that context.

OK. So it looks like dual enrollment is a big one. OK. So I'm going to scroll up and down. Whoops. So it looks like enrollment is large. Dual enrollment is large. Keeping folks. Staff turnover, that's a big one. Staff turnover is a very big one and co-enrollment and – OK. Time. I just want to make sure I'm capturing the most of them. OK. Federal colleagues, is there anything else you're seeing that I haven't already mentioned? The big ones look to be staff turnover, co-enrollment, enrollment. Outreach is also very big, which of course is tied into enrollment.

OK. So today's presentation we are going to be talking about case management across the spectrum. We've recently expanded case management to include a very strong emphasis on outreach, but of course there's also a very important component of once we engage folks, how do we best serve them and – throughout their participation to ensure the best possible outcome? Then this presentation will kind of touch on the full spectrum.

OK. So today we're going to be looking at an overview of case management principles. You're going to be hearing from some ETA regional colleagues who actually have oversight over states and have a lot of experience in terms of what they consider to be a priority for monitoring purposes. We're going to be looking at state best practices because of course the folks in the fields are the ones that are going to come up with the best ideas.

One of the most important roles of ETA is identifying promising practices that need to be elevated so that they can be cross-pollinated across states. And we are very focused on that, and we'll be reaching out to you at the end of this webinar to collect feedback from you on additional promising practices that may not be included here because this is the first of several efforts to increase our technical assistance on case management.

And last but not least, we want to hear from you in terms of what is working in your state, potentially for just this conversation or for later follow up for additional technical assistance needs in terms of showcasing what your state or local may be doing.

So this first section is about why case management matters. We'll be looking at data that shows just how significantly case management plays a role in outcomes, how it's basically central to our work in administering to trade participants, and of course, as I mentioned before, you're going to hear from the ETA regional monitors based on their experience of state monitoring.

So what you see in front of you is the first of three slides that provide infographics of a 2016 evaluation that the Office of Trade Adjustment Assistance sponsored that look at several areas and had a significant focus on case management. This first slide looks at the differences between case management as applied to rural participants versus non-rural or urban participants.

The top graphic you can see with the black looks at the fact that for every one person that was not hired who received intake services – and when we say intake services, we're talking about up-front services that happen at the very beginning. We're not talking about continuous services. Just that they received intake at the beginning.

For every one person that was not hired, 3.3 people were hired that did receive case management. In contrast those that were in urban populations, if you look at the bottom graphic, it wasn't deemed as essential based on the data because, basically, for every one person that was not hired, 5.1 were hired.

Drilling down on this, these last two slides are really even more significant, the rural odds of gaining employment with additional benefits and services. And here we're looking at not just intake services, but we're also looking at ongoing case management, so receiving case management as tracked through the reporting in the PIRL throughout individual participation.

For those who were looking at the top left graphic where it says 4.4 to 1, rural populations who received case management, every one person that was not hired, 4.4 people were hired that received case management. If we tack onto that, moving to the right, 5.4 to 1, we have rural populations being served with case management and training. That number is 5.4 to 1.

So obviously, the odds of your being successfully reemployed increase with training. Looking down – zigzagging down to the bottom left, 5.3 to 1, participants that received – rural participants that received case management and TRA it was 5.3 to 1. So similar to training alone, TRA made a big difference in increasing the odds. And if we look at participants – rural participants who received case management, TRA, and training, the odds of being hired were the highest of all.

One of the aspects of case management that we've gotten a lot of technical assistance questions on has to do with ATA and RTAA. The common argument from the states is, why do I need to provide case management services to a participant who already has a job because, of course, ATA and RTA is a way to supplement with the requirement that is contingent upon already being employed in order to receive the wage supplement. The question is, why do I need to spend my case management bandwidth on a participant who already has a job? And the answer is here in the data.

So the likelihood of an individual who is receiving RTAA and case management is 17.2 to 1. So every 17.2 people hired to one person not hired who received both ARTA and case management. Compare that to the graphic directly below, 12.2 to 1, is ARTA payments and only intake services. So they only received services at the beginning, not throughout their ARTAA recipient fee, for example.

So the odds of retaining employment diminish, and this is actually – this graphic is about actually retaining employment. I should have clarified. Last but not least, we look at folks who are age 50 or older that did not receive ARTA trade payments but did receive intake services. And obviously, the likelihood of being hired with this suite of services is lowest of all.

So hopefully, this data will help put to bed some of the assumptions that are made with regard to necessity of case management in tandem with RTAA. Of course we know that currently our data shows that those who receive ATA and RTAA who are age 50 or over are amongst our highest success stories with regard to both employment and sustained reemployment.

So now, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague Amanda. Amanda, take it away.

MS. POIRIER: Thanks. So when we started planning this webinar, we had a lot of discussion around what is case management and why does it matter. I'm going to walk you through the skeleton framework of case management from Training and Employment Guidance Letter number 5-15, Change 1 as to what must be made available to adversely affected workers and adversely affected incumbent workers. As a caveat, this does not tell the whole story, which is why we are here today to share promising practices.

So first, TEGL 5-15, Change 1 notes that there are eight services that must be made available to trade participants. These eight services are assessment of skills and services, development of an individual employment plan, information on available trainings, access and referrals to financial aid, prevocational services, career planning, provision of labor market information, and referrals to supportive services.

TEGL 5-15, Change 1 goes into more detail on these services and I highly encourage everyone to read the full section to understand the intent and purpose of these services that should be made available to trade participants.

Next up is what we in the trade business affectionately refer to as the six criteria for training approval. Many states know and love this section of the regulations, but again, I encourage everyone to reread 20 CFR 617.22.

There's a lot of context in this section that frames and supports each criteria. When it comes to the six criteria, we at the federal level are looking at more than a checklist. We're looking for quality case notes that tell a story, integrated systems to support training approval, and the use of labor market information, real time and traditional.

For a post-training approval it's important to consider benchmarks. How are benchmarks determined and the quality of those check-ins with the participant and training providers, as appropriate? The Trade Act counselors to consistently refer back to the individual employment plan to ensure that it's still appropriate and modify and revise, if needed. During training and post-training career services should be offered to customers to position them well for reemployment.

We suggest that you do not wait until the training is complete. Please note that follow up is required if co-enrolled with Title I, and follow up means providing a meaningful service to participants to help them secure employment. We do not see case management as complete until the participant is employed in suitable employment, and even then there is always a service that can be provided to help the participant move up the career ladder, if needed or desired by the participant. So, quote, unquote, good case management is never really over.

So now, I'm going to turn it over to my colleagues in regions four and five, Kathy from Dallas and Jason from Chicago.

KATHY MCDONALD: Good afternoon. This is Kathy McDonald from region four, Dallas, Texas.

JASON HUDSON: This is Jason Hudson from region five, Chicago. So just a few thoughts from a few monitoring visits that Kathy and I have been on, and the first thought is that trade is new to workers.

Although we deal with trade at the federal level and a state level on a daily basis, this program, for the most part, is a new program to most workers, which means they are not fluent in the benefits and services that the program offers. So to complete this service are not to inform these workers thoroughly of what exists under trade, and the only way to accomplish this is to provide thorough and in-depth case management. Kathy?

MS. MCDONALD: OK. As a monitor we look for the trade affected participant's story. So when we're looking at the case management notes or case notes, we're looking to see what are the barriers, what are the strengths, what are the goals of the participant. If I go into a file and I don't see that in the case notes, then I wonder, did it happen? Is it happening? A lot of times when we go in there, we know that case management is happening, but it's not being documented.

And so it's very important to have those case notes inside the case file so that, for instance, if somebody is out, a case manager is out for whatever reason and the participant is having a crisis and they need help, someone needs to be able to pick up that case and take over to make sure that the participant is getting the services that they need.

MR. HUDSON: And kind of to go off of Kathy's point, for the next bullet point case management is not a one size fits all approach. A checklist that indicates that a worker was offered a case management service does not indicate that the worker actually understood or comprehended what the service could do for them.

So a checklist followed by a pamphlet or a booklet doesn't always ensure that every worker will understand what the context and the content that's in that booklet. So as much as possible, states and case managers should try to tailor case management to the worker – specifics worker that have specific needs because. Case management isn't just a checklist and then a pamphlet and a booklet to follow up. Kathy?

MS. MCDONALD: OK. It's continuous and hard work. Case management is a process of building a relationship with the trade affected participant. We do this so that by the time a participant is either finished with the program or has another barrier that comes up that might prevent them from finishing, they'll feel comfortable with their case manager.

So it's not a one-time event. This is a continuous thing. We should see lots of documentation in the file showing how this relationship has been built with your case – in your case notes with your participant. Jason?

MR. HUDSON: So for adversely affected workers and adversely affected incumbent workers, the state should ask themselves – at the beginning of this webinar, one of the top words in the word cloud was staff turnover.

So states should ask themselves, are there systems in place to combat that issue? Do you have templates in place? Do you have scripts in place? Do you have procedures and policies in place that allow you to be more comfortable in – (inaudible) – the case management service to the worker because with states we have to convince the worker that this program is good for them, that these eight services can only benefit them if they choose to take it up?

Are you offering your case managers training on a continuous basis? All states should have more than enough funding to conduct ongoing training. Are you dedicating more intensive workers to case managers that have more tenure on the job? Again, not every worker is the same. Do you have policies and procedures in place and work flow processes to get intensive workers or intensive need workers to more fluent case managers? And I will turn this over to Steve.

Stephen Duval: Thank you, Jason. I'm going to tell a little bit of a story that's going to mirror what Kathy and Jason just spoke about in terms of what our expectations are when we're on site doing file reviews, doing a monitoring visit.

This past summer the region two office that I work for in Philadelphia decided to focus its trade review on two critical areas, one in Pennsylvania and one in Maryland. And we focused our review on two events that were significant events. One was a GE transportation services layoff that resulted in 1600 workers getting certified under trade and out of a job and then in Baltimore or Baltimore County we focused on RG Steel, which was about 1900 workers getting certified under trade and becoming eligible for services.

So we worked on our monitoring visit as we always do, and we went with expectations. And the expectations were that we were going to find what we typically find when we monitor, and that was we would dive into – (inaudible) – participants' files and the files would appear to just suggest that somebody was enrolled.

An intake was done. There might be some assessment material in the file. Might be some initial activity enrollment, so on, and so forth. But for the most part – and I think one of the primary reasons why we're having this webinar is that's where the story starts to trail off for a lot of participants.

We'll see spotty records of engagement. Decisions around enrolling and training, even though we are required to look – and look at those six criteria for enrolling people in training, it's not always evident that that information is in the file, where it's documented. What was the outcome of it? Sometimes you will see assessments that have been completed, and then you'll see individual employment plans or individual service strategies.

They're called different things in different locations, and you might see some connection between the result from the assessment and the decision to enroll in training or – (inaudible) – provide certain services. At best it's a record of enrollment, and there's hardly any additional evidence that participants went on to get services that they needed to complete their goals and that they were for the most part successful.

So that was the frame that we went into both Maryland and Pennsylvania with this past summer, and I got to tell you, folks. We were pleasantly surprised. We were surprised by the volume of cases that these individual case managers were handling.

Now, keep in mind an event like 1600 people and 1900 people being laid off all at one time is a massive effort. In most communities we'd set up an itinerate location. We deployed staff to handle their intake, their registration, to get them started on that path toward reemployment that often includes retraining. It's an all-hands-on-deck and that's a lot of effort and staff have to hit the ground running. Oftentimes, these events happen fairly quickly and you're not able to plan all the – you might not even be stocked up to handle the sheer volume.

So we went into Pennsylvania. We went into Maryland, and as I said, we were pleasantly surprised. What we found when we did our file reviews is that there was a story. There was a story that followed that participant's journey through the employment training system. There was a story that documented the need for retraining services, and some cases, some participants were obligating tens of thousands of dollars to complete their training plans.

We were pleasantly surprised, and in a few minutes you're going to hear from the folks from Maryland who will talk about their experience, but I just wanted to offer this frame because it's not typical that we find fully documented cases of the whole experience of the participant. Kathy and Jason talked about the importance of that.

The purpose of this webinar is to ensure that all staff that are working with participants, whether they're being supported by the trade or any other ETA funding source, they need to have that story told. The money that we've spent on participants is, obviously, to help them to succeed, to move on from employment and training to independence and self-sufficiency. So we have our funders in Congress to answer to, and we need to be able to tell the story of how our funds were able to – (inaudible) – our investment in participants' lives.

So the purpose of today's webinar is really to focus on what you need to know as case managers, what state staff need to know about keeping staff trained and supported as they're going through these efforts because the two events that I'm talking about, they are – they're significant. And when I said that staff had to hit the ground running, they literally did.

There was no warning that this was coming, and these were people who were in both locations in mature industries that had been working in – with their employers for a significant tenure. Most of them were older workers, per se, but they were seasoned workers. They were in their 40s and 50s and they were making major life decisions.

They were coming into the centers, and they were being – they were asked to provide documentation for eligibility. They were going through intake. They were being handed off to other people for assessment. A lot of individuals needed remediation. In other words, they weren't ready to move from unemployment to reemployment through postsecondary education path. They had to have some intervention with basic skills education.

A lot of these services that are being provided by different agencies are happening simultaneously. Staff are handing people off to these organizations, and participants are coming back and forth. The information in that case file, it tells the story. It tells the experience of the participant. It keeps us informed, and it helps us to guide that participant through their successful completion.

So I'm going to leave it there at that backdrop, and I'm going to turn it back to Jason. Then we'll give another shout out for Sheila and Vicki in a few minutes who will talk about the very specific experience they had working with that 1900 steel workers who were left unemployed. Jason?

MR. HUDSON: Thank you. So pretty much what we're getting at is, obviously, we should all care about how we deliver case management to workers, but at the end of the day at the federal and state level one of the most important issues we all care about is performance. How does case management affect your performance?

At the outset Susan kind of provided a infographic. More intensive case management is only going to lead to better performances. It's going to lead to better employment retention rates, better completion rates, better program take-up rates. So not to have a robust and thorough case management service only – it does not benefit your but it does not also benefit – it doesn't benefit you in your performance outcomes. And in our day-to-day – (inaudible) –that's kind of what we care about.

So one of the main words mentioned at the outset of the webinar was staff turnover. Does your state have processes and procedures in place to make sure that case management continues despite who comes into the process because, if we drop the ball at one point, all the work we do at the outset could fall through the cracks if you don't have those policies and procedures which leads to negative performance outcomes?

I will now send it over to Rachel in the Atlanta regional office.

RACHEL FLOYD-NELSON: Thank you, Jason. Thank you, Steve. This is Rachel Floyd-Nelson, region three, Atlanta.

So what is good case management? As Steve and Jason already expressed, good case management tells a story. We've heard this repeatedly, but to go another layer, it is thorough assessment and the development of a strong IEP to match the decisions that you make on behalf of the participant. Whether training is approved or denied, your documentation must clearly support that decision, and monitors expect to be able to follow a concrete trail.

There's early intervention and prompt notification of services. This of course hinges on many things, but specifically, the smooth integration and communication between TAA, Title I, and rapid response partners. Then there's triage and common intake of customers. This is an effective approach, and what we've experienced is that this can be enhanced when cross-training is afforded to your AJC, TAA, and Title I staff.

As an example, my region six San Francisco colleague Consuelo Hines, who happens to be sitting in the audience, shared that cross-training is an essential part of California's state strategic planning. In Region Nine she sites that non-TAA staff who work in the welcome center of the Pasadena and Glendale – (inaudible) – Job Center receive a general TAA overview. And this practice helps identify and respond to general questions from potential TAA customers and helps increase the number of participants.

Wrapping this slide up, good case management properly assesses and applies the six criteria to each participant's unique story. Note the emphasis on properly assessing and unique story. And finally, the case file should be evolving. It isn't an idle thing. It's someone's path back to livelihood. It is continuous, and it is ever-evolving.

So with that your regional and national peers will turn it over – we'll take a pause here, and we'll turn it over to our state panel to talk about some of the best practices. Up on the screen you'll see – actually, I'm sorry. We took the screen out that showed a variety of the topics that they would be discussing. And so now, I'll turn it over to Robin Wright, who is the Tennessee TAA coordinator from the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development Division. Robin, the microphone is yours.

ROBIN WRIGHT: Thank you, Rachel. Tennessee was asked to talk about a couple of ways that we handle our case management processes in Tennessee. One way, we are – trade is a part of the combined state plan in Tennessee, and as such we have an opportunity to work as a full partner in our comprehensive career centers.

We currently have 23 comprehensive American Job Centers and approximately 50 affiliated offices across the state. In those offices are staff – merit staff that oversee the trade impacted workers as they come in, evaluate them, offer them assessment on the front end, and then offer the services and help them determine what path they're going to be taking.

We have recently decentralized our TAA program, moving our trade specialists to the field, dividing the state into three regions. Each specialist oversees that region, assists the merit staff in the AJCs, and provide technical support and decision making on all cases with regard to training, job search, and relocation.

Doing that decentralization of the program has freed up the central office program staff to do monitoring of the program and provide program support throughout the state, and this enables us to ensure that our case management documentation is provided and updated on a regular basis and that we can train – we can determine who needs the training and when they need the training much quicker than we would have in the past.

The second part of the information that I was asked to talk about was our training processes and how we train our staff for going out and doing their job in the field. We have regular trainings across the state. We include all of our partners in our trainings. We also include our training providers who will be working with those staff in the field providing assistance in developing the training outlook.

We have recently completed our regional training where we had training with our one-stop operators and our site leads, along with our AJC staff and our specialist. And we included our providers in that training, and they were so enthusiastic of being included in the trainings that they have requested that we continue to do these types of training on a more regular basis than we have in the past.

Doing these regional trainings has helped each region to be able to discuss their successes, their issues, and their best practices. So they're communicating across their area and sharing how the program is working in their area and, if they have a better practice, the other areas can pick up on that. We found that including our providers into our trainings solidified our relationships throughout all of our programs, whether it was TAA, Title I, voc rehab, whatever it may be, and it caused a more seamless connection across those programs.

Our providers get to know their official contacts, who they're going to be talking to on a regular basis, why they're asking for certain information, what they could do easier – well, to make our job easier, what they can do better to make our job easier when we're having to set these folks up into training and set up the funds in order to be able to pay for their training.

Let's see. As I said, we included our one-stop operators throughout our trainings, along with our site leads, TAA, and we think that encourages a stronger work group and also increases our co-enrollment. We're currently planning our next annual TAA conference. We just had one in April of this year, and in that conference we did have all of our partner programs included in the annual conference.

We also invited our sister states to attend, and we did have several with us during that period of time. And so when we do our next conference, which we hope to be sometime between July and September of next year, we would be happy to have anyone across the nation who would like to come. Just let us know. We'll get you the information.

But just because we've done regional training and annual training, that is not the only training we do. We don't stop with just those two things. We conduct trainings generally on a monthly basis, and if we need to do it more than once a month, we will do it more than once a month. We do conference calls, webinars, and that enables us to talk one on one.

If we need to do it in a small group, we can. If we need to do it expanded in a larger group, we can do that. So that's how we do our training for the state, and that's just two areas that has helped our case management as we progress through the program. And I'm going to pass it back to Amanda.

MS. POIRIER: Hi, Robin. Thank you. If you're able to, Alexa – I hope I'm capturing your name correctly – said, "What kind of activities does Tennessee charge for case management?" Can you name a few activities that you charge for case management?

MS. WRIGHT: Let me – can you – could she explain more what she's asking for? I guess I'm not following the question. In what way? What activities are you talking about? Are you talking about what's in the TEGL? I mean, case management money is utilized for all aspects of the program. We use it for staff time, when they are actually doing assessments. We use it for training, when we have training. If we travel to other states, we use it for that. Is that what we're asking for?

MS. WORDEN: Yes. That's what she's asking.

MS. POIRIER: (inaudible). Also, too for your – yeah. For your conferences and things of that nature, I imagine you're using case management money for that; correct?

MS. WRIGHT: Yes. Yes. We do.

MS. POIRIER: Thank you, Robin.

MS. WRIGHT: Uh-huh.

MS. POIRIER: All right. I'm going to turn it over to Natalie. And please, folks, keep entering your questions in the chat and we will continue to field them. And Natalie is from Utah.

NATALIE KNUDSON: Hello. I'm from region four, the state of Utah, as Amanda said. I'm a senior business analyst here that supports the TAA programs, and I actually started here in the state of Utah as a case manager who worked with TAA customers. Utah is fortunate to have a robust case management system that supports all of our programs, including all of the TAA programs.

The nice thing about that case management system is that it does a lot of the tasking and reminding and narrating reminders that we need to tell the story. But we realized as an agency that we were only as good as the staff that are interfacing with our customers. So in the last few years we've been focusing on developing the skills of our staff to effectively build relationships with the customers in order to improve engagement, outcome, and outcomes of case management.

We've been focusing on a few concepts and doing trainings for our staff, in collaboration with our TANF and WIOA partners, which we are lucky here in the state of Utah that are internal to our agency. These concepts are around the idea of building those case management skills. I'd like to share with you a few of those tools that we've been focused on and then a tool that we use to implement our training and ensure that our training is effective.

The first concept that I'd like to talk about is our coaching and motivational interviewing. It's a guiding style of conversation that helps our customers focus on reasons for performance in such a manner that motivation to change is likely to increase. This is especially useful when the person may be ambivalent or lack of motivation to change, the theory being making an alliance of a partnership with the people we serve ultimately yields more positive outcomes.

The initial and ongoing training that we've been doing with our staff have included many techniques. We've had to work with our staff because we know that all case management doesn't look the same. We encourage our staff to try to try out a few different styles at a time, make them be comfortable and relevant to their styles so that they can help their customers.

One of the techniques and possibly the most important is the initial meeting of the customer. We all realize that people coming to us seeing TAA assistance are not always used to getting help. They may feel judged or misunderstood. We coached our staff to develop skills in that initial meeting to help the customer feel comforted, understood, and hopefully feel like they are in a partnership or an alliance with the counselor.

The second concept that we focused on was executive functioning. Executive functioning skills are skills and capacities that we develop from early childhood and throughout adulthood. These skills are what help us manage important tasks such as time management, organization, and self-control. These skills may play a vital role in our ability to succeed in the workforce, personal relationships, and educational attainment. Our training with our staff addressed how stress and trauma can impact executive functioning skills and how this can present itself.

To help you put this in perspective, to make it related to you, on a good day we have – we may all have good executive functioning skills. We are organized. We know when we are supposed to be. We know what meetings we're supposed to be at. We know how to complete a project.

But what happens when we add stress, perhaps an overflowing plate of responsibilities, perhaps covering colleagues that are out of the office for an extended period of time? Our normal ability to cope may wane. We might be able to prioritize – we may not be able to prioritize like we normally do. This can lead to missing meetings, a disorganized desk, and/or missing deadlines.

We liken this to our customers seeking services due to a layoff who had been working for 20 years. Never late. Good quality work. Star employee. They have good executive skills, but what happens when the stress of a layoff onsets?

The training that we provided helped our staff recognize how we can reach the person sitting across from us, how to perhaps identify when there are additional stresses, and how can we help our customers when they are experiencing stress and trauma that is inhibiting their executive functioning. An example of this and a success story is from one of our case managers, Devon.

He contacts his customers twice a month to see how school is going. By doing this Devon found out from a customer that she was having issues with her kids and was struggling in a required course. The customer was failing her class and was considering dropping out of the program.

Because Devon reached out to her, he found out before she failed the class that she was struggling. He was able to help her prioritize her struggles. He offered her tutoring, and she was able to pass her course and will be successfully completing the program this year.

We have found that these concepts are helping our staff feel confident and helping them relate to their customers. So we have this concept that we've been working on, but we also found in order to ensure that we effectively train our customers, we wanted to implement something to ensure that we weren't wasting our time and resources.

We have adopted an idea of an implementation science, which is a method of evaluating how changes are implemented to ensure the changes occur. This process is helping us know that oftentimes we're not just training once but retraining as often as needed and not allowing for new concepts to fall by the wayside. We are using our version of this concept for large projects as well as our small policy functional changes.

I've included a handout, and it's in the file share. It kind of goes through our process that we use here in the state of Utah about how we go through changes, implement changes, and then potentially retrain changes, if we're not seeing the outcomes expected.

One thing that I'd like to note, after – through the past few years we found that we are increasing in our positive closures, meaning customers leaving our – after they're done with their training finding employment. During the calendar year 2017 our positive closure rate here in the state of Utah for trade was 90.24 percent. In 2018 it has increased to 95.77 percent. So we feel like these concepts that we've implemented have helped us greatly with case management skills here in the state of Utah.

And I apologize. I just saw the question about what case management system is Utah using. We use an internal state system. It's called Utah Workforce System. It's UWorks. We're looking to be able to – it's not off the shelf. We're able to implement changes here in house.

MS. POIRIER: Great. Thank you, Natalie. Are you – I'm going to address a couple of questions. One, Judy in Maine has just asked in the chat about other folks who are using peer support workers. So if you want to enter into the chat whether or not you use peer support workers, that would be helpful.

Also, regarding Tennessee's slide, for folks that are interested in the training provider slide, we will figure out a way to send that out to you all. So don't worry about that. We are on it, and Robin is willing to share.

I'm going to now turn it over to Sheila and Vicki in Maryland to discuss their best practices in Maryland.

SHEILA BOULOUBASSIS: Hello. I'm Sheila Bouloubassis, and I'm going to talk about how Maryland monitors the case management of our local staff. Maryland uses several methods to ensure proper case management is occurring in the local areas. We have a formal review by our state Monitoring Compliance Unit from the central office. We pull random reports from our Maryland Workforce Exchange, and do data checks to look for benchmark completion, recent services and training contracts.

We look at the results of our PIRL TAADI self-check feature to see if we're missing the mark on any of the measures, and we also monitor and track questions that were receive from our staff in the field as well as participants that may call our central office. When staff call, we look to see if we're getting a lot of repeated questions.

When participants call, we look to see if the case notes in the files by staff are adequate to help us answer the question and tell us where the participant is in the process.

For our formal reviews we have the Monitoring and Compliance Unit of the Maryland Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning conduct quarterly on-site monitoring of the TAA program. During the review the monitor will review and select files from beginning to end to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations. While reviewing the files, they compare the data to that in our Maryland Workforce Exchange to make sure the services and documentation align.

They will also identify any areas of concern or best practices and program successes that we can share. One the on-site file review is complete, the monitor generates a written report which is forwarded to the trade program manager. Once the manager reviews the report, it will be sent to the Labor Exchange administrator and American Job Center supervisor in the local area of review.

If action is needed to address any findings or areas of concerns, the LEA is given a 30-day time frame in which to address any issues. When findings or concerns have been appropriately addressed, the Labor Exchange administrator will send the responses back to the trade office. The manager or designee will verify corrective action has been completed.

During this whole process the program manager will work with the local area to schedule time to meet with staff and provide an overall TAA refresher training session and added technical assistance on those areas of concern noted in that monitoring report. Additionally, the program manager or trade coordinator holds mandatory quarterly TAA training with all trade staff and partners in the American Job Center and the central office to provide ongoing technical assistance.

The topics for these trainings are generated collectively from both the strengths and weaknesses noted in the local monitoring report, frequently asked questions, PIRL TAADI results, and any new information or changes to the TAA program. These discussions and reviews allow the central office to learn about and share best practices that are occurring around our own state in an effort to support and assist our staff and at the same time help our staff better serve our TAA customers.

Central office staff are always available to answer questions, and we encourage our TAA staff at any level to contact our office directly. The trade program in Maryland has benefitted and improved with enhanced level of involvement at the state level.

We have also created desk aids for staff with those frequently asked questions and general TAA topics. In the file share we have provided one of these as an attachment for you in a version that you can edit and make your own. Next, I will turn it over to Vicki, who is our job center supervisor, who will talk about best practices developed when Baltimore County office was bombarded with those 1900 impacted workers.

VICKI ZIMMERLEE: Hello. This is Vicki Zimmerlee. I'm formerly a case manager, now a supervisor in the local Baltimore County office. As Steve mentioned, our office was overrun with trade participants when the local steel mill closed.

We struggled to serve our customers in an effective and timely manner with the few staff that we had. So we co-enrolled participants and developed some in-house tools that assisted us. We received a national emergency grant to provide supportive services. Our WIOA partner hired some temporary staff to provide these services.

They conducted basic skills and career assessment training, provided monetary support like purchasing interviewing clothes, and as the participants neared the end of the training, they would meet with them to develop job search strategies and provide resume assistance. But due to the extremely large caseloads, case management errors were made, and documentation was missed.

So in working with the central office and our partner to make this process more effective, we created participant files that were used by both trade and WIOA, plus an accompanying file checklist that ensured consistency to the folders. This checklist, as you can see on the screen, has allowed case managers to quickly find information in the file or assess if documentation was missing.

The checklist also served as a tool to ensure the necessary data was entered into our electronic system, the Maryland Workforce Exchange. But because we did not have a lot of time to spend with the participants, we also developed a customer task sheet that guides the customer through the process of conducting labor market research on their future career and instructs them on the school or training information that's – that needs to be gathered prior to being approved for training.

So we are happy to say that our folder checklist was identified as a best practice during a TAA monitoring visit conducted by the state and was subsequently shared with other local area trade counselors. From our local perspective, we find that the webinars and the trainings provided by central office are valuable for sharing best practices, lessons learned, and any new program requirements.

Now, I will turn it over to our colleagues in Arizona.

MS. POIRIER: Just a quick pause. This is Amanda again. So before we turn it over to Arizona, I'd just like to say again that we will get the slides out to folks. And there was a question that came in too, Natalie, about average caseload, and she said that in Utah they have an average caseload of 60 right now. So if you look in the chat, there's a little bit of dialogue going back and forth on that.

So now, Susan, sorry to interrupt. I'll turn it over to you in Arizona.

SUSAN STANDEN: Hello, everyone. Greetings from region six. My name is Susan Standen. I'm the Arizona TAA state coordinator. As an ongoing process improvement, the state of Arizona has been incorporating lean principles across all agencies and programs.

Some of you may be more familiar with the term Six Sigma. For the TAA program we are examining how to incorporate the practices into various aspects of everyday job functions. Today I will discuss three lean management techniques and how we have incorporated them into our case management processes.

About six months ago we incorporated a TAA scorecard that the counselors could report their weekly activity on. The scorecard is located in a TAA folder in a shared drive so it is accessible by all relevant staff.

Through this scorecard we discovered the number of individuals in job search status, for example, who were not transferring to other activities, and we worried that some individuals are left too much to their own devices and possibly not getting the level of guidance and encouragement from our counselors they were due.

It also allowed us to monitor caseloads statewide and highlight the successes of our customers, such as job placements and successful training completion, just to name a few. Based on what we learned from the scorecard, we determined that we were due for a bit of case management overhaul.

We wanted to see a more hands-on engagement and more accountability to the customers we serve. We also wanted to make it easier for our counselors to track the status of their specific cases and be alerted when a deadline or service end date was approaching. Because the counselors are the ones performing the business practices, we needed their input and active participation when determining what we could be doing differently to improve customer outcomes.

I will be highlighting three lean management components that we have incorporated into our case management business practices. I will first discuss standard works. During one-on-one weekly sessions between our TAA supervisor and counselors, it was brought to her attention for certain processes there was confusion as to who did what and when or what was required for certain TAA functions.

During these sessions our TAA user guide was reviewed and found to be too general in some areas. Our user guide is updated annually, but in the meantime, we need staff to be able to access guidance and instructions to do their job.

Here is an example of a standard work for TAA role – enrollment in our computer system. It provides the required computer entries for registering a person followed by required steps for enrolling them in the TAA program. As you can see, it is a quick reference that helps to fill gaps and offer updates and clarification until the next edition of the user guide is released. All standard works created will be incorporated into the TAA user guide.

Here are just a couple of testimonials from our counselors. They seem to appreciate the clarity of job functions the standard works offer.

The next lean concept we will review are flow boards. Flow boards offer an at-a-glance visual of any participant's current status on a counselor's case load. The flow boards are displayed where a counselor or management can readily see the activities of each program participant a counselor's responsible for.

The flow board adapted for TAA case management purposes is a wall chart categorized by the industry a participant's job goal falls under and the current TAA service a participant is receiving, either job search, training, or RTAA. Each individual on a caseload is represented by a proxy card which offers information related to their current status. All participants start in the job search column until they move into training, RTAA, or obtain suitable employment. The idea is to maintain awareness of where each participant is within their activity. We want to help the counselors stay engaged.

If a participant reaches 90 days in the job search status, the counselor and participant need to review together what else may be needed. Is the jobseeker getting feedback? Are they getting interviews? Perhaps skills are not matching what employers are looking for. If not already pursued, is training needed or an option? Are there other barriers that need to be addressed? This just illustrates each section of the flow board and how an individual may move through the different services we offer.

This flow board was created by one of our TAA counselors. At the top the board is separated by the type of TAA service with the job search section separated into three columns, 30, 60, and 90 days. Down the left side are various industry sectors an individual's job goal may fall into. The individual sticky notes each represent a TAA participant and their current status. Here are just a couple of examples. The flow board on the left is the full view of the previous slide.

Once again, counselor testimonials. They seem to appreciate the quick visual reminder the flow boards offer.

The third and final technique I'll be sharing is problem solving. In the past, when a problem arose, either myself or a TAA program manager determined how we were going to fix it. Essentially, we were dictating what changes we were going to make and how they would be incorporated at the counselor level. As you can imagine, this practice at times resulted in grumblings and negative attitudes.

The problem solving concept offered through lean management appreciates problems as they afford a chance to make changes and try something new. Also, by incorporating staff at all levels, there is more buy in from the staff who are doing the work. Basically, when evaluating a problem, we're looking at the gap between what should be happening and what is actually happening, as this is where a problem often arises.

Here I'm illustrating the three-part problem solving process. First, define the problem. Then by determining the causes or root cause, it allows us to fix the problem. Countermeasures or actions taken to control a problem and to eliminate or at least mitigate the root cause. Effective countermeasures also eliminate the recurrence of the problem. The natural flow for problem solving, first, identify the problem, analyze the cause, develop countermeasures, evaluate effectiveness, and adjust if necessary.

During a TAA staff meeting we conducted a problem solving activity which included all levels of TAA staff members. We were noticing a problem. Our return rate for applications we sent out was quite low. We were also getting very few inquiries compared to previously. We needed to look at what our process was. Had something changed? We then brainstormed possible causes for the decline.

Some of the ideas suggested by staff included individuals were returning to work. Some could be weary of a government program. We did notice a decline in applications received after we had revised our information notice and application. Also, we were getting – were we getting all of our mail? And finally, we were not getting notice of upcoming rapid response sessions that could include potential TAA eligible workers.

As a group, everyone threw out ideas on possible actions we can take to turn around this cycle. The resolution execution, we determined what roles staff could take to try to increase our caseloads. Counselors will conduct outreach. We will work with our policy unit to simplify our program information sheet and TAA application. Also, a separate e-mail account was created solely for receipt of TAA applications, and due to various staffing changes, we are working with reconnecting with rapid response coordinators to get the word out about TAA.

This problem solving activity resulted in a standard work for conducting outreach. When a TAA application is not returned, the standard work was created so outreach will be conducted in an orderly fashion and all TAA staff will be able to determine when outreach is needed. We don't want to inundate individuals with constant phone calls from several staff members. The same for mailing out additional applications. By following the standard work, we have consistency across the state.

Two weeks after initial applications were sent to all affected workers, the separation lists are saved on our TAA shared drive according to the petition number and employer. We use a color coding system so at a glance staff can determine if outreach is needed. All individuals who have returned their applications who have a determination of eligibility issued are highlighted in yellow.

Once an individual is enrolled in the TAA program, their information is highlighted in green. This indicates follow up is not necessary. We determined we would initially reach out with phone calls. This adds the human touch to the program that a person cares enough personally to try to reach out and ensure benefits are not lost. When staff do establish contact with an individual, they provide program information and answer any questions the individual may have.

Staff then offer to mail or e-mail a new application. As part of this outreach process, it is also being questioned and documented why the individual did not return the original application. This provides insight, if there is something within our control that we can address and make changes to. We have just been doing this a few months, but we are definitely seeing an uptick in interest in the TAA program and a higher rate of return for our program applications.

In closing, I wanted to offer a glimpse into the new techniques we are learning and incorporating into Arizona's case management practices. We hope these new processes will help empower staff to expand their capacity to do more good for individuals we serve and resulting in more positive outcomes. And now, I will turn this back over to Amanda.

MS. POIRIER: Thank you, Susan. Thank you, everyone. Those presentations were amazing. Thank you so much. Quick recap of a couple things on questions. We got a question about how many trade counselors that they have, and Natalie answered that they have 15.

There was a question in for Susan. "Who guided you through the lean process? Did you hire a black belt?"

MS. STANDEN: Actually, because it's a statewide project that's going on, we have lean coaches that were hired and a whole department that is basically our lean development who have developed the trainings that the staff are going through. And of course it's generalized, and we are just taking that and putting it to TAA uses and how it can best help us.

MS. POIRIER: That's great. Thank you. So to recap, the key levers that support good case management from the state presentations today are stakeholder involvement and partnership with the trade program. That's a critical piece. Personal connections between counselors and participants, regular state monitoring and technical assistance to local staff based on findings and observations while on site, excellent documentation, and leveraging strategies like those identified in lean management to encourage new ideas and exploration around best practices for case management.

So the good news. There's money to support case management, which is great. We in the trade world are fortunate to have funds to support case management. This webinar doesn't go into detail on all the ways you as states can invest case management money, but we recommend you work with your regional trade coordinator to discuss next steps you would like to take after all these promising practices you've learned about today or other ideas that you've had percolating around.

We really encourage you all to connect with each other and/or to connect with us at the region. We're always interested in hearing your ideas because that's when we really – we learn from you all, and that's how we raise the floor for everybody.

So I want to turn it over now to any more questions. If you all want to take a second to put your questions into the chat, we would appreciate it. We're ready. And from what I understand too, a lot of folks are really interested – again, we've mentioned that Tennessee's slides – we want to make sure that everyone knows we will have all this information posted on WorkforceGPS. That will come out in about 72 hours after the end of this webinar.

So you as registrants will get that information. Also too, for colleagues that have not been able to view this webinar because registration was capped at a certain point or maybe your local offices might be interested too, you will be able to view the webinar later. It is recorded.

So please, after you get that e-mail and/or just keep your eye out on WorkforceGPS for more information, as well as all the other pieces and resources that were shared today that we discussed. Those are available via the file share option. They might be downloadable still and/or after the webinar is concluded, like I said, in 72 hours you'll be able to pull those documents down for your own use and for sharing within your states.

I'm not seeing anything come in.

MS. WORDEN: Somebody's asking. A couple of people are typing. Oh, OK.

MS. POIRIER: There's a lot of back-and-forth conversation on the chat, which we really appreciate. This webinar, you guys have been really interactive with each other on the chat.

MS. WORDEN: Yes. And it certainly proves what we suspected, which is that there's a huge hunger to know more about case management, which of course makes sense. And moving forward we certainly will be looking to channel that hunger and that energy into dedicated technical assistance opportunities.

MS. POIRIER: Great.

MS. WORDEN: Amanda, I don't know if I'm jumping the gun here, but since we're still doing the question and answer session, I wondered if we could just do an impromptu questions that the states could respond to in terms of targeted areas of case management that they'd like to get more technical assistance on. If we could just have folks just take a minute to populate with that or if they have other questions regarding the presenters today, they can also put that in there.

MS. POIRIER: OK. Yeah. Well, in general we would like to hear from you all too if you're interested in more types of training.

We will discuss this again in a second as well, but any other training that you're interested in as it relates to either case management or other, any sort of TA that you would like to provide, and/or best – promising practices that you all might have like Judy in Maine mentioned the peer support work that they do in Maine, things of that nature that might be something that we – something that you're interested in that you want to learn more about or something that you have to offer too.

And also too there was a request for some TRA training. If you have any specifics on that or just in general, please e-mail – submit via the chat. We're interested in hearing about that too.

MS. WORDEN: OK. Getting lots of good feedback through the chat.

MS. POIRIER: Yeah. So it looks like six criteria for training approval would be a good staff training, tracking methods of large caseloads, engagement of strategies, reporting requirements, frequency – (inaudible) – training. Great. Thank you.

Just as a heads up too, on our website at doleta.gov/tradeact there is a series of webinars that are on there too, as well as on WorkforceGPS already with some of the resources that Susan is going to talk to too, but there is some stuff around engagement strategies there that might be useful, specifically some of the practices that Oregon uses.

MS. WORDEN: OK.

MS. POIRIER: OK. This is good feedback. Thank you, everybody. This is good. So it doesn't seem like there might be any questions, but maybe you all can continue to write in some of the training that you're interested in. Susan, do you want to give it another second, or do you want to –

MS. WORDEN: Yeah. Let's just continue, please, to give us feedback. All of this will – everything you put into the chat will be archived for our consumption. So we really appreciate your needs – your expressing your needs so that it can help us craft effective and targeted case management that will address what you see as your need TA outreach. Keep in mind we do – as Amanda mentioned earlier, we have some excellent TA outreach material that's already been put together from the state of Oregon and a couple of other states.

And we may supplement our current PowerPoint slides in terms of what we actually end up posting. We may post an amended version that will include a couple of extra case management. Outreach was not the specific target of this particular case management webinar, but we're certainly happy to provide those resources to you as well as additional contact information from states who we think are especially effective, keeping in mind that it's those of you who are on the ground that, obviously, have workshops and best solutions. OK. And with that I think maybe we should go on so we can get through to the end of the presentation by 3:30.

OK. So upcoming events that we have tentatively scheduled, OTAA will be doing a dedicated webinar on USITC-related petition filings and notifications through the TAA program. There's been a lot of understandable confusion about how to handle the notifications that we have been sending out to states over the last year with regard to eligibility to file on behalf of workers. We hope to be able to provide some clarification to you to help on that.

And in January we are looking to do a dedicated webinar on a very important reporting area of the PIRL known as efforts to improve outcomes. This is a narrative section that is statutorily required. Has been so since 2009 and helps us to identify promising practices and other strategies that states are using.

As I said, it is a required field, and statutorily we're actually required to post it on the website. We have not yet done so but that might happen in the near future and we do have some states that are achieving much better information than others. And so we appreciate that the ownness is on us to make sure that you're clear about where you report it, how you report it, and what represents a good entry.

OK. Resources we have here on this slide. We've done some expensive contractor-enabled projects in the past, and these resources represent kind of a collection of best practices – of promising practices from different states regarding case management. And that's it.

Amanda, are we missing anything?

MS. POIRIER: I don't think so. There's a little bit of a dialogue going on between Tim and Denise on the chat, which I think that is relevant to everybody. Just so you – everyone knows, it is really important to do training on both ends. Like, for example, this case management training, this could be something that you could share with your Title I partners too.

We do really highly encourage everybody to think about how folks can get integrated across the partners and which is why Tennessee's discussion about how the combined plan trade was a really active partner is critical. So for planning purposes at the state and local level for training, we really highly recommend that folks are invited for joint trainings and part of those conversations as well.

I think other than that we will definitely archive all of the information from here, like Susan said, and we will go through it and determine how we can move forward with some next TA steps.

MS. WORDEN: And, Amanda, I just wanted to add, currently, it looks like we have the contact information of the main federal presenters.

We'll add to that in the archived PowerPoint presentation contact information for everyone who has presented today so that if folks, besides from whatever we provide in terms of provided information, folks want to be able to follow up directly, they have that information available.

MS. POIRIER: Great. Well, thank you, everybody. Everybody did a fantastic job presenting. Thank you so much, and thank you, everybody, for your questions, your thoughtfulness, and your time today.

(END)