

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 462 580

CE 082 996

AUTHOR Salzman, Jeffrey; Dickinson, Katherine P.; Fedrau, Ruth; Lazarin, Melissa

TITLE Unemployment Insurance in the One-Stop System. Final Report.

INSTITUTION Social Policy Research Associates, Menlo Park, CA.

SPONS AGENCY Employment and Training Administration (DOL), Washington, DC.

PUB DATE 1999-11-00

NOTE 131p.

CONTRACT G-5966-6-00-87-30

AVAILABLE FROM For full text: <http://wdr.doleta.gov/owsdrr/00-1/00-01.pdf>.

PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Agency Cooperation; Cooperative Programs; *Coordination; Dislocated Workers; *Employment Programs; *Employment Services; Federal Legislation; Federal Programs; *Job Training; Program Implementation; Shared Resources and Services; State Programs; Unemployment; *Unemployment Insurance

IDENTIFIERS *One Stop Centers; Workforce Investment Act 1998

ABSTRACT

To assess the current connections between the Unemployment Insurance (UI) and One-Stop (OS) systems, case studies were conducted of eight states and eight local areas. Findings indicated the major factor that influenced UI's role in the OS design was whether the state took initial claims by telephone or in-person; UI played differing roles in financing OS systems; UI's role in managing OS centers was strongly influenced by the extent of UI presence in the center; sites used three strategies to directly link claimants to reemployment services (integrated intake, coordinated intake, and staff-assisted linkages); states had various ways in which claimants made connections at each stage of the UI claims process (initial, continuing, eligibility review, and adjudication); states provided connections from reemployment services to UI; OS systems used UI tax auditors and other staff to market OS services to employers; UI programs used OS services and facilities to enhance UI employer services; and factors that affected connections between UI and OS employer services were time constraints, UI state-level attitudes, attitude of OS management, specialized employer staff and contractors, and location of UI staff. Sixteen recommendations were made to improve connections between UI and OS systems. (YLB)

ED 462 580

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Unemployment Insurance in the One-Stop System

Final Report
November 1999

Prepared by:

Jeffrey Salzman
Katherine P. Dickinson
Ruth Fedrau
Melissa Lazarin

Prepared for:

U.S. Department of Labor
Unemployment Insurance Service
Employment and Training Administration
Room S-4518
200 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20210

DOL Contract No. G-5966-6-00-87-30

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ES-1
I. INTRODUCTION	I-1
BACKGROUND	I-2
One-Stop Delivery Systems	I-2
Unemployment Insurance	I-4
Potential Connections between UI and One-Stop Reemployment Services	I-5
Taking Initial Claims by Telephone	I-6
STUDY DESIGN	I-7
II. STATE ORGANIZATIONAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN UI AND ONE-STOP SYSTEMS	II-1
UI ROLE IN ONE-STOP DESIGN AT THE STATE LEVEL	II-1
UI Role in One-Stop Design	II-1
UI Role in Financing One-Stop Systems	II-4
Administrative Activities Connecting UI and One-Stop Systems	II-5
Performance Measurement	II-7
UI CHOICE OF METHODS TO TAKE INITIAL CLAIMS	II-8
Factors That Affected Use of Telephone Initial Claims	II-9
Factors That Affected Use of In-Person Initial Claims	II-11
Call Centers Operations	II-13
III. LOCAL ORGANIZATIONAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN UI AND ONE-STOP SYSTEMS	III-1
UI ROLE IN LOCAL ONE-STOP DESIGN	III-1
UI Role in One-Stop Governance	III-2
UI AND ONE-STOP STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS	III-3
Organization of Staff to Serve Claimants	III-3
Organization of Staff to Serve Employers	III-5
Consequences of Staffing Arrangements for SESA Staff	III-5
Staff Training	III-6
PHYSICAL FACILITIES	III-12
Accessibility	III-12

Internal Layout	III-13
UI Influence on One-Stop Facilities	III-14
IV. UI AND ONE-STOP CONNECTIONS FOR CLAIMANT SERVICES.....	IV-1
CONNECTIONS AT INITIAL CLAIM.....	IV-2
Direct Connections at Initial Claims.....	IV-2
Information Connections	IV-10
Ad Hoc Connections.....	IV-11
Factors That Affected Connections at Initial Claim.....	IV-12
CONNECTIONS AT ELIGIBILITY REVIEW	IV-14
CONNECTIONS AT CONTINUED CLAIMS	IV-18
CONNECTIONS FROM ADJUDICATION PROCESS.....	IV-19
WPRS CONNECTIONS TO ONE-STOP SERVICES	IV-21
Identification and Selection of WPRS Claimants	IV-21
WPRS Services	IV-22
Enforcement of Participation Requirements	IV-25
Opinions about WPRS Services	IV-27
Factors that Affected WPRS Implementation and Services	IV-28
CONNECTIONS FROM REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO UI	IV-28
Connections to Improve Knowledge of Where to File UI Claims	IV-29
Connections to Help Claimants Get Information about UI	IV-31
ASSESSMENT OF CONNECTIONS BETWEEN UI AND TYPES OF REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES	IV-32
Connections to Core Services	IV-32
Connections to Staff-Assisted and Training Services	IV-37
Opinions about Effective Services	IV-38
CLAIMANTS' RESPONSES TO CONNECTIONS BETWEEN UI AND ONE-STOP.....	IV-40
Customer Satisfaction with Taking of Initial Claims.....	IV-40
Satisfaction with Connections to Reemployment Services.....	IV-40
Satisfaction with One-Stop Centers.....	IV-41
Claimants' Recommendations for Improving Connections to Reemployment Services	IV-42
V. UI AND ONE-STOP CONNECTIONS FOR EMPLOYER SERVICES.....	V-1

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN UI AND ONE-STOP EMPLOYER SERVICES	V-4
Connections from UI to One-Stop Employer Services	V-4
Connections from One-Stop to UI Information for Employers	V-6
Factors that Affected Connections between UI and One-Stop Employer Services	V-8
EMPLOYERS' OPINIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	V-9
Employers' Assessment of Current Connections and Services	V-9
Employers' Recommendations for Improving Employer Services and Connections	V-10
Employers' Recommendations for Improving Claimant Services	V-12
 VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	VI-1
IMPROVING CONNECTIONS AT INITIAL CLAIM.....	VI-1
1.States taking initial claims by telephone should design alternative ways to connect claimants to reemployment services.	VI-1
2.In-person claims states should take full advantage of the opportunity to connect claimants to services while claimants are at the center.....	VI-2
3.All states should provide claimants with improved written information about reemployment services.	VI-3
IMPROVING CONNECTIONS AFTER INITIAL CLAIMS	VI-3
4.States and local areas should systematically provide information about reemployment services at adjudication.	VI-3
5.All States should consider administering an Eligibility Review Program (ERP).	VI-4
6.States should provide information and access to reemployment services as part of their continued claims process.	VI-4
IMPROVING CONNECTIONS THROUGH WPRS.....	VI-4
7.States should consider referring more claimants to WPRS services.	VI-4
8.States and local areas should require more extensive, customized services for WPRS claimants.	VI-4
9.States should more strenuously enforce the requirement to participate in WPRS services.	VI-5
IMPROVING REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO WHICH CLAIMANTS ARE LINKED.....	VI-5

10. One-Stop systems need to ensure that UI claimants have access to appropriate services.	VI-5
IMPROVING CONNECTIONS FROM ONE-STOP TO UI SYSTEMS	VI-5
11. States and local areas should ensure that claimants have adequate information about how and where to file UI claims.	VI-5
12. Telephone claim-taking states should ensure that One-Stop staff have a better access to UI information for claimant customers.	VI-6
IMPROVING CONNECTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS	VI-6
13. One-Stop systems should use UI staff and materials to promote One-Stop services to employers.	VI-6
14. One-Stop staff marketing to employers should include information about UI.	VI-6
IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR SERVICE CONNECTIONS	VI-6
15. To facilitate linkages, states and local areas should ensure that both One-Stop and UI staff are knowledgeable about each other's programs.	VI-6
16. Telephone claims states should take steps to improve the working environment in call centers.	VI-7

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) requires that employment and training programs be provided through consolidated One-Stop centers so that both individuals and employers can more easily access needed services regardless of the funding source. WIA requires that the Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs be partners to these One-Stop systems to enable both claimants and employers to learn about and access One-Stop services through their interactions with the UI program, and conversely, to enable One-Stop customers to learn about and access UI services.

DOL funded Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to evaluate the existing linkages between UI and One-Stop systems in a sample of states and local areas that had relatively well-established One-Stop systems. The specific goals of this study were the following:

- Describe the current connections between UI and One-Stop systems. Aspects of such connections include:
 - Organizational connections between UI and One-Stop systems at both the state and local levels.
 - Connections to enhance claimant services.
 - Connections to enhance employer services.
- Assess these connections from the perspectives of:
 - UI and One-Stop staff.
 - Claimants.
 - Employers.
- Determine the factors that facilitated and inhibited connections between UI and One-Stop systems.
- Recommend policies and practices to improve connections.

To assess the current connections between UI and One-Stop systems, we conducted case studies of eight states and eight local areas. From among the states that implemented One-Stop systems early, we selected the sample of eight states that varied by the method of taking initial claims (in person or by telephone) and the level of

connectivity between UI and One-Stop systems. The local areas were chosen from nominations by state UI and One-Stop directors.

We conducted telephone interviews with state UI and One-Stop directors to obtain their perspectives of both systems. We then conducted in-depth, 3-day site visits to each local area. We interviewed administrative and line staff of both the UI and One-Stop systems, observed some reemployment services, and conducted focus groups with staff, claimants and employers.

This study does not seek to determine the relative benefits of in-person and telephone claims methods. Rather, it assesses the types of connections that do exist, their effectiveness in making a connection, the reasons why states have made their choices, and finally identifies areas where connections may be improved. Since telephone initial claim systems and their interface with reemployment services are quite new and likely to grow in importance, the study's recommendations tend to emphasize elements of potential improvement for telephone systems.

STATE ORGANIZATIONAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN UI AND ONE-STOP SYSTEMS

UI Role in One-Stop Design and Operations at the State Level

Within our study states, the major factor that influenced UI's role in the One-Stop design was whether the state took initial claims by telephone or in-person. The three states that continued to take initial claims in-person at One-Stop centers were actively involved in One-Stop planning and design. In contrast, the four states that decided to switch to telephone claims at the same time as One-Stop implementation did not play a significant role in One-Stop design. In one state, UI's role diminished when it shifted to telephone claims after implementing its One-Stop system.

Among the states in our sample, UI played differing roles in financing the One-Stop systems. In several states, UI contributed to the costs of developing technological tools needed for their One-Stop systems. In the in-person claims states, typically UI was a major contributor to the overhead and personnel costs of the One-Stop facilities, by stationing UI staff at those facilities.

A number of UI respondents in this study reported that developing management information systems (MIS) that allowed One-Stop partners to share information from disparate systems was a major technical challenge. In addition, UI respondents made it clear that whenever they sought to share information with partners, their first priority

was to maintain data confidentiality. Some UI respondents thought that confidentiality was a greater obstacle to coordinating MIS systems than the technical difficulties. If, however, states could meet confidentiality requirements, they used two methods to share information among One-Stop partners. First, one state created a common intake system that could take an initial UI claim, determine eligibility for other programs, enroll individuals into services, and maintain management information. Second and more commonly, states modified separate computer systems to link with other systems for specific purposes.

UI systems have extensive performance measurement systems, which remained intact; all states reported that the One-Stop implementation did not affect either their ability to track performance or their level of performance on UI performance measures. Only one state had adopted a statewide set of One-Stop performance measures, which included several measures of UI performance.

UI Choice of Methods to Take Initial Claims

Since the decision about shifting to telephone claims substantially influenced the connections between UI and One-Stop systems in these eight states, this study examined why states chose their methods of claims taking and how the telephone claims taking was implemented. Both internal UI and connectivity issues affected all states, but there were marked differences in the reasons that states offered about why they changed or remained with the same initial-claims method.

The five study states that took initial claims by telephone reported a variety of reasons for making the shift, virtually all of which were internal to the UI system.

- **Greater Cost Efficiency.** All five states reported that taking the initial claim by telephone increased the cost efficiency of the initial claims process.
- **Increased Accuracy of Claims.** Several states noted that they could apply their UI laws more consistently, thus ensuring a more accurate claim, by taking claims in a centralized call center.
- **Increased Claimant Satisfaction.** Among the telephone claims states that surveyed customers, all found that customers overwhelmingly favored telephone claims. Customers cited convenience, ease of use, and privacy as benefits of telephone initial claims.
- **Available Federal Funds.** Two states noted that the availability of the federal grants for telephone initial claims systems increased their incentive to move to telephone initial claims, although DOL's guidance

Executive Summary

indicated that these grants were not an endorsement of any particular method of taking initial claims.

UI staff in the three states that chose to retain in-person claims consistently cited concerns that shifting to telephone claims would reduce the connections between UI, ES and other reemployment services. Although they agreed that telephone claims might reduce costs, they felt that maintaining strong connections to reemployment services was important and would reduce UI benefits in the long run. They relied on the contact through the in-person initial claim and had not yet figured out how to maintain the connection in a telephone system. Factors that influenced these states included:

- **Historically Strong Relationship between ES and UI.** All the states that retained in-person initial claims characterized the relationship between ES and UI as strong in their state. Of the telephone states, only one state made a similar characterization.
- **Emphasis on Work-Search Testing.** All the in-person claims states placed a strong emphasis on work-search testing.
- **View of UI as Gateway to Reemployment Services.** All the in-person claims states explicitly stated that filing UI claims was the way that unemployed workers connected to reemployment services.
- **Concern about Difficulty of Filing Telephone Claims.** Two telephone states provided in-person claims options for claimants because they felt that some claimants lacked telephones or found using the telephone system difficult.

Four of the five states that have adopted telephone initial claims centralized claims taking into regional call centers. Each center handled a high volume of telephone calls, predominantly initial claims and customer service inquiries.

Generally, staff in call centers were less experienced than were the staff in previous SESA local offices because a number of experienced UI staff members did not take call center jobs. Also in some states, call centers had higher staff turnover. As a result, call center staff were less familiar with the reemployment services in the One-Stop system than previous SESA staff.

Staff reported some advantages of working in the call centers, such as feeling safer and having greater flexibility in their personal schedules. However, staff in our focus groups identified many disadvantages of working in the call center. Staff were most concerned about the pressure that they felt to complete initial claims quickly. Staff also felt that they had lost privacy and professional independence. Some likened

their working conditions to those of mass-production factories where there was constant measurement and control.

Staff at the call centers had limited contact with staff at One-Stop centers. Generally, call center staff knew little about One-Stop centers or the services provided. Call center staff had very few opportunities to meet their colleagues from the One-Stop centers. Both call center and One-Stop center staff reported that it was difficult to obtain information from one another.

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN UI AND ONE-STOP SYSTEMS

UI Role in Local One-Stop Design

UI's role in managing One-Stop centers was strongly influenced by the extent of UI presence in the center. In the four sites where UI was fully present, UI was a part of the SESA management team and was strongly involved in One-Stop operations. In sites where no claims-taking staff were located at the One-Stop center, UI had no role in the management of the One-Stop center.

UI and One-Stop Staffing Arrangements

To serve claimant customers, in-person sites varied widely regarding the extent that UI claims-taking staff and functions were integrated with other partners' staff and functions. We found four types of relationships (not mutually exclusive and some sites had no examples):

- **Integrated Staffing Where Jobs Are Integrated.** In two sites, UI and ES staff were at least partially integrated.
- **UI Staff Performing Some Common One-Stop Tasks.** In one site, UI staff performed intake functions for the One-Stop center, such as working the reception desk.
- **UI Staff Conducting Some Services for WPRS.** In two One-Stop centers, UI staff conducted WPRS workshops for UI claimants and tracked WPRS claimants' progress in their required services.
- **Co-Locating Staff with Separate Duties.** In two sites, UI staff were located at the One-Stop center but did not perform common tasks or help out with other programs.

In telephone claims-taking sites where no UI staff were present at One-Stop centers, UI did not perform any One-Stop functions.

To serve employer customers, six One-Stop centers formed integrated employer services teams composed of staff from several One-Stop partners although UI staff were not included in any of these teams. UI auditors were located in One-Stop centers at all four in-person claims sites and one telephone claims site, but auditors did not report to the One-Stop management in any of these sites.

Operating in a One-Stop environment required training for many UI and other One-Stop employees. We found four types of training relating directly or indirectly to the connectivity between UI and One-Stop services:

- **Cross-Program Training** to allow employees of one program to carry out duties in another program. Although only one site fully cross-trained staff, others cross-trained ES and UI staff to increase staffing flexibility.
- **Information-Sharing** to facilitate effective referrals. Some sites provided specific information-sharing training, but staff also reported a good deal of informal information-sharing.
- **In-program Training for UI Call Center Staff.** When UI staff shifted to call centers, all staff received specialized training in use of the telecommunications technology, new claims-taking procedures, and customer-service skills. UI staff did not receive any training on connecting claimants to reemployment services, except in one state.
- **One-Stop Teambuilding Training.** Several One-Stop centers provided training to all One-Stop staff to improve their capacity to work effectively with partners and work in teams. In the in-person sites, UI staff participated in this training.

Physical Facilities

None of the sites made location decisions strictly based on considerations about the UI program. Nonetheless, several architectural features were especially important to the One-Stop centers taking initial claims in person. The lobby and intake areas for in-person initial claims centers generally were larger to provide space for claimants to wait and for UI staff to serve them. All sites eliminated the counter that formerly separated claimants from staff. Further, some sites located their self-access services and job matching systems so that they would be visible and accessible to UI claimants. Some sites that shifted to telephone claims taking had to reconfigure their One-Stop centers to fill space made available when UI staff moved to the call center. All sites, regardless of the method of taking the initial claim, had eliminated the barrier counter that formally separated claimants from staff.

UI AND ONE-STOP CONNECTIONS FOR CLAIMANT SERVICES

Connections at Initial Claim

The initial claim has long been an important entry point to the workforce development system for unemployed workers. For some, an early connection to good reemployment services can shorten the duration of unemployment. For others whose skills may require upgrading, a connection early in the worker's spell of unemployment provides financial resources that makes it easier for a worker to attend training.

Direct Connections

Direct connections occur because a UI process is explicitly structured to connect claimants to reemployment services. These connections are systematically initiated by staff, and are part of a well-defined process. Many of the UI and reemployment services staff at the One-Stop centers indicated that direct, personal connections were generally quite effective in linking claimants to reemployment services.

All three sites where claimants filed initial claims in-person designed their One-Stop intake processes to directly link claimants to several reemployment services at the time that claimants filed their claims. The two telephone-claims sites that allowed in-person claims also provided some direct linkages for in-person filers. Sites used three different strategies to directly link claimants to reemployment services:

- **Integrated Intake.** Only one study site had a fully integrated intake system. At this site, customers directly keyed in the computer identifying information, which was used by all One-Stop programs, including UI, ES, and EDWAA.
- **Coordinated Intake.** Although their systems were not fully integrated, two study sites coordinated UI claims taking with Title III eligibility determination and intake into reemployment services.
- **Staff-Assisted Linkages.** In three One-Stop centers, the UI staff informally assessed claimants' needs and directly referred them to other services. In other sites, UI staff provided orientations or tours of the One-Stop center's services.

Another way to directly link claimants to services is to require claimants to register with ES. Four study states—three in-person and one telephone claims state—required ES registration for all non-job-attached claimants and one local site required all claimants who filed claims in person to register with ES.

Information Connections

Information connections occur when all claimants are systematically informed about reemployment services and ways to access them. These connections, however, rely on the claimant to act upon the information they received. We found two types of information connections in our study sites: (1) sending specialized brochures to claimants describing One-Stop reemployment services, and (2) including information about One-Stop reemployment services in UI claimant handbooks. In addition, in-person claims-takers routinely informed claimants about reemployment services as part of the direct connections described above. However, none of the telephone claims-takers in the three sites without direct connections routinely provided information about services to claimants.

Ad Hoc Connections

Ad hoc connections occur when UI staff provide claimants with information only when claimants ask about services or express anxiety about their job loss. Thus, these connections are informal and rely on claimants' initiative. Staff at all the call centers responded to specific claimants' requests for information about reemployment services. Typically, staff provided the address and telephone number of the nearest One-Stop center or the state's toll-free telephone number, through which claimants could obtain the same information.

Factors That Affected Connections at Initial Claim

- **Method Of Taking Initial Claims.** Within the sites in our study, the method of taking initial claims strongly affected the type and extent of connections to reemployment services. All sites that took claims in person directly linked claimants to reemployment services. Only one site telephone claims state did so, and that was through ES mandatory registration. The remaining telephone sites relied on informational and ad hoc connections.
- **Time Constraints.** Staff in all call centers indicated that they were under significant time pressure to meet their minutes-per-unit goal and state customer service standards, which limited the time to connect claimants to services.
- **Need to Improve Programs Separately.** Two telephone states felt that they needed to improve the UI system and develop better One-Stop services before they concentrated on improving the connections between those two systems.

- **Historically Close Relationship between ES and UI.** Direct connections were provided in states that had an historically close relationship between ES and UI.
- **Success of Previous Connections.** Several sites sought to maintain the direct connections to JTPA as well as ES that they thought were successful before One-Stop implementation.
- **Emphasis on the Claimant Making the Connection.** Providing claimants with information but not directly connecting them to services was consistent with two states' broader policy of relying on self-help services.

Connections at Eligibility Review

DOL designed the Eligibility Review Program (ERP) to serve two functions: to enforce the work-search test which verifies that claimants were able, available, and actively seeking work; and to connect claimants to reemployment services during their claim. Three study states in our sample used the ERP. Their program designs were quite consistent with this dual emphasis.

For example, in the most intensive ERP studied, staff reviewed the claims status for all non-job-attached claimants over the course of their claim. Staff conducted an individual review with each claimant every 4 to 5 weeks, depending on staff resources. Reviews alternated between full interviews—where ES staff met in person with each claimant and went over the individual's job-search strategy—and paper reviews of each claimant's job search logs.

Connections at Continuing Claims

To continue to receive benefits, claimants must certify throughout their claim that they are still unemployed and are able and available for work. Six study states used Integrated Voice Response (IVR) systems to accept by telephone the certification by claimants that they are able and available for work. Of these, three used their IVR systems to give claimants information about either reemployment services (an information connection) or job openings (a direct service connection). These states allowed claimants, through a menu option, to access information about job openings in their occupations.

Connections from Adjudication Process

Adjudicators in four of the eight states provided information about reemployment services when the claimant asked about such services (ad hoc connections). When asked by claimants, most adjudicators simply provided a telephone number and address

of a nearby One-Stop center. When adjudication occurred at a One-Stop center, however, the adjudicator would refer the claimant to the intake desk or to a specific service, if appropriate. The constraints on responding to claimants' request for information about services from adjudication included lack of time and lack of knowledge about reemployment services.

WPRS Connections to One-Stop Services

Another important way that claimants are linked to One-Stop reemployment services is through Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services Systems (WPRS), which identify claimants who are at risk of exhausting their UI benefits and refer those claimants to reemployment services early in their unemployment spell.

Identification and Selection of WPRS Claimants

All states gave local areas some flexibility in determining the number of claimants referred to their offices, so that they could match the number of WPRS claimants to the local capacity to serve them. Two states established minimum "cutoff levels" so that only those most at-risk were required to participate, but another state encouraged local areas to refer virtually all claimants because the number of claimants coming into One-Stop centers fell when the state shifted to telephone claims taking.

In almost all the sites where the state central office notified claimants, local staff and some claimants indicated that the information provided by the states was too threatening and, in some cases, insulting and patronizing. In two of the three sites where the local office notified claimants, however, local staff stressed the benefits of participation.

WPRS Services

Three of the eight sites provided WPRS services that were very consistent with DOL guidance. Although these sites differed in their approach, each provided WPRS claimants with information about One-Stop services, developed meaningful and customized service plans, directly linked claimants to additional services, and followed up with claimants to check on their progress and assess their need for additional services.

Three other sites provided brief WPRS workshops that included some reemployment services but either did not develop an individual service plan or developed a rather pro forma plan after only a brief interview with the claimant.

The remaining two sites only gave WPRS claimants information about One-Stop services through a very brief orientation lasting 30 to 35 minutes. Although WPRS claimants could then choose to participate in several types of services, they were not required to participate in any services.

Enforcement of Participation Requirements

Local areas varied widely in the extent that they enforced the participation requirements. Two sites enforced both the requirement that claimants report to initial services and the requirement that they make satisfactory progress in planned services. Three other sites enforced the requirement to participate in initial services but not the requirement to participate in planned services. However, two other sites did not generally enforce even the requirement that WPRS claimants report to the orientation or initial workshop.

Opinions about WPRS Services

Both claimants and staff expressed generally favorable opinions about the WPRS system and services, and made recommendations for improvements. Claimants generally found the WPRS services helpful although some said that they at first resented the fact that they were required to come in for services. Claimants made three recommendations for improving WPRS: (1) inform claimants sooner, (2) make the notification letter less threatening and focus it more on the valuable services, and (3) increase the number of people referred to services.

Staff also generally approved of the WPRS approach. Most staff felt that early intervention benefited claimants, and that, as one staff stated, WPRS “brings in likely exhaustees early.” Most also approved of the fact that claimants were required to participate. Staff also felt that it would be better to refer claimants to services sooner.

Factors that Affected WPRS Implementation and Services

Both state and local leadership affected implementation of WPRS. In two sites with well-developed services, the state designed the service approach and the enforcement procedures. In contrast, in two local sites that placed few requirements on WPRS participants, the state placed little emphasis on work search testing in general and on the enforcement procedures for WPRS. Local leadership was also reflected in the ways that sites implemented WPRS. For the most part, sites that tried to link UI claimants to reemployment services in other ways, such as through initial claims, also made more effort to link claimants through the WPRS system.

Connections from Reemployment Services to UI

Connections to Improve Knowledge of Where to File UI Claims

Most in-person claims states reported that unemployed workers generally did not have problems learning where to file claims even after the shift from local offices to One-Stop centers. Staff respondents in most telephone sites, however, indicated initially some individuals were confused about where to file a claim. When claimants mistakenly came into a One-Stop, however, they were able to use telephones at the center to file their claims.

In addition, some states and local One-Stop centers took steps to increase knowledge about where and how to file a initial claims including: (1) launching marketing campaigns; (2) working with community-based organizations; (3) involving employers in giving laid off workers information about how and where to file; and (4) providing some information through the Internet about how and where to file UI claims.

Connections to Help Claimants Get Information about UI

In most in-person claims states, all UI services were located at the One-Stop center so UI staff could generally respond to all inquiries about UI. In telephone claims states, however, claimants' ability to obtain information about UI through One-Stop centers varied. Obtaining information about the status of a claim was relatively easy because ES staff usually could access the UI data system to obtain such information. Finding out about adjudication or answers to more complex questions was more difficult. In two telephone claims states, current or former UI staff were located at One-Stop centers and could address more complex inquiries. One-Stop staff at other sites needed to telephone the adjudicator handling the case, a task which One-Stop staff found difficult.

Assessment of Connections between UI and Types of Reemployment Services for Claimants

Connections to Core Services

Core services were by far the most common services that UI claimants received. When claimants were referred to One-Stop reemployment services from UI—whether through direct, informational or ad hoc connections—they were generally linked to core services. In all sites, core services included:

- Self-access services that job seekers could use to assess their own skills and interests, understand the labor market, and search for jobs.
- Job search workshops covering subjects such as preparing resumes, writing cover letters, interviewing, networking, and searching for jobs on the Internet
- Automated job-matching system, all of which were connected to America's Job Bank and some to America's Talent Bank.
- Internet access to some services such as job matching, LMI or career exploration.
- Staff identified three advantages of these core services: (1) they could serve more customers with self-access services; (2) self-access services were immediately available so they could begin their job search without delay; and (3) self-help services were consistent with some states' shift away from mandatory job search requirements.

Nonetheless, we found widespread concern among staff that less-educated, lower-skilled claimants were less able to take advantage of these services than their better-educated, more-skilled counterparts. In particular, staff and some claimants reported that the automated self-access services were difficult to use for those with little experience using personal computers.

Connections to Staff-Assisted Services and Training

Two sites connected claimants, particularly low-skilled workers, to more intensive staff-assisted services. In these two sites ES staff worked one-on-one with claimants and provided job referrals in the traditional way.

Further, all sites referred claimants interested in training to EDWAA, and some sites linked claimants more directly to these services, for example, by determining eligibility for EDWAA when claimants filed their initial claim. Four sites had recent experience with TAA and NAFTA-TAA programs, although the way that UI claimants were connected to these programs varied from layoff to layoff, depending on the timing of the certification of eligibility.

Opinions about Effective Services

Claimants generally felt that the most effective services were those that provided them with a sense of support as well as specific job search skills. Staff also tended to nominate services that made efficient use of their time. Overall, both staff and claimants frequently identified three services as most effective, in the following order:

- (1) job search workshops (including the WPRS orientations with job search content),
- (2) self-access services in resource rooms, and (3) staff-assisted job referrals.

Claimants' Responses to Connections between UI and One-Stop

Claimants generally gave high marks to the initial claims process. Although claimants were generally satisfied with both in-person and telephone methods, most respondents preferred filing by telephone because it was more convenient and private. Several claimants in our focus groups, however, strongly preferred filing claims in person, and several claimants would have liked a choice of how to file their claims.

Customers were less satisfied with the extent that they were connected to reemployment services from UI. Regardless of the type of connections provided by the UI staff, claimants in many sites said that they needed more information about services, and they needed it earlier in their spells of unemployment.

Many claimants were very satisfied with the new One-Stop approach. Claimants frequently reported that One-Stop systems had more services than previous ES offices and that the centers were better organized. Claimants also commented that they found the One-Stop services more helpful than those they had used previously.

Claimants' Recommendations for Improving Connections to Reemployment Services

Several claimants recommended informing claimants about reemployment services earlier in their unemployment spell. Specific recommendations included:

- Calling claimants in for WPRS orientations sooner.
- Having employers distribute information about reemployment services and UI at the time of layoff.
- Providing more accurate information about reemployment services and UI during rapid response to plant closings.
- Advertising the One-Stop services in the media.
- Informing claimants about all the services available at the time claimants first come into the One-Stop center.

Claimants also recommended improving some One-Stop services, including providing more staff-assisted job referrals, providing more staff assistance in the resource rooms, and making it easier for claimants to find out about their claims at the One-Stop center.

UI AND ONE-STOP CONNECTIONS FOR EMPLOYER SERVICES

Connections between UI and One-Stop Employer Services

At five sites, UI auditors were located at the One-Stop center, although they were not formally a part of the One-Stop system. In these sites, UI tax field staff made efforts to connect employers to One-Stop services, although their practices varied. In these sites, the proximity of the UI offices to One-Stop employer service team members both raised UI staff's awareness of the One-Stop services and made it easier to refer employers to One-Stop staff. In the three sites where the auditors were not located in One-Stop centers, however, the auditors did not attempt to connect employers to One-Stop services, even informally.

Another way some states market One-Stop employer services is through the UI adjudicators. In three sites where adjudicators were located at One-Stop centers, UI adjudicators were particularly successful in connecting employers to One-Stop services. On the other hand, in the states where adjudicators were located in call centers, adjudicators were less likely to assist employers who wanted information, for example about placing job orders through the One-Stop or ES offices.

Connections with One-Stop employer services can also benefit UI by providing employers with UI information. Sites used three methods to make these connections. First, in many cases, One-Stop employer services teams or ES account representatives provided employers with UI information, such as tax-related information. Second, several sites regularly held workshops and seminars for employers that included information on UI issues; in some cases, One-Stop centers held seminars devoted entirely to UI issues. Third, EDWAA rapid response and Trade Adjustment Assistance teams from One-Stop centers that met with employers often included UI staff and provided UI information.

Factors that Affected Connections between UI and One-Stop Employer Services

- **Time Constraints.** Respondents at all levels, from the state UI division to local staff, indicated that UI staff—including field tax auditors and staff at the local site—did not have the time to discuss ES and other reemployment services with employers.
- **UI State-Level Attitudes.** Some of the state UI divisions discouraged UI field audit and adjudication staff from providing specific information about One-Stop and ES services. They felt that UI and ES were dealing with separate issues and that the two should not be mixed.

- **Attitude of One-Stop Management.** A few One-Stop sites indicated that they preferred to “control” their marketing efforts to employers, including the information that is provided and how it is provided. They did not want UI staff, therefore, to market One-Stop services.
- **Specialized Employer Staff and Contractors.** Often large employers have either separated their accounting and human resource offices or hired outside firms to handle tax issues or UI adjudications. In these situations, UI field tax auditors or adjudicators were not in contact with the employer staff who would use One-Stop services so cross-marketing was not possible.
- **Location of UI Staff.** Sites where UI staff were located at the One-Stop center tended to have better employer-service connections.

Employers’ Opinions and Recommendations

Employers’ Assessment of Current Services

By and large, employers had positive impressions of the UI audit and adjudication staff. Most employers reported that UI audit staff were fair and that their judgments, as well as those of the adjudicators, executed the law fairly.

All the employers in our sample who visited the One-Stop were pleased and impressed with the “look and feel” of the building, and felt that staff were helpful, professional, and as one employer put it, “non-bureaucratic in their approach.” Most of our employer respondents who had recently undergone a tax audit were unfamiliar with the new One-Stop system and would have welcomed more information. Other respondents who were members of local Job Service Employer Committees (JSECs) were more knowledgeable about the One-Stop approach and were more likely to have favorable comments about One-Stop services.

Employers’ Recommendations for Improving Employer Services and Connections

- **Provide More Assistance in Recruiting and Screening Skilled Job Seekers.** Many employers stated that the most valuable service that the One-Stop system could provide was access to qualified job seekers, particularly during this time of low unemployment.
- **Provide “Account Representatives.”** Even as the sites were moving to more self-directed services for employers, most employer respondents indicated that they preferred to work individually with a staff person who understood their personnel requirements, who reviewed candidates’ skills and attributes for them, and who maintained a list of referrals.

- **Provide More UI Tax Information.** Employers often wanted more information about UI tax-related issues, which they recommended providing in seminars or workshops.
- **Provide More Information about One-Stop Systems.** Many employers—especially those who had no previous contact with the One-Stop system—recommended providing employers with more information about One-Stop.

Employers' Recommendations for Improving Claimant Services

Several employers recommended improvements in individual claimant services that would also benefit employers.

- **Provide Services Attractive to High-Quality Job Applicants.** Employers strongly recommended that One-Stop systems develop services that attract more high-quality job applicants. About two-thirds of the employer respondents indicated that they still did not receive applicants that have the right skills.
- **Provide More Support to Low-Income Job Seekers.** If the One-Stop system wants employers to hire lower-skilled individuals, such as those in the TANF work-first programs, employers recommended that One-Stop provide those workers with more supportive services, such as child care and transportation assistance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this evaluation lead us to make the following recommendations to improve the connections between UI and One-Stop systems.

1. States taking initial claims by telephone should design alternative ways to connect claimants to reemployment services.
2. In-person claims states should take full advantage of the opportunity to connect claimants to services while claimants are at the center.
3. All states should provide claimants with written information about reemployment services.
4. States and local areas should systematically provide information about reemployment services at adjudication.
5. All states should consider operating an Eligibility Review Program (ERP).

Executive Summary

6. States should provide information and access to reemployment services as part of their continuing claims process.
7. States should consider referring more claimants to WPRS services.
8. States and local areas should require more extensive, customized services for WPRS claimants.
9. States should more strenuously enforce the requirement to participate in WPRS services.
10. One-Stop systems need to ensure that UI claimants have access to appropriate services.
11. States and local areas should ensure that claimants have adequate information about how and where to file UI claims.
12. Telephone claims states should ensure that One-Stop staff have the capability to provide claimant customers with UI information.
13. One-Stop systems should use UI staff and materials to market One-Stop services to employers.
14. One-Stop staff marketing to employers should include information about UI.
15. To facilitate linkages, states and local areas should ensure that both One-Stop and UI staff are knowledgeable about each other's programs.
16. Telephone claims states should take steps to improve the working environment in call centers so that claims takers have time to connect claimants to services.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) requires that employment and training programs be provided through consolidated One-Stop centers so that both individuals and employers can more easily access needed services regardless of the funding source. WIA requires that the Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs be partners to these One-Stop systems. The goals of including UI in One-Stop systems are (1) to enable both claimants and employers to learn about and benefit from One-Stop services through their interactions with the UI program, and (2) conversely, to enable One-Stop customers to learn about and access UI services at One-Stop centers.

In anticipation of the new legislation, U. S. Department of Labor (DOL) provided states with funding to develop One-Stop delivery systems. To receive this funding, One-Stop systems needed to include five DOL-funded programs, including UI. Assessing the experiences of states and local areas in developing existing linkages between the UI and current One-Stop systems can help DOL provide guidance on linking these systems under WIA.

DOL, therefore, funded Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to evaluate the linkages between UI and One-Stop systems in a sample of states and local areas that had relatively well-established One-Stop systems. The specific goals of this study were the following:

- Describe the current connections between UI and One-Stop systems. Aspects of such connections include:
 - Organizational connections between UI and One-Stop systems at both the state and local levels.
 - Connections to enhance claimant services.
 - Connections to enhance employer services.
- Assess these connections from the perspectives of:
 - UI and One-Stop staff.
 - Claimants.
 - Employers.
- Determine the factors that facilitated and inhibited connections between UI and One-Stop systems.

I. Introduction

- Recommend policies and practices to improve connections.

This report presents the results of the evaluation. The remainder of this chapter presents background and emerging trends within the One-Stop and UI systems and describes how this study was designed to meet its goals within this setting. In Chapter II, we examine the extent that UI was involved in the design and operations of state One-Stop systems. That chapter also examines decisions by states in this study about whether to take initial claims in person or by telephone, an important policy decision that can potentially affect connections between UI and One-Stop systems. In Chapter III, we examine how local UI and One-Stop organizations have connected their local systems, through staffing, training, and design of physical facilities.

In Chapter IV, we examine the extent that claimants are connected to reemployment services at several points in the claims process. In Chapter V, we examine the extent that employers are connected to One-Stop services through their interactions with the UI system. Chapter VI highlights key findings of this study and provides recommendations for improving connections between UI and One-Stop systems.

BACKGROUND

One-Stop Delivery Systems

The previous workforce development system had become increasingly complex, involving a wide variety of categorical programs that served individuals with diverse needs. In response to this complexity, DOL sponsored the One-Stop initiative to unify the “patchwork” of fragmented categorical programs into a single workforce development system. Under this initiative, DOL provided grants to states to build One-Stop systems that were to be based on the following principles:

- **Universal Access.** Core workforce development services should be accessible to employers and all individual customers, regardless of their eligibility for specific categorical programs.
- **Customer Choice.** Separate categorical programs and services should be transformed in a single, customer-driven system that allows individual and employer customers to select services consistent with their needs and interests.
- **Service Integration.** Services across multiple funding streams and agencies should be integrated to create a single seamless system that promotes high-quality services and minimizes duplication of effort on the part of program staff.

- **Performance Accountability.** New system-level accountability mechanisms should be developed to ensure that state and local One-Stop systems are driven by efforts to promote continuous quality improvement and high-quality customer service outcomes.

To be eligible for DOL funding, One-Stop systems were required to have the following partners: UI, Employment Service (ES), Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), the Senior Community Service Employment Program, and the veterans' employment programs. In addition, DOL encouraged states and local One-Stops to add additional partners. Many One-Stop systems added other partners such as vocational rehabilitation; adult basic education, community college, and K-12 education; welfare and welfare-to-work programs; community-based organizations; and economic development.

One of the key benefits of the One-Stop system was a greatly enhanced set of reemployment services. In addition to job matching systems developed by the ES, One-Stop systems created or greatly enhanced self-access services that allowed job seekers to search for jobs on their own and developed more comprehensive job search workshops to teach job search skills.

One-Stop systems were also enhanced to benefit employers. Some One-Stop systems focused on increasing services for employers. Strategies that One-Stop systems used to increase or improve employer services included tailoring job-matching systems to employers' recruitment needs; providing employers with better quality information, such as labor market information; and avoiding duplicative contacts with employers by forming joint employer service teams.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) made the One-Stop delivery system the cornerstone of the workforce development system, however, WIA requires One-Stop systems to include a broader range of partners. Along with the previously required DOL-funded programs—including UI—WIA also requires many programs not funded directly by DOL—such as welfare-to-work, adult education, post secondary vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation.

WIA also requires a hierarchy of services made up of three tiers: core services, intensive services, and training. Core services, available to all individuals, include information about how to file a UI claim, as well as services related to assessment, job search and placement, and provision of labor market and other types of information. Intensive services include comprehensive skill assessment, development of individual

I. Introduction

employment plans, counseling, and case management. These services are available to adults and dislocated workers who are unable to obtain employment through core services or their assessments show that they need such services. Training services are available for qualifying adults and dislocated workers who cannot obtain employment through other intensive services or their assessments show that they need training.

Unemployment Insurance

The federal-state unemployment insurance system, enacted in the Social Security Act in 1935, provides temporary compensation to unemployed workers, allowing them to meet at least a significant portion of necessities while they are looking for work. UI provides benefits to qualified workers who lose their jobs through no fault of their own. Benefits are an entitlement and are not based on need. Nevertheless, claimants must have worked in employment covered by UI and have sufficient prior wages to show that they are attached to the labor force.

To obtain benefits, an unemployed worker must file an initial claim. At this first encounter, UI staff review the reasons for the job loss and the claimant's wage history to ensure that he or she is eligible. At that time, the claimant receives information explaining the claimant's rights and responsibilities. Most claimants must serve a waiting week upon filing prior to the receipt of benefits. The first payment is usually issued 2 to 3 weeks after a job loss.

Throughout the benefit period, a claimant must be able, available, and in most states actively seeking work. Claimants submit by mail or telephone, usually weekly or biweekly, a certification for their continuing eligibility that triggers issuance of a check for the preceding period. This process, known as continuing claims filing or weeks claimed process, continues until a claimant finds a job or exhausts benefits, usually up to a maximum of 26 weeks.

All UI systems have an extensive process, to resolve questions of eligibility. The first level of this system is monetary eligibility and then non-monetary adjudication, where staff conducts an impartial fact-finding and issue a determination of eligibility. In addition, some states continue to review claimants' eligibility through the Eligibility Review Program (ERP). This program brings some claimants into the office at specific periods in their claims to review continuing eligibility and provide job search help.

Potential Connections between UI and One-Stop Reemployment Services

Connections through the Claims Process. The initial claim has been by far the most important step in connecting claimants to the workforce development system's reemployment services. Coming generally immediately at the beginning of a spell of unemployment, it is one of the points at which many unemployed workers are receptive to reemployment assistance. The very act of filing for UI brings the worker into contact with the workforce development system.

Further, the UI system since its inception has been connected to the ES program. Together they comprise the two major components of the State Employment Security Agency (SESA). The role of UI was to pay monetary benefits to unemployed workers, and the role of ES was to help them to find another job. The linkage was based on the requirement of all UI programs that all claimants must be able and available for work throughout their benefit period.

In the past, most states required claimants to register with ES, often at the same time they came into the local office to file an initial claim for UI benefits. Over the years, many states dropped the requirement for mandatory ES registration, however.

In addition to initial claims, other steps in the UI claims process offer opportunities to link claimants to services. For example, UI adjudication staff can inform claimants about reemployment services, which may be particularly important to claimants whose UI claims are denied. As part of filing continuing claims, claimants can learn about reemployment services, for example, by providing information through the integrated voice response (IVR) system.

Finally, there is the Eligibility Review program, through which selected claimants are called by telephone or required to come into the local office or One-Stop office to have their eligibility verified. The review can also be used to inform claimants about the availability of reemployment services in One-Stop systems.

Connections through Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services Systems. Another way that claimants are connected to reemployment services is the Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS) system. In 1993, Congress enacted Public Law 103-152, which amended the Social Security Act by requiring states to establish a system of profiling new UI claimants. That system must:

I. Introduction

- Identify which claimants are likely to exhaust UI benefits and, therefore, need job search assistance to successfully transition to new employment.
- Refer such claimants to reemployment services in a timely manner.
- Collect follow-up information relating to reemployment services received by such claimants and the employment outcomes subsequent to receiving such services.

The law also requires claimants referred to reemployment services to participate in those or similar services as a condition of eligibility for UI unless the claimant has already completed services or has "justifiable cause" for not participating.

Taking Initial Claims by Telephone

A recent trend within the UI system is the shift to taking initial claims by telephone. Beginning with Colorado in 1991 and Wisconsin in 1994, 26 states have now adopted telephone initial claims, of which 11 have implemented systems statewide. All but three jurisdictions reported that they were at least discussing the concept (Information and Technology Support Center, 1999).¹ Several states are pursuing initial claims on the Internet, including two states in this study.

DOL provided funding for states to develop telephone systems through Telephone Claims Implementation Grants. However, in 1997 DOL clarified its position with respect to a preference for telephone initial claims:

Department's Position: The Department will continue to assist SESAs in implementing systems that are technologically feasible and efficient in an effort to deliver quality services to claimants. However, the Telephone Claims Implementation Grants are not an attempt to dictate a single method of service delivery for the SESA, nor does the Department's support imply that the transition to remote claims taking is considered more desirable than in-person service delivery. The Department recognizes that SESAs are better situated to assess the methods that best serve their claimant and employer needs. (UIPL 37-97, July 28, 1997)

¹Information Technology Support Center Internet Site, "Telephone Initial and Weeks Claimed: State Status," updated June 24, 1999. <http://www.peter.itsc.state.md.us/prog-info/ticmap.htm>. The Information Technology Support Center categorized a state as interested if the state had discussed the issue or assigned staff to explore the issue. North Carolina and Indiana were recorded in that report as showing interest, but senior state UI officials indicated in this study that they were not considering telephone initial claims.

Nonetheless, efficiency and consistency are advantages of telephone initial claims and appear to be extremely compelling to many state UI officials. In addition, claimants seem to favor filing claims by telephone because they find it more convenient.

In states that have both shifted to telephone claims and eliminated mandatory ES registration, however, claimants are no longer required to come into a One-Stop center or local SESA office. In those states, connecting claimants to reemployment services poses a challenge. Further, these states also faced the challenge of ensuring that both UI and One-Stop staff have sufficient knowledge of each other's systems to help their joint customers obtain the services that they need.

This study does not seek to determine the relative benefits of in-person and telephone claims methods. Rather, it assesses the types of connections that do exist, their effectiveness in making a connection, the reasons why states have made their choices, and finally identifies areas where connections may be improved. Since telephone initial claim systems and their interface with reemployment services are quite new and likely to grow in importance, the study's recommendations tend to emphasize elements of potential improvement for telephone systems.

STUDY DESIGN

To assess the current connections between UI and One-Stop systems, we conducted case studies of eight states and eight local areas. We selected eight states from among the states that implemented One-Stop systems early. These states have had the most experience with the One-Stop approach and had opportunities to adjust connections between UI and the reemployment services of the One-Stop system. We also selected the states to include both in-person and telephone initial claims states. Telephone claims states included states that had several years of experience with telephone systems and states that were in the process of converting to the telephone. The states were also chosen to reflect different levels and types of connectivity between UI and One-Stop systems.

The local One-Stop centers were chosen from recommendations from the state UI and One-Stop directors. We attempted to select sites that represented the approach used in the state to connecting UI and One-Stop and that had established One-Stop centers. The states and local areas included in our study are presented in Exhibit I-1 below.

I. Introduction

Exhibit I-1
Sample of Case Study States and Local areas

<u>State</u>	<u>Local Area</u>	<u>Method of Initial Claims Taking</u>
Connecticut	Hartford	In person
Indiana	Richmond	In person
Maryland	Baltimore	In person and telephone
Massachusetts	Springfield	Telephone
Minnesota	Minneapolis	Telephone
North Carolina	Durham	In person
Texas	Austin	Telephone
Wisconsin	Racine	Telephone

We conducted telephone interviews with state UI and One-Stop directors to obtain their perspectives on both systems. Through these interviews, we obtained information about UI's role in the design of the One-Stop system at the state level and the state policies that affected UI and One-Stop connections, either directly or indirectly.

We also conducted telephone interviews with the local One-Stop administrator and the senior UI official at the local office. We used this information to ensure that the site was appropriate for this study and to obtain background information for our site visits.

We then conducted in-depth, three-day site visits to each local area. We interviewed administrative and line staff of both the UI and One-Stop systems, observed some reemployment services, and conducted focus groups with staff, claimants and employers.

Interviews. For our interviews, we sought respondents who had experience with the system before the One-Stop and before the conversion to telephone initial claims (where applicable). We interviewed the following types of UI and One Stop center staff:

- One-Stop administrator and managers from ES, UI, and JTPA.
- One-Stop intake staff and UI claims takers.

- Reemployment services staff, including workshop leaders, counselors, resource room staff, and JTPA case managers
- Other UI staff who conduct adjudication, ERP, and WPRS.

Observations. We also observed as many of the following activities as were available during the visit:

- Initial claims (at all sites).
- Adjudications.
- Benefit rights interviews.
- Eligibility review program sessions.
- WPRS orientations/workshops.
- General intake into One-Stop.
- Orientation to One-Stop services.
- Job search workshops.
- Visits to employers by One-Stop staff.

Focus Groups. At each site, we attempted to conduct focus groups with three types of respondents: line staff at the One-Stop centers and call centers, employers, and claimants. The staff focus group panels were drawn from a variety of non-supervisory staff to provide a cross-section of people who had direct contact with claimants through UI and/or reemployment services at the One-Stop center. These were experienced people who were familiar with programs and conditions prior to One-Stop implementation.

The claimant panels were drawn generally from claimants who had participated in reemployment services. Most commonly, we selected claimants who attended workshops or orientations at the One-Stop center.

To select employers for the focus group, typically state UI officials contacted employers who had been audited or involved in adjudications although in some states employers were drawn from those who used other One-Stop services. In several states, we conducted telephone interviews with employers who were unable or unwilling to come to the One-Stop center to participate in the focus groups.

II. STATE ORGANIZATIONAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN UI AND ONE-STOP SYSTEMS

Both state UI and One-Stop policies have substantial influence on the connections between UI and One-Stop systems in serving claimants and employers. In this chapter, therefore, we examine state policies that directly affected UI and One-Stop connections. We examine UI's role in designing One-Stop systems and financing One-Stop operations. We also examine the ways that UI and One-Stop systems are connected administratively through information and performance measurement systems at the state level.

We also examine an important state UI policy that, while not directly related to UI and One-Stop connections, substantially affected such connections within our study states: the choice of taking initial claims by telephone or in person. Thus, the second part of this chapter also examines the factors that influenced states' decisions to adopt telephone initial claims or to remain with in-person initial claims. This chapter concludes with a description of the operations of the centralized call centers at which telephone claims are taken in some states.

UI ROLE IN ONE-STOP DESIGN AT THE STATE LEVEL

UI Role in One-Stop Design

The major factor that influenced UI's role in the One-Stop design was whether the state took initial claims by telephone or in person. The three states that continued to take initial claims in person at One-Stop centers were actively involved in One-Stop planning and design. In contrast, the four states that decided to switch to the telephone claims at the same time as One-Stop implementation did not play a significant role in One-Stop design. In one state, UI's role diminished when it shifted to telephone claims after implementing its One-Stop system. Below, we have described in detail these three types of states.

States Where UI Was Actively Involved in One-Stop Design

In Connecticut, Indiana, and North Carolina, UI was actively involved in One-Stop planning. Historically, in all these states, the ES and UI programs were closely connected within the SESA. Connecticut fully integrated ES and UI staff in 1991, five years before One-Stop implementation. Indiana co-located its ES and UI programs at

II. State Organizational Connections Between UI and One-Stop Systems

least 10 years before One-Stop implementation. And North Carolina's UI field operations were under ES management. In all three states the One-Stop partners, including UI, built on a strong foundation resulting from years of previous cooperation. The One-Stop approach allowed these states to improve those existing connections and add new services for their joint customers.

Connecticut and Indiana decided to retain their SESA offices and make them the foundation for their One-Stop systems. In both Connecticut and Indiana, state officials considered the filing of initial UI claims to be the gateway to One-Stop services for unemployed workers. Both states made filing initial claims an integral part of intake into One-Stop services, including JTPA. As a result, UI played a key role in designing the One-Stop systems in these states. For example, the Connecticut state One-Stop director called UI the "driving force" in One-Stop implementation. That state's One-Stop planning group, which included UI staff, considered the implications for UI on all major decisions such as location, facilities, and services.

In North Carolina, UI—through the SESA—was also actively involved in One-Stop planning. The state's One-Stop design, according to One-Stop officials, emphasized improving cooperation among partners who had long worked together. UI already functioned as one of the key programs that "helps to fit all the pieces together," stated one state official. Thus, North Carolina felt little need to redesign the existing institutions and relationships between programs.

The main issues in designing North Carolina's One-Stop system were which agency would host the One-Stop centers and the extent that staff would be co-located. In that state, the SESA decided to retain intact its very extensive network of local offices. The state had 90 local offices, and only 30% to 40% of them host One-Stop centers. In those workforce development areas where the SESA did host the One-Stop center, a full complement of ES and UI staff were located at the Center. But in workforce development areas where JTPA or community colleges hosted the One-Stop center, no UI staff were present and ES staff were trained to take initial claims.

States Where UI Was Not Actively Involved in One-Stop Design

In four other states—Wisconsin, Texas, Massachusetts, and Maryland—UI had very little involvement in the design of the One-Stop system. With the exception of Maryland, these states began planning their One-Stop systems at about the same time that they began planning to shift to telephone initial claims and decided at that time that

II. State Organizational Connections Between UI and One-Stop Systems

the UI and One-Stop systems should be separate. Maryland was also planning to move to taking claims remotely (by telephone and the Internet), but was making this shift more slowly.

In Wisconsin, the decision to substantially reorganize reemployment services into a One-Stop system coincided with the decision to take UI initial claims by telephone. With UI committed to moving initial claims taking out of local offices and into a call center, UI and One-Stop planners agreed that there was no need for UI to participate in ongoing One-Stop design issues. The SESA closed all its local offices, moving its UI staff to the call centers and ES staff to One-Stop centers, which were hosted by the JTPA program or other organizations.

In Texas, UI also began to plan to shift to telephone initial claims taking at about the same time it began One-Stop planning. UI and One-Stop planners discussed extensively whether or not UI staff should be located in the One-Stop centers. Ultimately, UI decided that centralizing claims taking into call centers would promote both efficiency and quality. The state eventually shifted to the telephone system in 1998, three years after it began One-Stop implementation. During the interim period, some UI staff moved to One-Stop centers while some remained at SESA local offices until the call centers opened.

In Massachusetts, UI began to plan its shift to telephone initial claims explicitly in conjunction with implementing its One-Stop system. During the planning period, the state decided to select its One-Stop operators competitively. This approach allowed private-sector contractors to compete with ES to operate One-Stop centers and provide labor exchange services. (In our local site for this study, Springfield, a private-sector operator was awarded the One-Stop contract, which according to SESA officials, resulted in the loss of many local ES jobs and a good deal of staff dislocation and disruption.) Because of the decision to choose One-Stop operators competitively, UI decided to move its staff to call centers immediately, and both UI and One-Stop made their planning decisions independently.

In Maryland, UI had relatively little involvement in the One-Stop design process because it was planning to eventually move to remote claims taking (by telephone and over the Internet). Rather than shift to telephone claims taking immediately, however, UI decided to phase it in slowly to reduce staff disruption and accommodate special needs of some local populations for whom filing telephone claims appeared difficult.

II. State Organizational Connections Between UI and One-Stop Systems

During the transition to telephone claims, therefore, Maryland decided to retain UI staff at One-Stop centers operated by the SESA but decided not to locate UI staff in One-Stop centers operated by non-SESA entities (for example, JTPA, a community college, or a private operator). Instead, UI decided to link with non-SESA One-Stop systems through mutual referral arrangements. UI made this decision because it felt that locating UI staff temporarily in new offices would require additional space that the other partners would have difficulty filling after the UI staff were moved to call centers. They also felt that temporary relocation would be disruptive to UI staff.

State Where the UI Role in One-Stop Changed

In Minnesota, UI's role in the One-Stop system changed when it switched to taking initial claims by telephone some time after One-Stop implementation. Initially, UI's role, as in other in-person initial claims states, was to serve as the entry point into their One-Stop reemployment system for dislocated workers and claimants.

But once the decision was made to shift to telephone claims, UI no longer played an active role in managing the One-Stop system. UI officials indicated that One-Stop centers specialized in providing reemployment services while UI specialized in taking initial claims and providing other UI activities in call centers. This division of labor and attendant specialization of function was intended to allow each organization to concentrate on improving its own operations. Officials in both systems indicated that connections would be developed after each organization was able to accomplish its internal organizational goals.

UI Role in Financing One-Stop Systems

Among the states in our study, UI played differing roles in financing the One-Stop systems to support the technology, facilities, and staffing of One-Stop systems.

In several states, UI contributed to the costs of developing technological tools needed for their One-Stop systems. For example, in Minnesota, UI contributed some administrative funds to enhance the technology infrastructure of the One-Stop centers. In North Carolina, UI administrative funds were paying for a large portion of the common automated intake system the state is building. In Connecticut, UI paid for a substantial share of costs of developing a system to track One-Stop performance because UI performance measures comprised a large part of the overall One-Stop measures. In North Carolina the Worker Training Trust Fund, created from a related payroll tax, made grants to pay for some One-Stop technology infrastructure.

II. State Organizational Connections Between UI and One-Stop Systems

In the in-person claims states, UI typically located many staff at the One-Stop centers, and, as a result, UI was a major contributor to the cost of the One-Stop facilities. In Maryland, for example, UI estimated that it paid 50% to 70% of the rent in the One-Stop centers where UI was located. In Indiana, UI paid for 85% of SESA's One-Stop costs, including the cost of facilities. In Minnesota (which originally took claims in person), UI penalty and interest funds paid for part of the costs of remodeling SESA local offices to accommodate One-Stop centers.

In the in-person claims states, UI also made major contributions to the costs of operating One-Stop centers, although for the most part UI made this contribution simply by paying for UI program staff at the centers and the accompanying overhead costs. However, because Connecticut formally integrated UI and ES staff, the costs of these staff were allocated at 75% for UI and 25% for ES. SESA staff in that site also conducted EDWAA eligibility determinations; these costs were funded through a statewide contract with JTPA.¹ The only example where UI paid directly for non-UI staff was in Wisconsin, where UI penalty and interest funds paid for staff providing WPRS workshops.

At the time of our site visits, most of the states had completed their One-Stop implementation grant funding, and were considering other ways to fund One-Stop costs. Wisconsin, for example, was considering using penalty and interest funds as a permanent One-Stop financing source.

Administrative Activities Connecting UI and One-Stop Systems

Sharing UI and Other One-Stop Data Systems

A number of respondents in this study reported that developing management information systems (MIS) that allowed One-Stop partners to share information was a major challenge. The One-Stop partners all had very large investments in existing information and recordkeeping systems, which could not communicate with one another directly and would be costly to change. Even within the SESA, UI and ES information systems were separate in all states except North Carolina.

States used two methods to share information among One-Stop partners. First, the most comprehensive but most expensive method was to create a common intake

¹ Two other local sites, Minneapolis and Durham, contracted with their substate areas to operate EDWAA programs.

II. State Organizational Connections Between UI and One-Stop Systems

system that could take an initial UI claim, determine eligibility for other programs, enroll individuals into services, and maintain management information. Such a common automated intake system has been slow to emerge in the states in this study. Only Indiana had actually installed such a system as part of One-Stop implementation. Under Indiana's system, the claimant directly keyed in information that was used to file an initial claim, register the claimant for ES, and determine JTPA eligibility. The state began to operate the system in the fall 1998. Future modules will permit employers to place job orders remotely. Indiana made the investment expecting to recover its costs by reducing staff time entering data.

Three other states made some efforts to develop automated intake systems. North Carolina was planning a comprehensive automated common intake system to replace its existing paper common intake form. Texas developed a database containing personal identifying information that forms a "shell" over existing, stand-alone programs and allows One-Stop staff to access a customer's information from other programs, including UI. Minnesota was participating in the federally funded common intake consortium led by Iowa, but its participation in that effort was put on hold. None of the other states were planning to develop common intake systems in the near future.

Second and more commonly, states modified separate computer systems to link with other systems for specific purposes. For example, all states created special programs in their ES systems to track WPRS claimants' progress in reemployment services and report to UI whether claimants were in compliance with WPRS requirements. When Texas switched to telephone claims, it created a new system that brought up the address of the nearest One-Stop center or SESA local office; claims takers then would give the claimant this address so that they could register with ES.

Another major challenge to sharing information across programs was the need to maintain data confidentiality, which UI respondents found even more difficult than overcoming the technical problems of coordinating MIS systems. Two states, Massachusetts and Maryland, reported that the use of private-sector contractors to operate One-Stop centers in some sites was an obstacle to sharing UI information with other components of the One-Stop system. Texas, on the other hand, allowed private sector One-Stop staff to access the UI data system, although only ES staff at the One-Stop center were able to enter data about WPRS activity, ES registration, or enrollment in training.

Two state-level respondents observed that, regardless of the interest in sharing information, year 2000 compliance was using all programming and systems resources that might be available for improving MIS linkages.

Using UI Wage Data in One-Stop Systems

UI provides a potential source of rich data for One-Stop systems. Two states used UI data to help determine eligibility for other programs. Indiana JTPA staff, before the automated common intake, had used the UI wage data to assist in determining eligibility for JTPA Title II. In Massachusetts, welfare benefit applicants were required to file an initial claim to ensure that they were not eligible for UI benefits. Welfare was considered the program of last resort, and applicants had to exhaust other means of support before being eligible for TANF payments.

Performance Measurement

UI Performance Measurement

UI systems have extensive performance measurement systems, which remained intact; all states reported that the One-Stop implementation did not affect either their ability to track performance or their level of performance on UI performance measures.

Several states did report that they were temporarily unable to meet the productivity standards (minutes per unit) for claims taking and processing during transitional periods when they switched to telephone initial claims. There was also a problem during the transitional period for telephone claims-taking states because they lost some experienced staff and gained new staff members who needed training. But UI staff at call centers reported that they adjusted relatively quickly, and after the initial transition, enjoyed high levels of productivity.

One-Stop Performance Measurement

Four states were developing or planning to develop broad One-Stop performance measures, although Connecticut was the only state that had already developed a statewide set of One-Stop performance measures. Their "report card" included 15 measures of ES, UI, and general customer service performance. The UI measures, which were part of the UI national performance measurement system, were the percentage of first payments on new claims within 21 days, the percentage of continued claims processed correctly, and the percentage of timely non-monetary determinations. These UI outcomes, the Hartford One-Stop center director stated, were critical to the center's overall rating. The center also reported average waiting time at intake and

II. State Organizational Connections Between UI and One-Stop Systems

customer satisfaction, but the state had not developed performance standards for these measures. The report card did not include JTPA or other programs, nor did it include any measures of the connections between UI and reemployment services.

UI CHOICE OF METHODS TO TAKE INITIAL CLAIMS

For several study sites, the implementation of One-Stop coincided with the shift to taking initial claims by telephone, as discussed above. Since the method of taking claims substantially influenced the manner and extent that UI and One-Stop services were connected for both claimants and employers (as discussed in the subsequent chapters of this report), it is important to examine why states chose their methods of claims taking and how the telephone claims taking was implemented in our study states.

This study looked at both in-person and telephone claims and observed several states making the transition to the telephone. Five study states took initial claims by telephone.

Two states—Wisconsin and Massachusetts—had adopted telephone claims early and had substantial experience with their systems. Wisconsin took all claims by telephone; Massachusetts had first shifted to taking all claims by telephone but, in response to a 1997 legislative requirement, added 24 in-person initial claims sites throughout the state.

Two other states—Minnesota and Texas—were in the midst of shifting to telephone systems during the period of this study. For example, Minnesota was making a gradual transition. At the time of the site visit customers simply entered identifying information and zip codes into the integrated voice response (IVR) system. This triggered the mailing of a paper form to the customer, who filled it out and mailed it back to the center to complete the processing of the claim.

At the time of our site visits, Maryland offered both filing methods although it recently switched to taking all claims by telephone. In addition, Maryland is also piloting taking initial claims by the Internet.²

² Currently, claimants can access this filing option through an Intranet connection in Maryland's SESA local offices and One-Stop centers. Remote filing may be offered over the external Internet once encryption standards provide sufficient security.

The remaining states—Connecticut, Indiana and North Carolina—took all their initial claims in person. Connecticut, however, was planning to change to telephone initial claims in early 2000, and North Carolina was piloting an Internet claim filing option, although it was not operational at the time of the site visit.

Factors That Affected Use of Telephone Initial Claims

The five states that took initial claims by telephone reported a variety of reasons for making the shift. Virtually all these factors were internal to the UI system, and predominantly related to the efficiency of their program operations.

Greater Cost Efficiency. All five states reported that taking the initial claim by telephone increased the cost efficiency of the initial claims process. States identified two major areas of cost saving, labor and facilities. States cited this as the major reason for the switch.

For example, Minnesota officials viewed initial claims as a “back-office” operation that did not benefit from personal contact with claimants. Claims taking in a call center (i.e., the back office) could be organized so that staff were highly productive and eliminated the extra costs of staff time and facilities that in-person claims taking required.

Similarly, Massachusetts reported considerable gains in staff efficiency from taking claims by telephone. For example, the UI call center manager reported that the western Massachusetts call center handled 90% of the claims in its region with only 50% the claims-taking staff. The other 50% of the staff were located in SESA local offices to take in-person claims. He said the gains from switching were sufficiently self-evident that there was no point in further measuring the impact.

UI officials also reported that consolidating claims taking into fewer facilities saved cost. Wisconsin sought to take advantage of the concurrent One-Stop reorganization of their workforce development services to eliminate SESA local offices entirely. This state planned to relocate ES staff in One-Stop centers and UI staff to the call centers. Other states reduced the cost of their facilities by consolidating UI in call centers and transforming some of their SESA local offices into One-Stop centers where other organizations shared the rent with ES.

Minnesota and Texas cited efficiency and One-Stop organizational reasons together. These states felt that UI could operate efficiently in a call center, while ES

II. State Organizational Connections Between UI and One-Stop Systems

and JTPA could improve reemployment services in One-Stop centers. The leadership from both sides decided that they would improve their separate systems before working on connecting the two systems.

Increased Accuracy of Claims. Several states noted that they could apply their UI laws more consistently, thus ensuring a more accurate claim, by taking claims in a centralized call center. These states reported that, when in-person initial claims takers were spread throughout the state, claims takers tended to vary in how they questioned claimants, applied the law, or researched the wage history. When workers were consolidated into a few claims centers, managers could more easily train and supervise staff to achieve greater accuracy. Taking a more accurate initial claim also reduced the need for expensive adjudication procedures, resulting in further cost savings.

Increased Claimant Satisfaction. UI, like other workforce development agencies, has increasingly turned to customer satisfaction as an indicator of program success. Among the telephone claims states in this study, all that surveyed claimant customers found that the customers overwhelmingly favored telephone claims, even where the claimants had to wait in the telephone queue. (Staff also reported that customers preferred telephone queues to long lines and lengthy waits in the local offices.) State staff indicated that customers cited convenience (no lines or travel), ease of use, and privacy (avoiding the stigma of a public application for benefits and the risk of disclosing personal information others might overhear as benefits of telephone initial claims.) The claimant respondents in our focus groups confirmed these views.³

Lack of Strong Connections between ES and UI. Officials in Wisconsin characterized the historical relationship between ES and UI as weak. Maryland officials also acknowledged that the linkages between ES and UI were not as strong as they could have been. In these states, the organizational distance between ES and UI made it easier for UI, when balancing the advantages and disadvantages of telephone claims, to resolve the decision in favor of a telephone-based system with less connectivity to reemployment services.

³ Our findings are consistent with the research on the first states to implement telephone initial claims reported by Mathematica Policy Research, "Evaluation of the Impact of Telephone Initial Claims Filing," July 1998. http://peter.itsc.state.md.us/info/tic_interim_report/final-cp.htm.

Available Federal Funds. Two states noted that the availability of the federal grants for telephone initial claims systems increased the incentive for them to move to telephone initial claims.⁴ However, it should be noted that DOL issued policy guidance stating that its grant program did not represent endorsement of any particular method of taking initial claims.⁵

Factors That Affected Use of In-Person Initial Claims

UI staff in states that chose to retain in-person claims consistently cited concerns that shifting to telephone claims would reduce the connections between UI and reemployment services. Although they agreed that telephone claims might reduce costs, they felt that maintaining strong connections to reemployment services was important and would reduce UI benefits in the long run. Further, Indiana believed that the use of its common intake system, where customers input data directly, would achieve the efficiency of telephone claims while retaining the customers in the One-Stop centers. The following specific factors affected these states' decisions to maintain in-person claims taking.

Historically Strong Relationship between ES and UI. All the states that retained in-person initial claims characterized the relationship between ES and UI as strong. As discussed above, Connecticut fully integrated its ES and UI staff in 1991. In Indiana, ES and UI were co-located throughout the state 10 years before One-Stop implementation. The Indiana UI director thought it "inconceivable" that the state would move to telephone initial claims and thus separate the programs. While retaining a separate organizational structure in the field, the state integrated ES and UI management. In North Carolina the ES managed UI field operations.

Emphasis on Work-Search Testing. All the in-person claims states placed a strong emphasis on work-search testing. All these states required ES registration, and, the exception of Indiana, operated an Eligibility Review Program.

Connecticut, for example, made it clear to claimants, through intensive adjudication of work search issues, that the state took work-search testing very

⁴ Nationwide, all but one of the eleven states that have adopted telephone initial claims statewide have done so using these targeted federal grants.

⁵ Unemployment Insurance Program Letter 35-95, 1995; Unemployment Insurance Program Letter 37-97, 1997.

II. State Organizational Connections Between UI and One-Stop Systems

seriously. North Carolina had the strongest approach to the work-search testing of all the states in the study. This state required claimants to register for ES before filing a claim and had the most extensive program for eligibility review throughout the benefit period.

Of the telephone states, Texas maintained a stronger emphasis on work-search testing. It required ES registration. And the state's UI system queries the ES database nightly for potentially disqualifying events and automatically creates an adjudication issue. In contrast, three other states that shifted to telephone claims—Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Wisconsin—indicated that they had reduced the emphasis on applying the work-search test: none required ES registration and instead, relied more on claimants to take responsibility for their job search. For example, Minnesota state officials reported that the state's approach was to shift the UI system from a compliance mode to empowerment of individuals where the claimant was responsible for conducting an active job search while the state was responsible for providing adequate facilities that enable the individual's search.

View of UI as Gateway to Reemployment Services. All the in-person claims states explicitly stated that filing UI claims was the way that unemployed workers connected to reemployment services.

For example, Indiana UI and One-Stop officials termed UI as the “front door for all unemployed customers.” In Indiana, UI was an integral part of service integration, which was working so well that they believed that it was shortening the duration of unemployment. Their earlier experience also taught them to be wary of separating the ES and UI programs. When Indiana closed some local offices in the early 1990s, unemployed workers still managed to file claims in other local offices, but ES registrations declined considerably. Subsequently, Indiana SESA officials indicated that they did not consider any actions that weakened connections between ES and UI.

Concern about difficulty of filing telephone claims. Two telephone states—Massachusetts and Maryland—provided in-person claims options for claimants. These states gave claimants the option of filing in person because some claimants lacked telephone access altogether and others found using the telephone system, with hierarchical menus, difficult.

As discussed above, Massachusetts reinstated the ability of claimants to file in-person initial claims after it had shifted to a full telephone system. In late 1997, the

state legislature, responding to constituent complaints, required UI to create at least 15 in-person initial claims sites. The complaints came from non-English speaking, seasonally employed fishermen who had difficulty navigating the telephone system, and from residents of the less densely populated western part of the state where residents were concerned about loss of their SESA local offices. In implementing the legislative mandate, the state UI program decided that basic claims would be taken in person in at least 24 sites (all One-Stop centers and SESA local offices) to provide consistency throughout the state.

Maryland, which planned to shift to full telephone claims taking, allowed One-Stop centers in Baltimore and other areas to also take initial claims in person. These local areas were concerned that they were serving groups of workers who did not all have telephones or would have trouble navigating through the menu of an automated telephone system.

Call Centers Operations

Four of the five states that have adopted telephone initial claims—Massachusetts, Minnesota, Texas, and Wisconsin—centralized claims taking into regional call centers. Only Maryland has absorbed the function of telephone claims within the structure of their One-Stop centers or local offices, although its long-range goal was also to locate all UI staff in call centers. Most states that had two or more call centers interconnected these centers to provide backup capacity for peak workloads or equipment failure; Massachusetts planned to interconnect its centers this year.

In this section, we examine how these centralized call centers were organized, the activities and customer service provided, and working conditions at these centers. We also describe how call center staff interacted with reemployment services in the One-Stop centers.

Activities at Call Centers

Each center handled a high volume of telephone calls, predominantly initial claims and customer service inquiries other than continued claims. The Austin, Texas call center received about 5,000 total calls (120 per staff person) on one Tuesday following a Monday holiday. The Springfield call center processed 1,000 to 1,400 claims weekly. In all call centers, IVR systems helped claims takers handle their workload by prompting claimants to enter basic information before connecting the customer to a staff member.

II. State Organizational Connections Between UI and One-Stop Systems

Initial claims were typically taken Monday through Friday during business hours at most call centers. Some states made some automated services available during off hours so claimants could re-open claims. Wisconsin was also planning to extend the hours for taking initial claims.

Most states have customized their systems to accommodate the needs of special populations. For example, in Wisconsin, Spanish and Hmong speakers could access claimant services in those languages through the IVR system, and a system for the deaf was being piloted. In addition, most call centers have staff available to take initial claims in the languages most commonly spoken in the state. For example, the St. Paul call center had staff who spoke Spanish, Vietnamese, Hmong, and Laotian. In Massachusetts, call center staff could communicate with claimants in Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin, and Cantonese. At least two states contracted with services to provide translators in additional languages.

In addition to taking initial claims, call center facilities were used to conduct other UI functions. Call centers in all the states processed continuing claims through their IVR systems.⁶ Continuing claims in Wisconsin, for instance, could be filed 18 hours per day, seven days a week. The call centers also used IVRs to help handle the large volume of customer-service inquiries.

Adjudication staff were also located at the call center to conduct fact-finding and determinations for non-monetary eligibility. One adjudicator believed that the loss of face-to-face contact made it harder to judge a claimant's credibility. On balance, however, adjudication staff were generally much more satisfied with the telephone system than with the previous in-person adjudication. Most discovered that they worked more quickly over the telephone and had greater control over their interaction with claimants. In some states, the move to call centers did not represent a significant change since some fact-finding had already been conducted over the telephone.

Staffing of Call Centers

Generally, staff in call centers were less experienced than were the staff in previous SESA local offices because of two factors. First, the turnover of staff at the

⁶ In addition, as discussed in Chapter IV, two states taking claims in-person—North Carolina and Connecticut—also used an IVR system for continuing claims, and Indiana was planning to convert to an IVR soon.

call centers in some states was higher than when staff were located at the SESA local offices. Second, although UI officials had expected to staff call centers with UI employees from the local offices, many UI staff refused to make the change. Some found the location of the call centers to be inconvenient and did not want to relocate or commute long distances. Others objected to a change in the structure of their work. In response, many staff left the UI system. For example, those with sufficient seniority in Massachusetts were able to bump other employees to take ES jobs in One-Stop centers or SESA local offices. Others with enough age and years of service retired. Others either resigned or were laid off. Nevertheless, inexperience stemming from staff not transferring may be more of a transitional issue in states that do not have high staff turnover rates.

Thus, generally call center staff knew less about the UI laws and claims taking and were less familiar with the reemployment services in the One-Stop system than previous SESA staff. Minnesota sought to mitigate some of these problems by making a more gradual transition than the other states used.

Most call centers have retained the typical division of labor between initial claims and adjudication. But in Texas the call center used adjudicators to take claims on Mondays and other very busy days. Texas also planned to cross-train staff in all UI functions to allow staff to vary their work.

Office Environment at Call Centers

Staff reported some advantages of working in the call centers. Some reported that they felt safer because they did not have to work with angry, volatile claimants in person. Others reported that the call centers added more flexibility to their personal schedules, because a larger staff made it easier to schedule time off.

Although staff agreed that certain aspects of their job had improved, staff in our focus groups identified many disadvantages of working in the call center. Staff were most concerned about the pressures that they felt to complete initial claims quickly. In two centers, all activities, including breaks and trips to the bathroom, were timed. One call center that collected a great deal of information through a voice-response system wanted its staff to complete the claimant interview in three minutes. Staff tended to compare their current workloads unfavorably to their experience with in-person claims. Contentions by staff respondents that there was less time available to complete a claim

II. State Organizational Connections Between UI and One-Stop Systems

may be inaccurate, however, since we do not know whether the respondent accounted for time that the claimant spent with the IVR.

Staff also reported that there seemed to be no respite from the pressure of new calls coming in. Telephones at two call centers were programmed to route calls to claims takers within 10 seconds of completion of the previous call. Another call center provided time for completing the claim immediately after the customer hung up, but staff felt great pressure to complete the claim and get back on line for another call. Even in centers that had no individual production standards, the employees felt as if they were working under standards.

Staff also felt that they had lost privacy and professional independence. The concern over monitoring was pervasive among all call center respondents. In one call center, for example, supervisors monitored calls at least once a week for every employee in order to ensure high-quality customer service. In that call center, the physical design further influenced their sense of loss of privacy. Three managers were located in an elevated, glass-walled office in the middle of the floor so that they could constantly monitor employees' activity.

Employees at one center felt that their professional stature was sacrificed to production. An important customer service goal at that site was to reduce waiting time and eliminate phone calls dropped from the queue. Whenever the number of dropped calls increased, staff were to focus only on the more routine claims and had to route more complex—and more interesting—calls to a supervisor.

In response to these working conditions, staff in three of the four call centers commented on the increased level of stress that the new telephone system brought to their work. Examples of comments by UI claims-takers were: “the frustration level is horrendous,” “everything you do is timed to the minute,” and their office environment is now so “structured that it needs to be humanized.” The only call center with a more relaxed environment had not fully transitioned to full telephone operations.

Overall, employees believed that the work environment was more stressful than in the local office and was being driven by technology and the pressure to meet minutes-per-unit standards and reduce very high telecommunications costs. They likened their working conditions to those of mass-production factories where there was constant measurement and control. Although call centers in other states have attempted to mitigate some of these work environment problems (for example, by soliciting input

from employees about how to improve the environment and involving employees in making changes), none of the call centers in this study reported taking steps to address the employees' concerns.

Interaction between Call Center and One-Stop Staff

Staff at the call centers had limited contact with staff at One-Stop centers. Generally, call center staff knew little about One-Stop centers or the services provided. Call center staff had very few opportunities to meet their colleagues from the One-Stop centers. At the Milwaukee call center, for example, a majority of the UI staff had never visited a One-Stop center. However, in Springfield, One-Stop staff did visit the newly established call center and tour the facilities.

One ES supervisory respondent believed that communication was made worse at the management level as well. He indicated that UI and ES managers had previously had good relationships in the SESA local office, but with the establishment of the call centers, he no longer knew any of the UI managers.

Both call center and One-Stop center staff reported that it was difficult to obtain information from one another. None of the systems in this study had developed procedures for One-Stop staff to obtain information from call center staff about the status of their customers' claims. In one site, One-Stop staff could only reach call center counterparts by going through the toll-free number and navigating the IVR menu until they reached a staff member. A One-Stop center ES worker noted that call center staff frequently did not return his telephone calls to clarify claims issues for clients with whom he was working. Similarly, call center staff found it hard to confirm JTPA enrollment or ES registration when that information was needed to resolve a claims issue.

Factors that contributed to the lack of interaction between call center staff were the time pressure felt by call center staff, as discussed above, and the change in personnel at call centers. In Minnesota, on the other hand, because it recently transitioned to telephone claims, call center staff still knew their former One-Stop colleagues and found it easier to call them when they needed information.

In sum, while staff felt more secure, the highly structured and time-driven call center environment overall adversely affected front line staff. However, all UI staff acknowledged that there were substantial benefits in reducing the cost of administering the program and in improving customer services. In Chapter IV, we examine the

*II. State Organizational Connections
Between UI and One-Stop Systems*

impact of taking initial claims by telephone and the connections to reemployment services for UI claimants.

III. LOCAL ORGANIZATIONAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN UI AND ONE-STOP SYSTEMS

States establish broad One-Stop policies about the structure of service areas, mandatory partners, and financing, but local One-Stop policy boards and operators have wide latitude in designing and operating local One-Stop systems. The intention of this local flexibility is to make One-Stop systems responsive to the specific needs of local labor markets.

Although the UI systems have more consistent design and organization across local areas within a state, we did find some important local variation in the in-person initial claims sites we visited. For example, in at least two of our sites, the local office designed the basic connection between UI and the One-Stop system.

In this chapter, therefore, we explore the organizational connections at the local level between the UI program and One-Stop systems. We examine connections in the design, governance, and management of local One-Stop systems. We also investigate the extent of UI and One-Stop connections in the organization and training of staff. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the extent that the One-Stop physical facilities were affected by and influenced connections to the UI system.

UI ROLE IN LOCAL ONE-STOP DESIGN

All the states in this study had shifted their private industry councils to the broader designation of workforce development boards. In each case, the SESA was included on the local board, represented either by the local office manager or the ES manager in cases where UI had relocated to a call center.

The extent that UI played a role in the design and operation of local One-Stop systems was heavily affected by the state's decision about the method of taking the initial claim. In sites where the state retained in-person initial claims (that is, Hartford, Richmond, Durham), UI's role was quite strong and the same was true in Baltimore where both in-person and telephone claims were used.

As discussed in Chapter II, however, in telephone claims states, the extent that UI played any role in One-Stop design depended on when the shift to telephone claims-taking occurred. In the four states that shifted to telephone claims at about the same

*III. Local Organizational Connections
Between UI and One-Stop System*

time that they implemented their One-Stop systems (Wisconsin, Texas, Massachusetts, and Maryland), UI did not participate in any local One-Stop design or policy decision.

In Minneapolis, UI was initially part of the One-Stop system and played an important design role because UI was viewed as a major source of participants. After telephone claims taking was implemented, UI's role was greatly reduced in that site.

UI Role in One-Stop Governance

SESA/UI Role in Hosting and Managing the One-Stop Center

The One-Stop centers in the study sites had a variety of "hosting" and management arrangements, as shown in Exhibit III-1. Generally, local workforce development boards decided which agency would host the center based on the suitability of programs' existing offices. In five sites, the One-Stop center was initially located in existing SESA offices. In two other sites, the center was located in the existing JTPA offices. In the remaining site, the center was located at the county social service agency's offices. Although in several cases, the One-Stop center subsequently moved to larger offices, the host agency either bought or directly leased these new One-Stop facilities.

In all five SESA-hosted sites, the SESA local office manager was a key part of the One-Stop leadership. For example, the One-Stop centers in Hartford, Minneapolis, and Baltimore were essentially managed by the SESA manager. Although other partners co-located staff in each of these sites, they did not participate actively in the day-to-day management of the center. In Durham and Richmond, ES, UI and JTPA jointly managed the One-Stop center through a steering committee.

UI's role in managing One-Stop centers was strongly influenced by the extent of UI presence in the center. In the four sites where UI was fully present, UI was a part of the SESA management team and was strongly involved in One-Stop operations. Not surprisingly, in three sites where UI had no claims-taking staff at the One-Stop center, UI had no role in the management of the One-Stop center. In the remaining site—Springfield—a UI claims specialist was located at the center, but UI had little influence on the operations of the center (which was operated by a private, for profit contractor).

**Exhibit III-1
Hosting and Management Relationships
in Local One-Stop Centers**

	Host of One-Stop Center	UI Presence at One-Stop Center	Management of One-Stop Center
Hartford, Connecticut	SESA	Full	SESA management team
Richmond, Indiana	SESA	Full	ES, UI, JTPA
Baltimore, Maryland	SESA	Full	SESA management team
Springfield, Massachusetts	JTPA (private operator)	One UI Claims Specialist only	Private operator
Minneapolis, Minnesota	SESA	Auditors only	ES
Durham, North Carolina	SESA	Full	ES, UI, JTPA
Austin, Texas	JTPA (private operator)	None	Private operator
Racine, Wisconsin	County social services	None	ES, JTPA, and other funding partners

UI AND ONE-STOP STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

Organization of Staff to Serve Claimants

As shown in Exhibit III-1, the extent that UI claims-taking staff were located at One-Stop centers varied and was influenced by the method of initial claims taking. In the three sites that took all UI claims in person (Hartford, Richmond, and Durham), all UI staff were located at the One-Stop centers.

Further, two telephone claims-taking sites located at least some UI staff at One-Stop centers. In Baltimore, the full complement of UI staff were located at the One-Stop center; these staff rotated between taking in-person and telephone claims. In

*III. Local Organizational Connections
Between UI and One-Stop System*

Springfield, the state originally located all UI staff in the call centers, but it returned a UI specialist to the Springfield center, who took claims and provided customer services.

In Minnesota, Texas, and Wisconsin, however, all UI staff were located at telephone claims call centers (although, in Minneapolis, some former UI staff now worked in ES positions in the One-Stop center so these staff were able to answer claimant customers' inquiries about UI).

When located at One-Stop centers, the extent that UI claims-taking staff and functions were integrated with other partners' staff and functions varied widely. We found four types of relationships, ranging from UI and other One-Stop partners' staff integrating their programs' functions to UI staff operating entirely separately from other One-Stop partners' staff.

First, in two sites, UI and ES staff were at least somewhat integrated. In Hartford, the state had fully integrated its ES and UI staff in 1991, five years before One-Stop implementation. The separate ES and UI jobs had been combined into customer service representatives, who took initial claims and registered claimants with ES. After One-Stop implementation, these customer service staff also took on responsibility for determining JTPA eligibility and scheduling those customers for the JTPA orientation sessions. In North Carolina, integration took a different form. In the site we visited, UI and ES staff continued to operate separately. However, in some One-Stop centers in the state (i.e., those hosted by JTPA or community colleges), UI staff were generally not present. At these One-Stop centers, ES staff took basic UI claims.

The second way that UI staff related to other One-Stop staff was for UI staff to perform intake functions for the One-Stop center. Richmond had implemented a common intake system for One-Stop customers, and UI staff (except adjudicators) shared duties with other partners in helping customers use that system.

The third way that staff were organized was to have UI staff conduct some services for WPRS—the reemployment service mostly directly linked to UI. In two One-Stop centers—Hartford and Springfield—UI staff conducted WPRS workshops for UI claimants and tracked WPRS claimants' progress in their required services.

Finally, in two sites, UI staff were co-located at the One-Stop center but operated entirely separately from other partners' staff. In Baltimore and Durham, UI was

considered separate from other One-Stop activities, and UI staff neither performed reception nor other common duties nor helped out with other programs.

In telephone claims-taking sites where no UI staff were present at One-Stop centers, UI did not perform any One-Stop functions, but we found some examples of ES staff performing UI functions. In these cases, ES staff had access to the UI data system and could informally query the system to answer customer questions, for example about the status of their claims. Typically the most experienced ES staff performed this task.

Organization of Staff to Serve Employers

Cross-Program Business Service Teams

In six sites, One-Stop staff formed employer-service teams to market One-Stop employer services and provide some of those employer-related services. One additional center was considering the team approach. The major focus of most employer services teams was to obtain job orders or develop jobs for participants from categorical programs. The cross-program nature of these teams varied from sharing information about contacts to consolidated meetings with employers. None of these teams involved UI staff, however. These services to employers are discussed in Chapter V.

Audit Services

UI auditors were located in One-Stop centers at all four in-person claims sites and in Minneapolis. However, auditors did not report to the One-Stop management in any of these sites. Rather, auditors were part of regional or central office organizations. The implications of this organizational separation on the potential for cross-marketing services are discussed in Chapter V.

Consequences of Staffing Arrangements for SESA Staff

In several states, the separation of SESA components (with UI moving to call centers and ES locating at One-Stop centers) and the elimination of mandatory ES registration indirectly affected the ES organization. As a result of separating ES from the much larger UI program and reducing the number of UI claimants registering with ES, the ES has aligned itself more closely with the One-Stop system and partners in some sites.

The wide involvement of ES staff in providing One-Stop core services—such as the self-access services, job search workshops, and counseling—was invigorating the ES as an organization in some sites. For example, the Minneapolis and Hartford sites

III. Local Organizational Connections Between UI and One-Stop System

have either hired certified counselors (Minneapolis) or staff with counseling skills or the willingness to learn those skills (Hartford). Baltimore and Durham also increased their counseling staff. As a result, ES has been able to recover some of the counseling capacity (an area in which the ES had always been a leader) that it had lost over the last 15 to 20 years.

These major shifts in the staff organization and places of employment also had important consequences for the demographic make up of both ES and UI staff. Several sites reported that the changes in the work environment—either the move to greater ES/UI integration or the shift to telephone call centers—caused many senior people to retire because they were not eager to change duties or go to a new workplace.¹ These changes accelerated a demographic transition that would have occurred slightly later when the staff hired in the workforce development expansion in the 1960s and 1970s reached retirement age. In some sites, the retirement of some senior staff also allowed the ES to bring in younger staff with more counseling and personal computer skills.

Staff Training

Operating in a One-Stop environment required training for many UI and other One-Stop employees. We found four types of training relating directly or indirectly to the connectivity between UI and One-Stop services:

- Cross-program training to allow an employee of one program to carry out duties in another program.
- Information sharing that facilitated effective referrals or equipped an employee to convey information about another program to One-Stop customers.
- In-program training for UI call center staff.
- One-Stop teambuilding training.

At the time that One-Stop systems were implemented, most states in this study either sponsored or encouraged training of all staff. At that critical time, staff were generally given training in the goals and vision of the new system.

At some sites, initial training was extensive in duration and focus, involving computer and Internet training—including training in the state's computerized job

¹ See the section on call centers in Chapter II for a discussion of the loss of staff experience in call centers.

matching system—and instructions on using labor market information, improving customer relations, and working in an environment with multiple office cultures. At other sites, however, One-Stop training was minimal (e.g., a one-day informational session for staff across the board), and staff were expected to continue to function as they had in their previous roles, but simply in a different setting.

Cross-Program Training

Cross training to integrate programs fully was provided by only one site. However, partial cross training was more common. At several sites, other limited cross-training was provided, for example, to train ES staff to conduct JTPA eligibility determinations.

Full cross-training was provided in Hartford. When ES and UI were integrated into a single customer service unit, staff were trained in providing services for both programs, through intensive classroom training followed by on-the-job training.

Other sites provided cross-training in the ES and UI programs to increase staffing flexibility. For example, Richmond originally provided limited cross-training for ES and UI staff who had direct contact with customers to help the center manage staff shortages and uneven workloads. In addition, with the introduction of the new common intake system, the state provided extensive training to all staff to facilitate customers' ability use the system to electronically file a UI claim, register for ES, and determine JTPA eligibility. North Carolina also cross-trained ES staff to handle basic UI claims in those One-Stop centers hosted by JTPA or the community college because the state did not locate UI staff at those sites.

Cross-training to facilitate the connection between UI and reemployment services was not common. Only one state reported providing systematic training to One-Stop staff on leading the WPRS orientation workshops. (Other states had evidently provided training on other aspects of WPRS, but our respondents did not report such training.) Texas trained claims takers to provide the addresses of the One-Stop centers and SESA local offices for ES registration. This training occurred in the context of broader training for staff in executing the telephone script and other elements of the state's new telephone system.

Training through Sharing Information

Training to provide information about partners' programs was the most common training tool, particularly when new partners moved into the One-Stop center. Sharing

III. Local Organizational Connections Between UI and One-Stop System

of information kept managers and staff apprised of program updates and changes in regulations. Some information-sharing took place in through formal training sessions, but at most sites information was first shared at managers' meetings and then communicated to staff.

The only example of information sharing in a telephone claims-taking site occurred in Springfield, where the UI specialist who was located at the One-Stop center both received regular training from the One-Stop center and provided training to all One-Stop staff about UI. This staff member also continued to receive regular UI training and visited the call center to attend staff meetings. In contrast, another telephone claims-taking state explicitly decided not to provide any information for ES staff about UI issues; at this site ES staff were instructed to direct individuals to the UI office or to a telephone if customers had questions about their claim.

Formal information-sharing training was more likely to have taken place at the time the One-Stop was established; at that time, ES, UI, and other staff could describe their programs. For example, when the Baltimore One-Stop center opened, all staff participated in a one-day training session at which each partner described its program. In Durham, however, ES and UI managerial staff periodically attend informational training to help them better understand each other's jobs. In addition, Richmond provided regular information sessions for all staff.

Staff reported a good deal of *informal* information sharing as well. In our focus groups, staff rated this informal information sharing as very important. Informal sharing of information was facilitated in Minneapolis because several former UI staff members now held ES positions at the center.

Staff at several sites further indicated that co-locating partners at the One-Stop—even if only for a few days a week—resulted in more informal information sharing between UI and ES staff.

However, the situation was reversed at sites in which UI staff were transferred to call centers at about the same time that the One-Stop centers were established. For example, in Racine, ES, UI and JTPA staff had originally been located just a few blocks from each other; but staff contact with UI was lost when the One-Stop opened and UI staff were moved to call centers.

Training for UI Call Center Staff

When UI staff shifted to call centers, all staff received specialized training in use of the telecommunications technology, new claims-taking procedures, and customer-service skills. But UI staff did not receive any training on connecting claimants to reemployment services, except in Texas where claims takers were trained to provide the addresses of the One-Stop centers and SESA local offices, as described above.

The following are examples of the types of training provided to telephone claims-taking staff:

- The Milwaukee call center established a training center with three full-time staff to conduct training in telephone procedures and skills and in ensuring high-quality customer service. Training is provided to all UI staff, including adjudicators and claims specialists.
- In Austin, the Texas call center has a support team of customer service specialists who train staff and periodically monitor the telephone sessions. These staff then review with individual staff specific aspects of the call that need to be improved, when necessary.
- The St. Paul, Minnesota, call center adjudication staff were trained in using new word processing templates and macros to expedite writing determinations.
- In Baltimore, UI claims specialists and adjudicators were trained to handle both in-person and telephone assignments. Training in telephone customer service skills was provided to the claims specialists, while adjudicators received additional training on how to handle fact-finding over the telephone.

Teambuilding Training

Several sites provided training to all One-Stop staff to improve their capacity to work effectively with partners and work in teams. In the in-person sites, UI staff participated in this training. (Although teambuilding training is provided in many call centers elsewhere in the country, none of the call centers in this study reported any such training.) The following are two examples of One-Stop teamwork training:

- Hartford staff received training to assist them with all facets of their jobs, including training in customer service, time management, disability awareness, leadership and team building, as well as computer skills. Local management also supported training in time and stress management, customer satisfaction, LMI, and assessment. The Business Services Unit received training in job development.

*III. Local Organizational Connections
Between UI and One-Stop System*

- In Durham, the state provided team building training to reduce conflicts among partner programs over “turf” issues. At the time of implementation, the center also provided extensive training sessions on One-Stop policies.

Factors Affecting Training

Extent of Program Integration. Overall, it appeared that the level of training was consistent with the level of program integration. Because the One-Stop centers in this study were moving relatively slowly towards program integration, the limited amount of cross-program training to provide integrated services was not surprising. Several respondents noted the difficulty in training to achieve full integration. Even the Hartford staff, who were the most extensively cross-trained group in the study, acknowledged that ES and UI staff are not completely interchangeable for certain program issues.

As a result, the less intensive informational training was more common. Staff and managers reported that providing information about each other’s programs resulted in a common vocabulary to facilitate accurate customer referrals and improved staff’s capacity to answer customers’ questions about other program. According to some respondents, knowledge of each other’s programs also reduced parochialism and fostered a customer-centered approach.

Declining Levels of Training. At several sites, the level of all types of training seems to have declined since the beginning of One-Stop implementation. As a result, the skills of experienced staff tended to erode. The Minneapolis veterans’ representative knew enough about UI to provide some help to his customers. But he was finding it more difficult to keep up with UI regulations and policies than when he had UI colleagues present and he could attend their training and discuss these issues with them.

Several sites had approached training as a one-time operation. Rigorous training occurred when there was a new activity or program, but employees hired later had no formal training. For example, the Massachusetts call center trained staff at the beginning of telephone initial claims, but later employees learned their jobs through informal on-the-job training. In Minneapolis, the new staff had very limited UI knowledge and tended to rely on more senior colleagues to query the UI computer system.

Perceived Need for Training on Connectivity Issues. Training in ways to connect UI claimants to reemployment services was light because sites felt that there was relatively little need for it. Most sites taking initial claims in person did not change their connectivity practices as a result of One-Stop. Thus, they felt that their existing training practices sufficed. Sites taking telephone initial claims did not create many connections to UI services that required staff training, except as noted above.

Time and Funding Constraints. Respondents cited lack of time and funding as significant constraints to providing training. The call center manager in Massachusetts pointed out that there was very little funding for training. Call center staff talked extensively about the time pressure on them. They reported that they barely had time to complete their regular UI work much less time to be trained on other programs. Some reemployment services staff also talked about lack of time, although their concerns were not as acute as those of UI staff.

Difficulty of Cross-Training. One UI manager stated that programmatic changes were too frequent to make cross-information training practical and that staff could never be kept sufficiently well informed to make the information useful. A One-Stop director believed it was unlikely that an employee could be cross-trained in sufficient detail to become fully functional in another job. Most workers, the director said, were barely able to keep up with policies and rules in their own fields, much less have time to learn another program. For example, both the Hartford and Minneapolis sites made all program manuals available, but they were little used by staff from other programs.

These constraints and difficulties notwithstanding, we found that reemployment services staff respondents wanted more training in the UI program. ES and JTPA staff were frustrated because they could not assist job seekers with simple questions about their claims within the limits imposed by this highly technical program. And by the same token, UI staff wanted to know more about reemployment services. UI staff were often uninformed about ES and JTPA partnerships and how referrals were made to other organizations. Staff reported that knowledge of the other program would permit each to deliver better customer service.

PHYSICAL FACILITIES

An important decision for local One-Stop centers was the design and layout of their physical facilities. In selecting a location and designing the facility, governing

III. Local Organizational Connections Between UI and One-Stop System

bodies and administrators considered the overall goals of the One-Stop center, the needs of the programs participating in the center, the extent that common functions were integrated, and the need for resource rooms to house self-access services. Those sites taking in-person claims paid particular attention to whether they had facilities that were sufficiently large and appropriately structured to handle a large volume of UI claimants.

All but two of the One-Stop centers relocated to a new site, either at the same time or soon after One-Stop implementation. The Minnesota SESA had already built a new local office in South Minneapolis just a few years before and thus located the One-Stop center at the existing site. Baltimore remained in the original SESA location, but substantially remodeled it to accommodate the One-Stop center.

Despite moving to new facilities, however, some sites reported that they did not have adequate space for their centers. For example, at the Durham One-Stop center, the pressure for more office and workshop space increased as more partners moved into the site. At the Minneapolis and Austin sites, the self-service resource rooms were small and often crowded; and as a result customers had to sign in and had time limits on using computers. Hartford staff were unable to offer more job search workshops due to a lack of conference room space.

Accessibility

None of the sites made location decisions strictly based on considerations about the UI program. More often, sites located their facilities to be accessible to their targeted customers. Some sites sought to attract more higher-income and professional claimants and job-seekers and thus located their centers in buildings and locations that avoided the negative image of dingy government facilities located in decaying downtown areas. For example, Richmond and Durham relocated from old, downtown locations to new facilities with sufficient parking. Springfield was located in a nicely remodeled former factory building, across the street from the community college. Racine was housed in brand new county-owned public service campus near Lake Michigan in a pleasant residential area.

Other centers sought locations in areas to better meet the needs of low-income and welfare customers. For example, Austin moved to a community-service campus that was more accessible to less-skilled, low-income job seekers. Minneapolis and Hartford located their center in low-income neighborhoods, although these buildings

were near major freeways to improve access for all customers. Baltimore was the only site to retain a downtown location in the existing SESA building.

Internal Layout

In all sites One-Stop site planners used both interior design and architectural techniques to make their facilities attractive to all customers. Given the constraints of the space, most planners wanted two areas to be immediately visible: the intake counter and the resource room.

Reception, Lobby, and Intake Areas

One of the major accomplishments of the One-Stop centers was an improved intake area or reception desk. Previously high counters and teller-like windows created a physical barrier between staff and customer; the bare linoleum floors and metal folding chairs were visible symbols that the claimants were not valued customers. These features were eliminated by the centers in our sample. In their place were lower counters, carpeted lobbies, and (in all but one site) comfortable chairs of the type often found in business offices. Overall designers attempted to use furnishings, color and space to create a more relaxed, friendly atmosphere for both staff and customers.

Self-Access Services and Resource Rooms

All study sites recognized the need to provide an area that would allow customers to explore career options, assess their skills and interests, and obtain labor market information through self-access services. All sites made major investments in creating or upgrading these facilities. Renovations expanded and enhanced resource rooms to include workstations with computers installed with the Internet for job seekers, resume development, and career exploration software.

The following sites used architecture effectively to make their resource rooms and self-access services highly visible to customers:

- The Minneapolis center was designed to emphasize several self-access services. Minneapolis had its self-service job match computers in the waiting area. The resource room was off the lobby and access to it did not require going through the intake desk. Brochures and posters at the reception area also advertised job search workshops.
- The Racine site was also designed to emphasize self-help. The resource room was immediately off the lobby. Two touch-screen kiosks in the lobby provided information about programs, and could

III. Local Organizational Connections Between UI and One-Stop System

be used to sign up for workshops. A help desk staffed with ES employees assisted individuals with using equipment and services inside the resource room.

- The Durham site emphasized direct ES job referrals and so located the job match computers in the lobby area. The resource room, however, was purposely located well away from the lobby area.

In contrast, at Hartford, the office layout retained some old characteristics but was, nonetheless, designed to facilitate customer flow. No reemployment information is located in the reception area because the goal was to get people out of the waiting area and into the integrated intake process as quickly as possible.

UI Influence on One-Stop Facilities

Several architectural features were especially important to the centers taking initial claims in person. Ensuring that the reception area could accommodate a large number of customers allowed customers to receive information about the center and move on immediately to accomplish their business “without waiting in long lines and doing the elephant walk,” as one UI staff phrased it.

Size was another consideration. The lobby and intake areas for in-person initial claims generally required more space for claimants to wait and for UI staff to serve them. On the other hand, in Texas, UI’s shift to call centers relieved a number of One-Stop centers of the difficult task of finding locations that could meet the needs of both UI and reemployment services.

One site was planning to reconfigure its offices to improve the connection from UI to reemployment services. After the Richmond site implemented its automated common intake system, UI claims filers were no longer required to meet with an ES specialist. To increase claimants’ awareness of the self-access reemployment services, therefore, resource room staff planned to introduce a video screen to display resource room services and were exploring other devices to attract claims filers to the resource room immediately after they completed their computer intake process.

Finally, some sites that shifted to telephone claims taking had to reconfigure their One-Stop centers to fill space made available when UI staff moved to the call center. For example, Minneapolis brought in additional partner staff. Hartford was planning to increase its meeting room space to increase the number of job search workshops when UI staff move to a call center.

IV. UI AND ONE-STOP CONNECTIONS FOR CLAIMANT SERVICES

This chapter analyzes the connections between UI and the One-Stop systems to provide services to claimants. In this chapter, we examine the connections that claimants can make at each of the major stages of the UI claims process: initial claims, continuing claims, eligibility review, and adjudication. We then explore the Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services System (WPRS) in each area. We next examine the extent that job seekers are linked to UI system through the contact with One-Stop systems. We next assess the linkages between UI and One-Stop systems to the different types of claimant services required under WIA. This chapter concludes with a description of claimants' reactions to the connections between UI and One-Stop systems and their recommendations for improving service connections.

In this study we found three broad types of connections that provide a claimant with an opportunity to get reemployment services:

- **Direct connections.** Direct connections occur because a UI process is explicitly structured to connect claimants to reemployment services. These connections are systematically initiated by staff, and are part of a well-defined process. Some connections are mandatory, while others are voluntary. Examples of direct connections include:
 - Intake that directs a customer to reemployment services, such as intake that determines eligibility for categorical programs.
 - Mandatory ES registration.
 - Eligibility Review Program (ERP).
 - Reemployment services required under WPRS.
- **Information connections.** Information connections occur when all claimants are systematically informed about reemployment services and ways to access them. This information can be provided by staff, electronically, or by sending written materials. These connections, however, are voluntary and rely on the claimant to act upon the information they received. The claimant's knowledge and experience heavily influences whether the claimant elects to participate in services. Examples of information connections are:
 - Special mailings on reemployment services at initial claim.
 - Information in Claimant Handbook.

*IV. UI and One-Stop Connections
for Claimant Services*

- Inserts with benefit checks.
- **Ad hoc connections.** Ad hoc connections occur when UI staff provide claimants with information only when claimants ask about services or express anxiety about their job loss. Thus, these connections are informal and rely on claimants' initiative.

CONNECTIONS AT INITIAL CLAIM

The initial claim has long been an important entry point to the workforce development system for unemployed workers. For some, an early connection to good reemployment services can shorten the duration of unemployment. For others whose skills may require upgrading, a connection early in the worker's spell of unemployment allows UI claimants to have income support during training.

Below we discuss the different types of connections at initial claim that we found. In Exhibit IV-1, we present the same information for each site to illustrate how that site's different connections fit together in the context of its initial claim process.

Direct Connections at Initial Claims

Intake That Directs Claimants to Multiple Services

All three sites where claimants filed initial claims in person designed their One-Stop intake process to direct claimants to several reemployment services at the time that claimants file their claims. The two telephone-claims sites that also allowed in-person claims—Baltimore and Springfield—also provided some direct linkages for in-person filers. Sites used three different strategies to directly link claimants to reemployment services: integrating intake for all programs, including UI; coordinating intake to services with filing UI claims; and staff assessing and directly referring claimants to needed services.

Integrated Intake. Integrating intake for all programs is a potentially convenient and cost-effective way for One-Stop centers to connect claimants to multiple services. Integrating intake not only allows claimants to connect to reemployment services at the time they file their initial claim, it also saves customers time and saves programs the cost of duplicate data collection, entry and storage by taking identifying and eligibility information only once. Some One-Stop centers have developed paper forms to collect intake information required by various programs, but many One-Stop systems have the goal of developing a comprehensive computerized system to collect this information.

Among our study sites, only Richmond had developed a fully integrated intake system. At this site, customers directly keyed in the computer identifying information, which was used by all One-Stop programs, including UI, ES, and EDWAA. For all unemployed workers, the system requested the information needed to file UI claims and then automatically registered claimants for ES. The intake system then asked customers about the workforce development programs of interest to them and guided them in filling out all the information required to determine eligibility for each program. The system then informed eligible claimants how to access services. For example, claimants interested in training were referred to a JTPA specialist, who would schedule claimants for appointments.

Coordinated intake. Although their systems were not fully integrated, two study sites designed their intake processes to coordinate UI claims taking with Title III eligibility determination and intake into reemployment services.

For example, Hartford had integrated their ES and UI staff so that a single intake worker took initial UI claims and conducted intake into the major programs for unemployed workers. Staff first took customers' initial claims, second registered claimants for ES and showed them how to use the job match computer, and then asked claimants whether they were interested in training. If they were, the intake worker then determined whether the customer was eligible for EDWAA and signed them up for an EDWAA orientation workshop.

In Durham, the ES and UI programs had different staff but shared a common database that contained customers' personal and identifying information. Staff used this common data system for collecting information to file UI claims and for ES registration. This procedure saved data entry time and increased accuracy. In addition, the ES staff determined eligibility for EDWAA during the ES registration process.

Several sites also had specific procedures to connect veterans to reemployment services. For example, in Hartford, veterans filing claims were introduced to the local veterans' employment representative. In Richmond, the intake system identified veterans, who were referred to the veterans' staff for specialized attention. In Baltimore, veterans filing claims were immediately referred to the veteran's unit for specialized service; if the veterans' staff were unable to help them, they were referred to JTPA.

Exhibit IV-1 (continued)
Descriptions of Initial Claim Filing Methods
and Connection to Reemployment Services

Initial Claim Procedure	Connection to Reemployment Services
<p>Exhibit IV-1 Descriptions of Initial Claim Filing Methods and Connection to Reemployment Services</p>	<p>Connection to Reemployment services</p>

Initial claim Procedure

Telephone Initial Claim

Springfield,
Massachusetts

Claimants call into one of four regional centers. The state takes 87% of claims by telephone. Claims related information is taken including questions about layoff status for WPRS, the telephone claimant is informed of benefit rights and responsibilities and a handbook is mailed out with the forms, which the claimant must sign. Claimants can also file in 24 in-person sites (local offices and some One-Stop centers where UI staff are present) throughout the state. The in-person sites will only take a basic state claim. The script for the local office initial claim requires that staff attempt to divert people to the telephone at each opportunity. There is, however, an optional group benefit rights interview at all in-person sites. This interview typically provides information about reemployment services.

The claims taker does not provide any information about reemployment services unless the claimant requests it. On request claims takers can provide the address and phone number of the nearest One-Stop center or local office. One staff member indicated the information only when a claimant exhibits some anxiety about his or her job search. The FutureWorks One-Stop center provides a variation on the group benefits rights interview, with a special emphasis on reemployment services that are offered at the center. The group session concludes with a tour of the center.

Minneapolis,
Minnesota

This state is still in transition. It takes 100% of claims by a telephone-mail combination. Claimants call into one of five regional centers to request a paper form. This is mailed out to the claimant, who then mails it back into

The claims taker does not provide any information about reemployment services unless the claimant requests it. On request claims takers can provide the address and phone number of the nearest One-Stop center or local office. If

Exhibit IV-1
Descriptions of Initial Claim Filing Methods
and Connection to Reemployment Services

Initial Claim Procedure	Connection to Reemployment Services
--------------------------------	--

the call center. The state is planning to eliminate the mail-in process in 1999. No in-person service is available. One-Stop centers had been permitted to distribute the mail-in form, but this practice is no longer permitted. At the present time there is no benefit rights interview. The claimant handbook is mailed out.

staff are familiar with the One-Stop center in the claimant's area because they worked at that center, they will give out detailed information on services. The call center does send out in a separate mailing a brochure on the state's One-Stop system and the services that are available statewide. The state prefers a separate mailing to avoid overloading the claimant with information about the claim and reemployment services at the same time. The loss of UI staff has precluded One-Stop centers from providing a group benefit rights interview that the staff used to market reemployment services.

Austin, Texas

The state takes 100% of claims by telephone (at the time of the site visit the level was 80%). The claims taker gets basic information on the claim and provides a benefit rights interview. The claimant receives the handbook in the mail.

After taking claims information, the claims taker informs the claimant of the requirement to register with ES and provides the address and telephone number of the nearest One-Stop center or local office. The computer system brings up the nearest location addresses based on the claimant's zip code. The claimant receives the address orally and in writing.

Racine,
Wisconsin

The state takes 100% of claims by telephone. Claimants call into one of two centers where claims takers get basic claims information and provide a benefit rights interview. A claimant handbook is mailed out.

The claims taker does not provide any information about reemployment services. If a claimant requests such information, the claims taker gives him an 800 number with a recorded list of One-Stop centers in the state. The state does mail out a brochure about its integrated job match system to all claimants.

In-Person Initial Claims

Exhibit IV-1 (continued)
Descriptions of Initial Claim Filing Methods
and Connection to Reemployment Services

Initial Claim Procedure	Connection to Reemployment Services
--------------------------------	--

Hartford,
Connecticut

The claimant comes to the lobby monitor, fills out a slip indicating the reason for the visit to the One-Stop center. If the lobby is busy, the claimant will receive a number indicating his or her position in line. Once called to the counter the staff fills out identifying information on a paper form, calls up the wage history, and estimates the benefit and duration of the claim. The benefit rights interview is given separately one week later in a group session. If the center is very busy, claimants are organized into groups where the claimants fill out the identifying paper form and do not receive benefit and duration estimates.

Richmond,
Indiana

The claimant is directed to a computer where he or she keys in identifying and layoff information into the common intake system. The system is designed to work without any staff intervention, but staff will provide help on the use of the computer as well as respond to questions about UI. State officials hope that staff assistance will recede once the bugs have been worked out of this new system and claimants and other customers become more familiar with its use. Claimants can view a benefit rights video at any time during their visit.

Immediately after filing the claim the same staff person registers the individual for ES and screens the claimant for Title III eligibility. If they are potentially eligible and interested in Title III services, they are signed up for the Title III orientation session. Finally the person gets a tour of the job match computers and the resource room. If there are a large number of claimants waiting, staff reduce the amount of time taken with each person in reemployment services. If the crowd continues to grow, they will take group claims and take only a three-digit ES registration for each claimant, which provides a less accurate job match.

The common intake system automatically registers a claimant for ES and matches the customer's registration against available job orders. Staff noted that there was a considerable amount of inaccurate and incomplete data entry, creating extra work for UI staff and making for inaccurate job matches. The computer shows customers all the services available including Title III. Customers provide eligibility information and the system determines eligibility. Some customers tend to leave after inputting their claim and ES registration information. The computerized intake system replaced a more staff intensive intake system that was characterized by the staff listening to a claimant's full story before personally taking the individual over to the appropriate program

Exhibit IV-1
Descriptions of Initial Claim Filing Methods
and Connection to Reemployment Services

Initial Claim Procedure	Connection to Reemployment Services
--------------------------------	--

<p>Durham, North Carolina</p> <p>At the second visit, UI staff hold a group session to fill out the claim forms and view a benefit rights video. Individual claimants then meet with UI and ES staff to take the claim form and determine eligibility for Title III or other targeted programs. The two-visit initial claim process was eliminated shortly after the site visit, but the center still requires ES registration first.</p>	<p>At the time of the site visit claimants had to come in to register for ES before filing a claim. They would receive referrals and engage in a job search. That action started their waiting period. In the following week they would return to the local office or One-Stop center to file the actual claim, which was then backdated to the first visit.</p>
--	--

Mixed Initial Claim

<p>Baltimore, Maryland</p> <p>The state handles over 50% of claims by telephone and is moving towards greater telephone usage. The claims taker conducts the initial claim interview over the telephone, handwriting items for later key entry. The claims taker provides the benefit rights interview and sends out a handbook and a form for signature. The Baltimore site does offer claimants the opportunity to file in-person. For an in-person initial claim the claimant fills out a form and presents it to the claims taker who reviews it and asks any supplementary questions. The claims taker then gives the benefit rights interview and the handbook and gives the claimant a card to take to ES staff. The claims taker keys in the data later.</p>	<p>The telephone claims taker does not provide any information about reemployment services unless the claimant requests it. If the claimant does request information, he or she receives a referral to the nearest ES office. If a person files in person in Baltimore, however, the claimant must register with ES, which is done with a referral card. The claimant then walks across the room to ES reception. At registration, staff browse the system for a match and provide a referral for all new job seekers. In addition any telephone initial claimant using the resource room must also register with ES. The ES registration were local practices</p>
---	--

*IV. UI and One-Stop Connections
for Claimant Services*

Staff-Assisted Linkages. In three One-Stop centers, the UI staff informally assessed claimants' needs and directly referred them to other services. In other sites, UI staff provided orientations or tours of the One-Stop center's services.

For example, Hartford intake staff encouraged claimants to participate in additional reemployment services. At the conclusion of the individual intake session, staff encouraged claimants to sign up for job search workshops (the appointment books were immediately at hand) and took them on a tour of the resource room to encourage them to use the self-access services.

In Richmond, before its common intake system was implemented, intake staff took advantage of some customers' tendency to tell personal stories when they sought help. Staff listened sympathetically to a claimant's story—even personal problems—before taking the claim and then walked the claimant over to the appropriate program representative. As a result, staff referred most unemployed workers to reemployment services. Because their new intake system was automated and customers entered information directly into the data system, this personal contact has been lost. Richmond staff, however, were working on ways to replicate in their new intake system the personal intervention they had previously provided.

In Massachusetts, unemployed workers had the option to file an in-person initial claim. A UI staff member was located at the Springfield One-Stop center to take in-person initial claims. Immediately afterward, she gave the claimant a tour of the center and encouraged participation in services. She also explained the services available and encouraged claimants to sign up for a job search workshop or counseling session. Further, this staff member also conducted voluntary orientations to the UI claims process and benefits. She concluded that orientation with a discussion of reemployment services available and a tour of the center.

Mandatory ES Registration

Another way to directly link claimants to services is to require claimants to register with ES. Four study states required ES registration for all non-job attached claimants—all three in-person initial claims states and Texas, a telephone claims. In addition, although not required by the state at the time of our visit, Baltimore also required all claimants who filed claims in person to register with ES.

In Durham and Baltimore, ES registration was the key connection for claimants, reflecting the importance of ES as an organization and a key service provider in both of

those sites. Hartford and Richmond, on the other hand, presented ES as one of several programs to help claimants find jobs. Texas had always used mandatory registration and decided to maintain it after they shifted to taking claims by telephone.

As discussed above, Hartford's integrated ES/UI intake workers registered claimants with ES immediately after taking their claims. Further, Richmond's common intake system included mandatory ES registration. After filing their claims, claimants entered their job skills and key words into the system, which created a work profile to match against job orders.

Durham reversed the normal sequence of events by having potential claimants first register with the ES before filing initial claims. Only after ES registration was complete could individuals see UI staff to file claims. At the time of our site visit, claimants had to wait one week between registering for ES and filing initial claims. Claimants were to use the waiting period for an active job search before returning to file the claim, which was backdated to account for the delay. Claimants found this procedure very inconvenient, however, so beginning in February 1999, ES registration and filing claims could occur on the same day. Nonetheless, ES registration still preceded filing claims.

In Texas, claimants could file their claims over the telephone, but they were required to register with ES in person. After taking claims information, the claims-taker informed the claimant of the requirement to register with ES and provided the address and telephone number of the nearest One-Stop center or local office. (The computer system brought up the address of the nearest ES location based on the claimant's zip code.) Claims-takers did not, however, have any information on the type of services available at particular local offices or One-Stop centers.

Although not required by the state, the Baltimore center required ES registration for those filing claims in person. Baltimore considered ES registration to be the gateway to other services and expected ES to provide the full array of core services as well as referral to JTPA and other services. All ES registrants, including claimants, received at least one staff-assisted job match referral at initial registration. Claimants and other job seekers could use the job match system on a self-service basis at subsequent visits. (Baltimore also required all other customers to register with ES before they could use the resource room.)

IV. UI and One-Stop Connections for Claimant Services

The other three states (i.e., Wisconsin, Minnesota, and other Maryland sites) had not required ES registration at the time of One-Stop implementation, and they did not make any change in their procedures either in response to One-Stop implementation or to the shift to telephone claims taking.

Staff Opinions about Effectiveness of Direct Linkages

Many of the UI and reemployment services staff at the One-Stop centers indicated that direct, personal connections were generally quite effective in linking claimants to reemployment services. One intake worker estimated that about one-third of all claimants were unaware of reemployment services or were in denial of their need for help. Thus, he used his contact with these claimants to "sell" reemployment services. He thought that he persuaded about half of them to participate. Many of these claimants, he believed, might not have sought reemployment services on their own until near the time they would exhaust benefits.

Information Connections

The second type of connection is informational, whereby claimants are systematically given information about reemployment services but are not directly connected to those services. Thus, information connections rely on claimants to seek out services on their own.

We found two types of informational connections in our study sites: (1) sending specialized brochures to claimants describing One-Stop reemployment services and (2) including information about One-Stop reemployment services in UI claimant handbooks. In addition, in-person claims-takers routinely informed claimants about reemployment services as part of the direct connections described above. However, none of the telephone claims-takers in the three sites without direct connections (i.e., Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Maryland) routinely provided information about services to claimants.

Special Brochures on Reemployment Services at Initial Claim

All the telephone states except Texas developed special brochures and other promotional material that described One-Stop reemployment services, which were mailed to all claimants. Most often, these One-Stop materials were mailed with UI materials such as the benefits determination letter or the claimant handbook. Minnesota, however, preferred a separate mailing because it felt claimants would be

overloaded with too much information and reemployment services information might be overlooked if it were included with the UI package.

None of the sites that took claims in person mailed claimants information about reemployment services. Indiana, however, handed out a brochure specifically targeted to UI claimants in its resource rooms.

Information in Claimant Handbook

All the states included general information about reemployment services in their UI claimant handbooks, which were given to each claimant. The handbooks typically described services or programs and provided addresses and telephone numbers of the local offices and One-Stop centers. These handbooks did not, however, provide information on the type of services available at any particular local office or One-Stop center. The handbooks varied in readability and the ease with which claimants could find the section describing reemployment services.

Ad Hoc Connections

The third type of connections is ad hoc, whereby UI staff provide claimants with information about reemployment services only when claimants ask questions or request information about reemployment services. Claimants who made these requests may have been exceptionally anxious about their job search, lack other job search resources, or simply be more assertive than other claimants. Although these connections are infrequent, they may also be efficient because they connect only those customers who have already expressed interest in services. They also fill a gap, particularly in those telephone states with no other connections at initial claims.

Staff at all the call centers responded to specific claimants' requests for information about reemployment services. In two of centers, staff indicated that they also provided information to claimants who expressed greater than average anxiety over their job loss.

All claims-taking respondents in Minnesota and Massachusetts indicated that they provided the address and telephone number for the nearest One-Stop center or local office from a list they kept at hand. In Wisconsin, staff gave claimants who requested information the toll-free telephone number that had the same information. Most did not offer any other information than the address. But if a claimant resided in a local area where the claims taker had previously worked, some claims takers were able to provide more information about services or even a personal contact. This richer connection

IV. UI and One-Stop Connections for Claimant Services

flourished during the transitional phase in Minnesota and Massachusetts because most call center staff had been transferred from the local offices and had knowledge of local services. In Wisconsin, many experienced UI staff did not take jobs at the call center, so this type of connection was less available.

All respondents reported that they provided information about the location of services relatively infrequently and did not provide much information about reemployment services, except for the limited circumstances where claims takers had previous experience. Staff noted that providing this information took time away from their formal duties. By contrast, if a claimant asked UI staff about reemployment services at in-person sites, staff members typically referred the claimant directly to reemployment services staff, effectively making a direct linkage to services.

Factors That Affected Connections at Initial Claim

Method of Taking Initial Claims. Within the sites in our study, the method of taking initial claims strongly affected the type and extent of connections to reemployment services. All three sites that took all claims in person directly linked claimants to reemployment services, both through intake procedures and through mandatory ES registration. Further, in two sites that took some claims in person—Baltimore and Springfield—claimants filing in person were also directly linked to services.

In contrast, among the sites that took all initial claims by telephone, only Texas directly linked claimants to services through ES mandatory registration. The remaining telephone sites relied on informational connections—mailing claimants information about reemployment services—and ad hoc connections—answering questions about services when claimants requested information.

However, this relationship between telephone claims taking and weak connections between UI and One-Stop systems is not inherent in the nature of telephone claims taking. Among the direct connections at intake that we found, only staff-assisted connections (where claimants were escorted to services and given tours of the facilities) could be provided only when the claimant came into the center. In contrast, the others types of direct linkages at intake, such as determining eligibility and referring claimants to specific services, could be carried out over the telephone. And, as was done in Texas, telephone sites could require ES registration.

Time Constraints. A major impediment to linking claimants to services was the amount of time available. In particular, staff in all the call centers indicated that they were under significant time pressure to complete their calls and enter and analyze the data required to complete an accurate claim. The pressure to meet their minutes-per-unit standard and the high telecommunication costs limited the time to connect claimants to services because time taken for such connections was viewed as “unproductive.” (See Chapter II for a discussion of the work pressures on call center staff.)

Although the minutes-per-unit standard also applied to in-person claims-takers, these staff appeared to feel less pressure from that standard. Further, in some sites (e.g., Hartford and Richmond) some intake functions were jointly funded by UI and other partners, which added a source of funding for the staff time spent connecting claimants to services.

Nonetheless, respondents in some in-person sites indicated that time pressures resulting from peak workloads reduced the quality of the connections to services although it did not eliminate those connections altogether. For example, Hartford staff indicated that when the center was very busy, they reduced the amount of time spent with each customer from about 25 minutes to 10 to 15 minutes. Although they tried to reduce the time it took to take the claim, their highest priority was taking an accurate claim, so most of the reduction came in spending less time connecting claimants to reemployment services. Specifically, as part of ES registration, they entered a less detailed Dictionary of Occupational Titles code, resulting in a less accurate job match. They also gave a briefer tour of the state job bank computers and the resource room. (Some staff attributed the lower quality of connections during peak workloads to the decision to combine the ES and UI jobs. They thought that if there still had been ES specialists, those staff would have spent more time with the customer.)

Need to Improve Programs Separately. Two states—Minnesota and Texas—felt that they needed to improve the UI system and develop better One-Stop services before they concentrated on improving the connections between those two systems. For example, Minnesota UI officials felt that they needed to improve the basic UI transaction to make it more efficient before creating better connections to reemployment services. They also noted that One-Stop centers did not yet have sufficient capacity to handle a large flow of claimants. Were they to make systematic and effective connections, they felt that the extra job seekers would overwhelm the One-Stop centers

IV. UI and One-Stop Connections for Claimant Services

and degrade the quality of services. But they expected One-Stop capacity and service quality to increase over time.

Historically Close Relationship between ES and UI. Direct connections were clearly associated with states that had an historically close relationship between ES and UI. All the in-person states reported that there was a close relationship between the two branches of the SESA, often for a long time before One-Stop implementation. These states also tended to take work-search testing more seriously, which created an important reason to maintain the connection.

Success of Previous Connections. Several sites sought to maintain the connections that they thought were successful before One-Stop. For example, Durham and Baltimore largely maintained the strong emphasis on ES job matching that was at the heart of their service strategies both before and after One-Stop. Thus, from a claimant's perspective, connections after One-Stop looked very similar to the connections in the predecessor SESA local offices.

Emphasis on the Claimant Making the Connection. States that simply provided claimants with information about reemployment services connections, through brochures and the claimant handbook, relied on claimants to act on that information to seek out services. In Minnesota and Wisconsin, this approach was compatible with broader state policy that emphasized the individual claimant's role in connecting to reemployment services. These states wanted willing participants in their One-Stop systems rather than claimants who were forced to enroll in reemployment services under threat of sanctions. Thus, these states had little interest in implementing mandatory ES registration.

CONNECTIONS AT ELIGIBILITY REVIEW

DOL designed the Eligibility Review Program (ERP) to serve two functions: to enforce the work-search test to ensure that claimants were able, available, and actively seeking work; and to connect claimants to reemployment services during their claim.

DOL developed the Eligibility Review Program (ERP) in 1976 after the high claims loads during the mid-1970s recession amply demonstrated that a more carefully targeted program was necessary to administer the work search test and to link claimants to ES for reemployment services. The program instructions required UI staff to classify claimants according to their attachment to the labor force (an eligibility

requirement) and their prospects for reemployment. Staff would screen for possible in-person interview:

- Non-job-attached claimants in demand occupations who had been referred to ES but not yet placed.
- Non-job-attached claimants needing counseling and job search assistance.
- Job-attached claimants who continue to claim benefits after their estimated return-to-work date had passed.
- Claimants with eligibility issues.

Claimants were to be scheduled for an individual interview in the eighth week of the claim. Claimants who needed additional help with job searching or supportive services would be referred to ES; claimants with eligibility issues would be turned over to adjudication. A continuing record was to be maintained so that interviewers would be able to follow a claimant's subsequent progress. (General Administrative Letter 5-77, Attachment I)

Three states in our sample—Maryland, North Carolina, and Connecticut—used the ERP. Their program designs were quite consistent with the dual emphasis on both job search assistance and compliance that each state demonstrated in other aspects of their UI programs. These states' ERP designs, however, had changed considerably from the design of the original program.

North Carolina made the most intensive use of ERP among the states in the study sample, and its design was closest to DOL's original vision for this program. Staff reviewed the claims status for all non-job-attached claimants and followed them over the course of their claim. Staff then conducted an individual review with each claimant every 4-5 weeks, depending on staff resources.

The first review was a full interview where ES staff met in person with each claimant and went over the individual's job-search strategy. In Durham the staff then provided additional referrals from the job match system to claimants who were not conducting sufficiently intensive job searches. Durham's emphasis on directly providing job referrals using the job match system paralleled that site's overall strategy used to connect claimants to reemployment services. The next review, called the "periodic review," was largely a paper review of each claimant's job search, as

*IV. UI and One-Stop Connections
for Claimant Services*

documented by the claimant's job search logs. Then staff would alternate the full and periodic reviews throughout the claimant's benefit period.

North Carolina used the continuing claims Integrated Voice Response (IVR) system to notify claimants when they should come in for a review. When a claimant called to file a continued claim, the claimant entered his or her Social Security Number, responded to prompts to enter the information needed to demonstrate continued eligibility, and received information specific to his or her claim, such as notification of an appointment for the ERP.

Connecticut's program was less intensive than North Carolina's in that it reviewed many fewer claimants and did so less frequently. The One-Stop centers randomly sampled claimants and called them in to the One-Stop center during the 6th or 7th week of their claim. The size of the sample was based on the capacity of the local One-Stop center, with the Hartford office sending out letters to 50 claimants per week. The claimants were required to participate in a workshop with about 10 to 15 other claimants and bring a resume and log of job search contacts. Claimants who did not respond to the summons, however, were not sanctioned.

The two components of Hartford's ERP workshop, which we observed, reflected the dual purposes of the program: to enforce eligibility requirements and directly connect claimants to reemployment services. Eligibility issues came first. Each person was required to write down his or her job search activity during the preceding week. The workshop leader, who was part of the integrated customer-service unit, reminded the claimants about the work-search activities that were necessary to collect benefits. He reviewed the forms and identified two claimants whose job search did not contain sufficient entries. These claimants were taken immediately after the workshop to an adjudicator who would make a determination on the spot about their eligibility for the period in question.

The workshop leader then provided information and reemployment services. He discussed job search strategies and the specific resources available in the Hartford One-Stop center. He then reviewed the resumes of those who brought them to the workshop. He directed claimants who did not have resumes to the resource room to develop them.

The staff conducting the Hartford ERP workshop promoted the same types of connections that they used at initial claims; encouraging claimants to use the resource

room and the job search workshops. The ERP workshop itself—Hartford was the only site to use a group format—reflected that One-Stop’s approach to reemployment services: to encourage as many people as possible to use less staff-intensive methods so staff would be able to work individually with those who required more one-on-one assistance.

Maryland made the ERP optional for each local office or One-Stop center and the content of the program varied locally. The only statewide enforcement of the eligibility requirement came at the 6th week when claimants were required to mail in at least 12 employer contacts. UI staff then conducted a desk review of these submissions to determine continued eligibility.

The Baltimore One-Stop’s ERP generally emphasized helping claimants search for jobs. The One-Stop director believed that it was important to use the program to link claimants to reemployment services because many of the site’s claimants were low-wage workers who needed extra help finding jobs.

Claimants were called into the office during the 10th week for an individual interview session.¹ A UI specialist, who had some experience as an ES technician, conducted this interview. She brought up the claimant’s ES registration on the computer, and used a checklist to assess the claimant’s attempts at finding a job. She then tried to suggest ways of improving the job search. She ended the session by referring the claimant to ES staff, who would give the claimant job referrals from the job match-system. This site’s use of ES job referrals at ERP review paralleled the same emphasis at initial claim.

The remaining five states did not have full ERPs, although two states conducted some review of eligibility after initial claims. Texas and Indiana indicated that they applied “ERP principles” to the claimants sampled for the Benefits Accuracy Measurement program. Indiana also reviewed job-attached claimants after the 13th week of benefits; these claimants must either verify that they will soon return to work with the employer who laid them off or register with ES.

¹ UI staff at the Baltimore One-Stop and other Maryland sites were experimenting with conducting their ERP interviews by telephone. Results were not available, however, at the time of the site visit.

*IV. UI and One-Stop Connections
for Claimant Services*

The states that did not have an ERP expressed differing views about the program. Indiana and Wisconsin had dropped their programs because they thought it was not cost efficient. Neither state thought that claimants who had been reviewed returned to work more quickly or received fewer benefits. In contrast, two other states were considering reviving the program. Minnesota UI officials would like to use the program but were concerned that One-Stop centers did not have sufficient resources to provide reemployment services for larger numbers of claimants in a full program. Once the One-Stop center developed more services, they planned to use the full ERP with a strong emphasis on aiding claimants' job search. Massachusetts dropped the program at the time it shifted to telephone initial claims, but the state planned to re-institute the program in the future.

CONNECTIONS AT CONTINUED CLAIMS

To continue to receive benefits, claimants must certify throughout their claim that they are still unemployed and are able and available for work. Although claimants were originally required to come into the office to file continued claims, starting about 30 years ago, states began to allow claimants to mail in self-verification forms. Over the last 10 years, many states further shifted this process to the telephone. In these states, claimants can report their employment status and availability for work through a voice mail system referred to as Integrated Voice Response (IVR) system.

All the states in this study, except Indiana and Massachusetts, were using IVR systems to accept the certification by claimants that they are able and available for work. The two using mail-in forms are states planning to implement IVRs also. Of the six states currently using IVR systems, three used those systems to give claimants information about either reemployment services (an information connection) or job openings (a direct service connection).

In the Texas, North Carolina, and Minnesota, claimants could choose through the IVR menu to obtain information about job openings listed in the state's job bank and about reemployment services. For example, in North Carolina's IVR system, claimants could access the state's job bank to learn about openings in their occupation (based on the DOT code the claimant gave to ES). This information was available five days a week, on days that the state's mainframe computer was not writing benefit checks. (This automated system is also available to all job seekers who have registered with ES.)

Two other states used another method to inform continued claimants about reemployment services. Minnesota and Maryland both inserted flyers with claimants' benefit checks to inform them about the reemployment services available at the local office or One-Stop centers. These states believed that including these flyers with each check would dull their effectiveness; so Minnesota sent them out quarterly and Maryland included notices periodically, but not on a regular schedule.

CONNECTIONS FROM ADJUDICATION PROCESS

Adjudication is the process through which UI staff obtain the facts necessary to make an administrative determination on a claimant's eligibility for UI benefits. The goal of the adjudication process, like other parts of the UI program, is to ensure that payments are made only when due. Most adjudication cases are concerned with the reason for separation (in which employers have standing to contest the issue) or whether the claimant has been able and available for work and actively seeking work. Adjudicators, or fact-finders as they are sometimes called, interview the claimant and other parties and then issue a decision. Some issues are complex and involve specialized representatives or even attorneys, while others are very settled matters of law and involve a recitation of the facts and a quick decision. States also have multiple levels of appeal from these determinations.

All the states handle adjudication in the same way that they handle initial claims. The in-person states conduct adjudications at the One-Stop centers while the telephone states conduct adjudication at the call centers. Much of the fact-finding work occurred by telephone, regardless of whether the state has a call center or not.

The advantage of conducting adjudication in the One-Stop center is that claimants may get immediate service. For example, in Connecticut, if the issue was straightforward and did not involve a separation where the employer must have an opportunity to participate, Connecticut could conduct a fact-finding hearing and issue a decision on the spot. The Hartford One-Stop center stationed an adjudicator at all times adjacent to the initial claims/intake desk for these on-the-spot decisions. This is convenient for claimants, who could readily obtain reemployment services while they at the center. This could be especially important to claimants who get an adverse decision and may have lost benefits.

Adjudicators in four of the eight states did provide information about reemployment services when the claimant asked about such services (ad hoc

*IV. UI and One-Stop Connections
for Claimant Services*

connections). However, all respondents agreed that such requests were infrequent. When asked by claimants, most adjudicators simply provided a telephone number and address of a nearby One-Stop center. When adjudication occurred at a One-Stop center, the adjudicator would refer the claimant to the intake desk or to a specific service if that was appropriate. For example, in Baltimore an adjudicator reported that she occasionally referred claimants to social services at the One-Stop center.

The only example of more intensive ad hoc connections came from an adjudicator in Hartford. If a claimant requested information about jobs, she responded by providing a quick informal assessment of the claimant's needs. She would then refer the claimant to services that she considered appropriate for that individual. She indicated that she often promoted the apprenticeship program, which she knew more about because her office was adjacent to the state apprenticeship program. If she had any extra time, she would briefly review the individual's job search strategy. This individual had been an ES representative for many years before becoming an adjudicator and felt comfortable in doing this extra work.

Hartford was the only site in which supervisors explicitly encouraged fact-finders to respond to ad hoc requests when they had time. In addition, fact-finders in that center—like all other center staff—were supposed to promote to “hot jobs” (job orders for which employers had immediate needs) and JTPA on-the-job training positions that the center was eager to fill.

The constraints on responding to claimants' requests for information about services from adjudication appeared similar to those reported at initial claims. All adjudicators reported that they were under severe time pressure to issue their determinations. This militated against spending time responding to a claimant's questions about reemployment services or other issues outside the required fact-finding and decision. Further, the quality of information offered to claimants at adjudication appeared to vary with the previous job experience of the staff member. Finally, adjudicators also varied in their willingness to help; some staff were temperamentally more sympathetic to claimants.

Although these efforts to connect claimants to reemployment services from adjudication were neither abundant nor strong, they may have been especially beneficial for claimants whose claims were denied and thus who either lost weeks of benefits or

received no benefits at all. These claimants may have been in particular need of assistance.

WPRS CONNECTIONS TO ONE-STOP SERVICES

Another important way that claimants are linked to One-Stop reemployment services is through Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services Systems (WPRS). WPRS systems identify claimants who are at risk of exhausting their UI benefits and refer those claimants to reemployment services early in their unemployment spell. Because all states are required to implement WPRS, it represents the only required mechanism to connect UI claimants to reemployment services.

Below we describe the ways that states and local sites implemented WPRS, including how they identified and selected WPRS claimants, what services they required, and how they enforced the requirement to participate in services. We conclude with an analysis of the factors that influenced local WPRS implementation.

Identification and Selection of WPRS Claimants

Seven of the eight states in the study used a statistical model to identify UI claimants at risk of exhausting their benefits; only Massachusetts used a characteristics screen. Indiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin used their model statewide, while Connecticut and Minnesota applied their models differently in different labor markets. All states profiled claimants soon after they received their first benefit check.

After identifying claimants at risk of exhausting their benefits, the next step was to select specific claimants to refer to services. All states gave local areas some flexibility in determining the number of claimants referred to their offices, so that they could match the number of WPRS claimants to the local capacity to serve them. In Massachusetts, the local areas gave the state the number of claimants that they could serve, and the state then selected specific claimants to refer to services. In all the other states, however, the state gave the local areas weekly lists of claimants and their profiling scores, and the local areas then selected the specific claimants to refer to services.

Two states established minimum "cutoff levels" for referring claimants. For example, Maryland indicated that claimants with probabilities of exhaustion below 40% should not be referred to services. Connecticut also established a minimum cutoff

*IV. UI and One-Stop Connections
for Claimant Services*

level, although it reported that some local areas with excess capacity did call in claimants with lower scores.

In contrast, Minnesota encouraged local areas to select all except those with very low scores because the number of claimants coming into One-Stop centers fell when the state shifted to telephone claims taking. As a result, some One-Stop centers in that state referred all non-job-attached claimants to WPRS services.

Local staff reported that they selected claimants beginning with those with the highest probability of exhaustion, as DOL intended. However, staff in Richmond also referred veterans to WPRS services, even when veterans had lower probabilities of exhaustion than did other claimants who were not referred to services.

After selecting claimants, sites differed in how they notified claimants about their need to participate in WPRS services. In five states, the state notified claimants. Most often claimants were sent letters, although Massachusetts called each WPRS claimant by telephone and North Carolina used its IVR voice-mail system to notify selected claimants. In almost all the sites where the state notified claimants, local staff and some claimants indicated that the information provided by the states was too threatening and, in some cases, insulting and patronizing. As a result, staff reported that some claimants came in "with an attitude" and resented being required to participate.

In two of the three sites where the local office notified claimants, however, local staff used a different approach—they stressed the benefits of participation. For example, Baltimore sent a letter that described the services and emphasized that attending WPRS services met the claimant's work-test requirement for that week. Richmond staff called each selected claimant and stressed that, in one staff member's words, "This is an opportunity for you to receive some valuable services."

WPRS Services

The legislation authorizing WPRS defines reemployment services as "job search assistance and job placement services, such as counseling, testing, providing occupational and labor market information, job search workshops, job clubs and referral to employment, and other similar services." DOL clarified that orientation was also a reemployment service.² DOL guidance further indicated that services "should be

² "Unemployment Insurance Program Requirements for the Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services systems," UI Program Letter 41-94, U.S. Department of Labor, 1994

tailored to claimants' individual reemployment needs" by developing an individualized service plan for each claimant.³

Three of the eight sites—Richmond, Baltimore, and Springfield—provided WPRS services that were very consistent with DOL guidance. Although these sites differed in their approach to providing services, each provided WPRS claimants with information about One-Stop services, developed meaningful and customized service plans, directly linked claimants to additional services, and followed up with claimants to check on their progress and assess their need for additional services. The WPRS services provided in each of these sites are described below.

In Richmond, the initial orientation was conducted individually, with the ES staff working one-on-one with each WPRS participant. To acquaint the claimant with One-Stop services, the counselor gave a tour of the resource room and showed the claimant how to use some of the services—such as accessing labor market information. The claimant then completed a self assessment form, which the counselor used to help the claimant set goals, determine what actions he or she needed to take to reach those goals, and determine the services required to address potential barriers. The counselor then followed up with each WPRS claimant every 30 to 90 days to assess his or her progress in carrying out the plan and in meeting the employment goal.

As part of our visit to Richmond, we observed a WPRS counseling session with a single mother who had a young child. The counselor reviewed the claimant's self-assessment form, and helped the claimant set a goal—to become a science teacher. Together they determined the claimant needed additional training and that she faced several barriers to participation in that training, including the need to care for a sick parent, the need for child care, and the need to support herself by working part-time while in school. After developing the plan, the counselor helped the claimant enroll for the classes she needed, arranged for an appointment with a potential part-time employer, and referred her to needed social services. The claimant felt that the process had been very helpful and that, when she registered for UI, she had not been aware of the "all the helpful services available" to her.

³ "Reemployment Services for Unemployment Insurance Claimants through State Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services Systems," Employment Service Program Letter No. 1-98, U.S. Department of Labor, 1998

IV. UI and One-Stop Connections for Claimant Services

Baltimore also had well-developed WPRS services. State staff developed the broad outlines of the WPRS workshop. In developing their approach, state staff tried to balance the need to serve a large number of claimants with the need to provide services sufficiently in-depth to make a difference. In Baltimore, WPRS services began with a 16-hour, 2-day workshop that oriented claimants to services and provided job search assistance. Participants were given information about One-Stop self-access, intensive, and training services; and about other social services available within the community. Job search assistance included instruction on effective job search strategies; a film on interviewing tips; and information on writing resumes, letters of application, follow-up letters. Participants' homework assignment at the end of the first day was to develop a draft resume, which counselors reviewed and participants revised in the second day. At the end of the workshop, each participant made an appointment to return to meet one-on-one with a counselor to develop a customized plan for services and an action plan. The counselor followed up with each participant five weeks later.

In Springfield, the well-developed WPRS design followed guidance from the state. Participants began by attending a 2 1/2-hour orientation, during which they were given a tour of the One-Stop center and received a "swipe card" that would give them access to services and track the services they used. At the end of the session, each participant met one-on-one with a counselor to critique his or her resume and develop a customized service plan, which had to include five additional services. The last service for all participants was a meeting with the counselor 6 weeks later, who reviewed the claimant's progress in carrying out the plan and provided additional assistance when needed.

Three other sites—Durham, Hartford, and Racine—provided a brief WPRS workshop that included some reemployment services, but the services were much less extensive than those described above. Further, these three sites either did not develop an individual service plan, or developed a rather pro forma plan after only a brief interview with the claimant.

For example, Durham conducted a brief WPRS orientation to services at which participants completed two questionnaires: one to identify claimants' background and career goals, and the other to assess their job seeking skills and strategies. While the other participants waited, each claimant met briefly with a counselor, who reviewed the questionnaires and helped the claimant develop a service plan. No additional WPRS services were required, although claimants were given the opportunity to attend several

workshops at the center. Because this site conducted ERP for all claimants, counselors reviewed WPRS participants' plan and their progress as part of the eligibility review process.

In Racine, WPRS claimants were required to attend a 2- to 3-hour orientation session, which covered the services available, a tour of the center, and a brief group discussion during which participants described their goals and the instructor suggested services that might be useful. At the end of the orientation, each participant briefly met with a counselor for a few minutes to develop a service plan. Although several service options were available, no additional services were required of WPRS claimants. Staff did not follow up with participants.

In Hartford, an ES staff member conducted a 3-hour workshop, which included some job search training. The main goals of this initial session were to inform claimants about the services available through the One-Stop center and to encourage them to enroll in at least one job search workshop. WPRS claimants did not develop individual service plans, however, and were not required to attend any other services. The workshop leader did, nonetheless, telephone each participant monthly to provide further help and recommend additional assistance when needed.

The remaining two sites—Austin and Minneapolis—only provided WPRS claimants with information about One-Stop services through a very brief orientation lasting 30 to 35 minutes. Although WPRS claimants could then choose to participate in several types of services, they were not required to participate in any services. Individual service plans were not developed as part of WPRS, and staff did not follow up with claimants. Both of these sites viewed the WPRS system as a method to recruit dislocated workers into their EDWAA program rather than to provide claimants with services directly.

Enforcing Participation Requirements

Because participation in WPRS services is a condition of UI receipt for WPRS claimants, all study states developed some method to track claimants' progress in services. All states used their ES systems (or integrated system in the case of Indiana) to record the services received by WPRS claimants.

Local areas varied widely, however, in the extent that they enforced the participation requirements. Two sites—Springfield and Baltimore—enforced both the requirements that claimants report to initial services and the requirement that they make

*IV. UI and One-Stop Connections
for Claimant Services*

satisfactory progress in planned services. In Springfield, claimants could be denied benefits if they did not attend the WPRS orientation. Further, the state developed an automated system to track whether claimants were making satisfactory progress in services. UI staff entered WPRS claimants' service plans into their MIS systems, and the One-Stop staff reported to UI about participants' services, which were tracked through its swipe-card system. After 6 weeks, claimants not participating in services required in their plan were referred for adjudication.

In Baltimore, claimants were given one opportunity to reschedule the initial workshop, but those who did not eventually participate were referred to UI for adjudication. Staff followed up with WPRS claimants after 5 weeks to check on their progress relative to their plans; claimants could be sanctioned if they did not participate in planned services.

Three other sites enforced the requirement to participate in initial services but not the requirement to participate in planned services. In Austin, Durham and Richmond, claimants were given a chance to reschedule the initial meeting or orientation, but then they were referred to adjudication if they did not attend. Although in two of these sites claimants developed service plans and counselors followed up with claimants in both sites, neither sanctioned claimants who did not participate in planned services.

One other site—Racine—did not develop service plans for WPRS claimants but did enforce the requirement to attend the initial workshop. Staff entered the names of those who did not show up for the scheduled workshop into the state MIS system, and an adjudicator then placed holds on their checks.

However, two other sites—Minneapolis, and Hartford—did not generally enforce even the requirement that WPRS claimants report to the orientation or initial workshop. These sites only occasionally referred a claimant to adjudication for not attending the initial service. The state of Minnesota indicated that they chose this policy because did not want to enforce participation requirements until they could offer better WPRS services through their One-Stop system.

Opinions about WPRS Services

Both claimants and staff expressed generally favorable opinions about the WPRS system and services, and made recommendations for improvements.

Claimants' Opinions

Claimants generally found the WPRS services helpful although some said that they at first resented the fact that they were required to come in for services. As one participant stated, "At first, I thought it was a hassle, but now I'm glad for the extra help." Even in sites where the main WPRS activity was an orientation and tour of the center, most claimants said that they appreciated "learning about all the free services."

Claimants made three recommendations for improving WPRS. First, several said that they wished they had known about the services sooner and recommended that claimants be called in earlier. As one claimant noted, by the time he was called in, "I had already figured out what I wanted to do." Second, some claimants felt that the letter they were sent was too threatening and should have focused on the services they could receive. One claimant also recommended that the letter provide more information about the "new look" of One-Stop center. Third, reflecting their satisfaction with WPRS services, several claimants recommended increasing the number of people referred to services.

Staff's Opinions

Staff generally approved of the WPRS approach. Most staff felt that early intervention benefited claimants, and that, as one staff stated, WPRS "brings in likely exhaustees early." Most also approved of the fact that claimants were required to participate. For example, one staff member said that the requirement to participate was "good for people in denial." Another said that even if people were resentful, WPRS was like "planting a seed in a reluctant heart."

Staff also felt that it would be better to refer claimants to services sooner. In fact, in Minneapolis, staff sent out a "voluntary letter" to all new claimants before the state notified those selected for WPRS so that claimants would know about services as soon as possible.

Staff in Minneapolis, however, expressed concern about the state's profiling model. Although the model identified that those with more education and stable work histories were more likely to exhaust benefits, staff felt that these claimants needed services less than did other claimants.

*IV. UI and One-Stop Connections
for Claimant Services*

Factors that Affected WPRS Implementation and Services

The sites in our sample varied widely in the comprehensiveness of WPRS services and in the extent that the requirements to participate were enforced. Both state and local factors seem to have led to these differences.

State leadership had a strong impact on WPRS implementation in some sites. In Springfield, the WPRS system was strongly influenced by the state's design of the orientation session and requirement that WPRS claimants participate in six mandatory services and by the state's rigorous enforcement procedures. Maryland state staff also developed the broad outlines of the WPRS workshop. In other sites, the state had less direct influence, but the state's reduced emphasis on the UI work search requirement seemed to be reflected in local implementation of the WPRS system. For example, as discussed in Chapter II, both Minnesota and Wisconsin place little emphasis on work search testing. The WPRS systems in the local sites in these states placed few requirements on WPRS participants, requiring few services and not strenuously enforcing participation requirements.

Local leadership was also reflected in the ways that sites implemented WPRS. For the most part, sites that tried to link UI claimants to reemployment services in other ways, such as through initial claims, also made more effort to link claimants through the WPRS system. For example, the Baltimore director felt that the site's local customers were better served by filing in-person claims and by mandatory ES registration. The extensive WPRS services provided in this site were consistent with this general approach. Similarly, the extensive WPRS services in Richmond were consistent with the active efforts to link claimants to One-Stop services at initial claims in that site.

CONNECTIONS FROM REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO UI

The above sections examined the extent that connections between UI and One-Stop systems improved UI claimants' access to reemployment services. But connections between UI and One-Stop need not be all in one direction. Strong connections can also improve job seekers' ability to obtain information about UI. In this section, therefore, we examine two types of connections from One-Stop systems to UI: connections that help individuals file their initial claims, and connections that help claimants obtain information about other UI issues.

Connections to Improve Knowledge of Where to File UI Claims

Any problems that complicate an unemployed worker's ability to file a claim are cause for concern. Unemployed workers seeking to file an initial claim have faced two challenges in recent years. First, the once familiar unemployment office may have changed into a One-Stop center, often with a different name and at a different physical location from the previous office. Second, some states removed the claims taking process from a physical location entirely and took initial claims only by telephone.

The extent that claimants were confused about where and how to file differed among the sites in our sample. Most in-person states reported that most unemployed workers did not have problems learning where to file claims even after the shift to One-Stop centers. Only Hartford staff reported that some customers were still going to its former local office over two years after the One-Stop center was established. Staff attributed this difficulty, however, to the fact that the local telephone company had not corrected its listing in the telephone directory despite repeated requests from One-Stop officials.

Respondents in other in-person sites reported that knowledge about where to file an initial claim was widespread. For example, a North Carolina UI official pointed out that everybody knows where the unemployment office is. Indeed, most of the claimant respondents in this study indicated that they knew where to file.⁴

Staff respondents in most telephone sites indicated some individuals were confused about where to file a claim, especially when telephone initial claims taking was first implemented. Several respondents indicated that people continued to come into the One-Stop center attempting to file claims. In all cases, individuals who mistakenly came into the center were able to use a telephone at the center to file their claims. In Texas, this procedure did not always work smoothly, however. When individuals came into a One-Stop center expecting to file, staff would direct them to the telephone to do so. However, in some cases UI would direct the claimant to another One-Stop center to register with the ES. The Austin center addressed this problem by registering all such claimants immediately, before they filed their claims.

⁴ The sample in this study is biased because all the claimant respondents and the people whom the One-Stop and UI staff have met had successfully navigated the challenges posed by changing names, locations, filing methods.

IV. UI and One-Stop Connections for Claimant Services

Several factors contributed to claimants experiencing little difficulty in finding out where to file. First, among our claimant respondents, the most common way that they found out about how to file was by word of mouth. Further, many of our respondents were repeat claimants who had knowledge of how to file based on their previous experience.

In addition, some states and local One-Stop centers took steps to increase knowledge about where and how to file an initial claim within their community. Several states launched marketing campaigns to address transitional issues related to changes in name and location or the shift to telephone claims taking. Hartford, however, took a different tack of working with community-based organizations to spread information about the One-Stop center's new location and services.

Respondents offered mixed opinion about the effectiveness of advertising. Most felt that their advertising had helped claimants learn where to file. The One-Stop director in Minneapolis, however, believed that his local campaign to advertise the new services—when UI was still located at the One-Stop center—was ineffective; others in Minneapolis felt that the advertising campaign needed to be larger.

Another way sites used to improve awareness of where and how to file was to involve employers. Three states reported that their UI laws require employer assistance in the initial claims process. Massachusetts required all employers to notify a laid off employee about how to file a claim. In Connecticut, eligibility determination was facilitated by the use of a state layoff notice form (known as the “pink slip”) which employers gave out to workers who were permanently separated. North Carolina required that employers themselves file initial claims for job-attached employees who have a definite recall date. Claimants in our focus groups supported the idea that involving employers would be very useful. Panels in three sites suggested that employers be required to provide information on how to file UI claims.

Another method of getting information about filing an initial claim was through EDWAA rapid response. UI and reemployment services staff participated jointly on rapid response teams to assist dislocated workers affected by plant closings and mass layoffs. (Neither One-Stop implementation nor the shift to telephone initial claims had substantial impacts on this activity.) In Maryland and Minnesota, UI staff generally took initial claims on-site. Hartford and Durham arranged for laid off workers to come into the One-Stop center for group initial claim sessions. The other sites made

presentations about filing UI claimants and then had claimants file through the normal processes.

Finally, all states offered some information over the Internet about how and where to file UI claims. Five states included frequently asked questions, including instructions on where and how to file a claim or glossaries of terms. Three states posted their claimant handbook on their websites.

Connections to Help Claimants Get Information about UI

Telephone Claims States

In telephone claims taking states, claimants using One-Stop reemployment services frequently needed to obtain information about the status of their claims, discuss a UI issue with appropriate UI staff, or get assistance in how to respond to UI requests for information as part of fact-finding or other UI processes. Indeed, some centers reported that a substantial amount of their walk-in traffic was solely for these purposes. For example, the Racine One-Stop center reported that staff continued to get questions about claims from customers years after Wisconsin shifted to telephone initial claims taking. One-Stop reemployment services staff uniformly believed that providing such information was useful to customers and consistent with their One-Stop mission.

Claimants' ability to obtain such information varied by the type of information requested and whether UI staff were present at the One-Stop center. Obtaining information about the status of a claim was relatively easy, according to One-Stop center staff. ES staff in all but one state had access to the UI data system and could access that system to inform claimants about the status of their claims. And even in the state without official access, ES staff were still able to query the UI system unofficially because of their previous experience with the UI system.

Finding out about adjudication or answering questions about less common provisions of the UI law was more difficult. Nonetheless, many ES staff understood the basic UI requirements and some could address the less complex inquiries. But this experience appeared likely to erode over time through the attrition of more experienced employees. In Minneapolis, for example, recently hired ES staff deferred to their more experienced colleagues in making UI inquiries because ES staff were no longer trained on the UI system and changes in the law.

In two telephone claims states, current or former UI staff were present at One-Stop centers who could address more complex inquiries. Massachusetts placed a UI

IV. UI and One-Stop Connections for Claimant Services

staff person in each One-Stop center to take initial claims. That person had full access to the UI system and could answer many technical questions. The Minneapolis One-Stop site did not have any current UI employees, but one former UI professional and two former paraprofessional technicians were now ES employees at the center. Because these individuals had substantial UI expertise, they could access the UI system to inform claimants about the status of their claim and answer general questions about the law.

When claims were in fact-finding, One-Stop staff did not try to answer questions directly and would try to telephone the adjudicator handling the case. One-Stop staff found this to be much more difficult than when the adjudicators were located in the One-Stop center.

In-Person Claims States

In most in-person claims states, all UI services were located at the One-Stop center. As a result, UI staff were present and could generally respond to all inquiries. The only exception was in North Carolina One-Stop centers that were housed in JTPA or community college facilities. These centers only had staff on site to take basic state claims; these staff might not be able to answer questions about adjudication, a WPRS issue, or a complex eligibility question. In those instances staff would need to reach the appropriate expert in the nearest One-Stop center housed in a SESA.

ASSESSMENT OF CONNECTIONS BETWEEN UI AND TYPES OF REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Although UI claimants potentially had access to the full range of reemployment and training services in One-Stop centers, the centers in our sample varied in the extent to which they emphasized linkages to particular types of services. In this section, we assess the how well UI claimants were connected to different types of One-Stop services and then examine the factors affecting those connections. We conclude with a discussion of services that staff and claimants considered particularly effective.

Connections to Core Services

Core services were clearly the most common services that UI claimants received. When claimants were referred to One-Stop reemployment services from UI—whether through direct, informational or ad hoc connections—they were generally linked to core services. Core services included self-access services—available through resource

rooms or over the Internet—workshops providing job search training and job search information, and job-matching systems.

Six of the eight sites—Hartford, Springfield, Minneapolis, Austin, Baltimore, and Racine—had policies that encouraged customers to use resource rooms, job-search workshops, or both. These sites considered core services to be both effective and efficient. For example, Hartford and Baltimore both reported that they tried to get as many people as possible into self-access services in order to free staff to work with those who needed more intensive help. Similarly, the Racine One-Stop director did not believe that he could handle the workload the center was currently serving without these core self-access resources.

Durham and Richmond were the only sites that did not explicitly encourage customers to begin with core services. Richmond informed customers about One-Stop services through its new common intake system and expected the customer to make the choice of which services he or she wanted. Durham only encouraged use of self-access services for more educated claimants and claimants in WPRS and ERP who were not finding jobs through ES job referrals.

Self-Access Services in Resource Rooms⁵

The One-Stop centers in our sample had made substantial investments in equipment and software to help job seekers assess their own skills and interests, understand the labor market, and search for jobs. All our sites had made available some printed materials and a wide variety of computer software tools. The sites also provided equipment such as telephones, fax machines, and printers to help job seekers prepare and send out resumes and cover letters. Several sites permitted and even encouraged claimants to immediately begin using the resource room without any instruction or training. However, two sites—Springfield and Racine—provided formal orientations to self-access services before customers started to use them; in Springfield this orientation was mandatory.

⁵ The summary of services below is based on the site visits for this study. For a fuller discussion of self-access services in the resource rooms, see Social Policy Research Associates, "An Evaluation of the Self-Service Approach in One-Stop Systems," March 1999.

*IV. UI and One-Stop Connections
for Claimant Services*

Job Search Workshops

Many UI claimants participated in job search workshops. Every site offered an introductory workshop. In Connecticut and Minnesota, the introductory workshop was developed by the state and could be customized by local One-Stop centers. Typically, center then gave customers a choice of attending more specialized workshops covering subjects such as preparing resumes, writing cover letters, interviewing, networking, and searching for jobs on the Internet. In some cases the workshops also covered ways to handle some problems related to job loss, such as financial management or family relationships. After completing the workshops, customers were encouraged to use the self-access services in the resource room in order to apply the job search techniques learned in the workshops.

Springfield provided some of the most extensive workshops, many of which targeted specific groups of workers. This center tailored its general One-Stop orientation to four different groups: white-collar dislocated workers, blue-collar dislocated workers, Spanish-speakers, and welfare recipients and other labor force entrants. Springfield also provided a job club for professionals, which was akin to a job search workshop with sessions that met over several weeks. Each session emphasized mutual support and networking at the conclusion of each session. In other workshops, the leader solicited input from participants and tried to tailor the content to the specific interests of those participants. This interactive style was used in the WPRS and UI orientations as well.

Job-Matching Systems

All states had developed some type of automated job-matching system. All states systems were connected to America's Job Bank and at least one to America's Talent Bank. Three states—Maryland, Minnesota, and Wisconsin—developed integrated job-matching systems that included assessment and career exploration tools and labor market information in addition to the job match system.

States' job-matching systems varied, however, in the amount of staff assistance needed. The Wisconsin system allowed complete self-service because the state did not suppress employer identity or contact information. As a result, customers could browse through job orders and apply directly to employers for jobs. Minnesota's system disclosed the employer's name but withheld contact information. Four other states' systems allowed customers to browse through job listings but suppressed all identifying information so that customers needed staff assistance to apply for jobs.

In contrast, in two sites—Baltimore and Durham—ES staff still worked directly with claimant customers and searched the system for a suitable match. Baltimore insisted that no initial claimant or other first-time ES registrant would leave the registration session without a job referral.

Remote Access Services

All states allowed claimants to access at least some core services by remote means. All states offered at least some services on the Internet, which could potentially be used by a nearly unlimited number of customers at very low cost. Connecticut and Maryland also set up terminals and kiosks in libraries and other heavily used public facilities.

All states in the study provided extensive labor market information and access to their job banks over the Internet. Maryland offered its integrated assessment/job matching system over the Internet, although the assessment component was far less extensive than that available at the center. None of sites offered services as comprehensive as those available at the One-Stop center, however, and no states indicated that remote access at this point could substitute for a personal visit.

Factors That Influenced Connections to Core Services

We identified a number of factors that encouraged sites to link claimants to core services. First, by encouraging claimants to use the self-access services, sites could serve more customers. For example, a Racine ES staff member noted that the steady reduction in ES funding had necessitated the reliance on self-access services; this staff member reported that one-on-one services, such as providing the traditional job referrals, were simply too costly in this budgetary environment.

Indeed, most One-Stop management and staff respondents indicated that if the number of claimant customers were to increase substantially (as a result of more claimants being referred or because of a recession), serving customers through self-access services and job search workshops would be the only way that they could respond effectively. These services required only small increases in staff or facilities to accommodate a surge in the number of claimants served.

Second, staff in several sites encouraged links to self-access services because these services were immediately available when claimants filed an in-person initial claim or first visited the One-Stop center. As a result, claimants could begin their job search immediately, which potentially shortened the duration of their unemployment.

*IV. UI and One-Stop Connections
for Claimant Services*

and reduced their receipt of benefits. To encourage claimants to get started with these services immediately, a number of sites located their resource rooms so that they were highly visible and accessible to individuals filing initial claims, as was discussed in Chapter III.

Finally, the emphasis on self-help inherent in many core services was consistent with some state UI systems' shift away from enforcement and toward voluntary use of reemployment services. Minnesota specifically indicated that it was less interested in trying to enforce work-search requirements on reluctant claimants than in the past. Wisconsin also had reduced its enforcement emphasis.

Despite the emphasis on self-access core service in most sites, however, we found widespread concern among staff that better-educated more-skilled claimants were far more able to take advantage of these services than their less-educated, lower-skilled counterparts. For example, the Austin One-Stop director noted that the self-service approach was more suitable for white-collar workers, and staff in Minneapolis and Baltimore commented on the difficulties that blue-collar workers had using these services.

In particular, staff reported that the automated self-access services available in most resource rooms were difficult to use for those with little experience using personal computers. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that many sites provided limited staff assistance in using these resources. For example, one resource room specialist indicated that if a job seeker were not familiar with a computer mouse, she was unlikely to be able to give them enough help to use the computerized services effectively. Similarly, although Richmond staff found that they needed to help two-thirds of their customers use the intake system computers, staff who worked in the resource room, like their counterparts in the other sites, indicated that they had little time to help to these customers use the self-access computer and software. However, a resource room specialist in one site indicated that she looked out for people who were floundering and gave them whatever help they needed.

Although job search workshops were more accessible to lower-skilled claimants, these workshops also emphasized self-help. One workshop leader rather bluntly noted that "I can't help those who cannot help themselves." Further, some sites reported that some lower-skilled workers seemed intimidated by the workshop, as described above. Springfield addressed this problem by offering separate sessions for professional and

blue-collar workers. The content was essentially the same, but staff believed that mutual support and learning were more effective where participants shared similar skill or educational levels.

In our focus groups, several less educated, lower skill claimants confirmed the difficulty that some blue-collar workers have with the core self-access services and job search workshops. These claimants expressed little interest in using the resource room or attending workshops. Several reported that their efforts in using the job-match computers had been completely fruitless. These respondents were disappointed that they did not get staff-assisted job referrals.

Connections to Staff-Assisted and Training Services

Staff-Assisted Job Referrals

Two sites—Baltimore and Durham—connected claimants, particularly low-skilled workers, to more intensive staff-assisted services. Baltimore developed its entire service strategy around a more traditional model to accommodate the less-skilled, less-educated customers that the center served. Thus, this center allowed claimants to file claims in person, required that those claimants register with the ES, and then provided a staff-assisted job referral to every new ES registrant.

Durham also focused its service strategy on staff-assisted services. Durham staff noted that the self-access services in the resource room were well suited to the needs of well-educated, highly-paid technology workers. But lower-skilled workers, they said, required more assistance. Thus in this site, ES staff worked one-on-one with claimants and provided job referrals in the traditional way. Durham also included these direct placement services in many of its workshops, including the WPRS workshop.

Connections to EDWAA and Trade Programs

EDWAA and the trade-related programs of TAA and NAFTA-TAA are the principal programs from which claimants can obtain training.

All sites referred claimants interested in training to EDWAA, and some sites linked claimants more directly to these services. As detailed above, three sites automatically determined eligibility for EDWAA when claimants filed their initial claim; several other sites included presentations by EDWAA staff in their WPRS orientations and several sites recruited many EDWAA participants from these orientations. Nearly all sites emphasized the training, rather than the basic readjustment services, available through EDWAA.

IV. UI and One-Stop Connections for Claimant Services

Four of the eight sites reported that they had few or no trade-related layoffs in their area and thus had little experience with the TAA and NAFTA-TAA programs. Among the sites with more experience, the way that UI claimants were connected to trade-related programs varied from layoff to layoff, depending on the timing of the certification of eligibility. For example, for layoffs certified as TAA-eligible while workers were still on the job, UI might go on the job site to explain the program; for layoffs certified after claimants had left work, claimants might be notified by mail.

All the sites with some trade programs coordinated those programs with EDWAA. Claimants were dual-enrolled in the two programs, with TAA or NAFTA-TAA funding training and EDWAA typically providing supportive services and case management services.

Opinions about Effective Services

As part of our focus group discussions, both staff and claimants were asked which services they thought were the most and least effective. Respondents were generally reluctant to comment on the least effective services, but were more easily able to identify which services were the most effective.

Claimants generally felt that the most effective services were those that provided them with a sense of support as well as specific job search skills. Staff tended to nominate services that made efficient use of their time, although front-line staff also felt that services that provided support were more effective. Overall, both staff and claimants frequently identified three services as most effective: job search workshops (including the WPRS orientation, which typically included at least some job search content), resource rooms, and staff-assisted job referrals, in that order.

The clear consensus among both claimants and staff was that job search workshops were the most effective service.⁶ Claimants liked both the content and the atmosphere of support provided in workshops. For example, in Minneapolis one claimant liked the way the workshop leaders wove together many different themes that she was experiencing in her job search and reported that the mutual support from her colleagues in the workshop was very helpful. In Durham, older workers, who believed

⁶ Our sample may be biased because most of the claimant focus groups were drawn from workshop participants. We also interviewed relatively more workshop leaders than other staff. Nevertheless, other staff also commonly voiced this opinion.

that they faced subtle age discrimination, found that they were able to get tips from their counterparts to overcome discriminatory practices. Another Durham job seeker mentioned how networking with fellow participants had contributed to his understanding of the labor market. Durham claimants also noted the strongly supportive atmosphere of the job club component of that site's two-week workshop.

Staff also rated these workshops highly. The Minneapolis One-Stop director confirmed that customer satisfaction surveys indicated that workshops were well-liked by customers. A workshop leader in Hartford indicated that the workshops provided just the right blend of individual attention and efficient use of staff time. Several Springfield staff identified their 2-day workshop as the most effective service they provided.

The services provided in resource rooms were the second highest rated services. Several claimants wished that they had known about the services in resource rooms earlier in their spell of unemployment. Staff also liked these services because they were efficient and encouraged customers to help themselves. For example, the counselor who worked in the Springfield resource room believed that the self-help strategy was basically sound. She felt that helping people to help themselves was a much more effective strategy in the long run and she liked the idea of being a facilitator rather than an advocate for job seekers.

ES staff-assisted job referrals were the third choice. As noted above, lower-skilled claimants particularly liked staff-assisted referrals. Staff also thought those referrals were effective. For example, a Baltimore ES staff member reported that when he gave a job seeker an immediate referral, he had provided that person with a tangible benefit that might result in an immediate placement. But even if it did not, a good quality referral would bring the job seeker back to the center where he or she could receive more assistance. This staff member also felt that a job referral provided a measure of support to people who had been unsuccessful in their job search efforts using the resource room.

Two sites provided services that captured the supportive elements of both the job search workshops and the staff-assisted job referrals by organizing their workshops around producing job leads. One of Baltimore's job search workshops was led by an ES job developer who made sure that everyone leaving the workshop had several good job leads. In Durham's job search workshops, staff improved on the referral by

*IV. UI and One-Stop Connections
for Claimant Services*

inviting employers who had job vacancies to come into the center to interview appropriate workshop participants.

CLAIMANTS' RESPONSES TO CONNECTIONS BETWEEN UI AND ONE-STOP

Customer Satisfaction with Taking of Initial Claims

Claimants generally gave high marks to the initial claims process. Customers did not have strong opinions about the responsiveness of claim takers and offered no clear trend. For example, one claimant felt that UI staff were brusque and uncaring, while another thought that the UI staff person knew so much about his case that he must have been assigned as a case manager for him.

Although claimants were generally satisfied with both in-person and telephone methods of taking initial claims, most respondents preferred filing by telephone because it was more convenient and private. Further, of those claimants who filed by telephone but had previous experience filing in person, most preferred the telephone. The favorable responses to telephone claims taking by many claimants in our focus groups were consistent with results of states' customer satisfaction surveys. States conducting such surveys all reported that customers overwhelmingly favored filing by telephone.

Several claimants in our focus groups, however, strongly preferred filing claims in person. These claimants were predominantly those who had separation or other issues that were adjudicated. One of these claimants said that she wanted to look at the claims-takers reaction to her claim as way to gauge her likelihood of success in prevailing on the claim. In addition, two claimants in Baltimore indicated that they wanted to come in personally to the office to get a name in case they had a problem. Several claimants would have liked a choice of how to file their claim.

Satisfaction with Connections to Reemployment Services

Customers were less satisfied with the extent that they were connected to reemployment services from UI. Regardless of the type of connections provided by the UI staff, claimants in many sites said that they needed more information about services, and they needed it earlier in their spells of unemployment.

Although some claimants wanted UI to provide information about One-Stop centers in general, most claimants wanted better information about the mix of services available at the centers. Several claimants felt that the description of services was not adequate and that some services were "glossed over." Two claimants in one site, for

example, said that they were not told about the resource room. Further, some claimants felt they did not get sufficient information about services from programs other than ES.

Although most affected customers did not have strong opinions about being required to register with ES, in Durham claimants did not like the two-step process where they first came in to register with ES and then had to come back a week later to file a claim (a requirement that has since been eliminated).

In contrast, a claimant in Minneapolis recognized that the work-search requirements had been eased at that site. She thought that this was both realistic and created an atmosphere of trust that would encourage effective job search by claimants.

Satisfaction with One-Stop Centers

Many claimants were very satisfied with the new One-Stop approach. Claimants frequently reported that One-Stop systems had more services than previous ES offices and that the centers were better organized. Examples of their comments include:

- In Springfield, one claimant was very pleased about the “holistic approach in the One-Stop center with so many services available.”
- In Austin, a claimant who had visited both the ES local office and the One-Stop center commented favorably on the One-Stop center, reporting that it made more information available and its staff were more helpful. Two other claimants at that site were very satisfied with the One-Stop center compared to the local office to which they were initially referred when they filed their telephone initial claim. Two additional claimants commented that the center was well organized and had a great deal of good information.
- In Baltimore, several claimants were pleasantly surprised that there were no lines at the One-Stop center.
- A repeat claimant in Minneapolis had been aware from reading a newspaper article of the change from the local office to the One-Stop center. He immediately came down to see if the services were any different. In his previous spell of unemployment, he had tried to browse the ES system, which was then on microfiche, and found that all the jobs had already been filled. This time he was pleasantly surprised at the usefulness of the resource room and the job search workshops.

Two customers, however, felt that One-Stop services were not appropriate for them. For example, a profiled salaried worker in one site was disappointed to see the poster in the One-Stop lobby advertising training for forklift drivers. He thought that

*IV. UI and One-Stop Connections
for Claimant Services*

this would not be the place for him. Claimants in another site felt that the ES job matching systems did not work well. For example, one claimant, a long-time employee of the insurance industry, had been referred to a job as a chef.

Claimants' Recommendations for Improving Connections to Reemployment Services

Although most claimants knew about where and how to file an initial claim, very few knew that UI was part of a One-Stop system that offered a wide variety of reemployment services. They offered several recommendations to improve the connection between UI and One-Stop systems.

Several claimants recommended informing claimants about reemployment services earlier in their unemployment spell. A common observation in the focus groups and from other claimant respondents was that they wished they had known about the services earlier in their spell of unemployment. Specific recommendations included:

- Calling claimants in for WPRS orientations sooner.
- Having employers distribute information about reemployment services and UI at the time of layoff.
- Providing more accurate information about reemployment services and UI during rapid response to plant closings.
- Advertising the One-Stop services in the media.
- Informing claimants about all the services available at the time claimants first come into the One-Stop center.

Claimants also recommended improving some One-Stop services. As noted above, a number of claimants recommended providing more staff-assisted job referrals. In addition, some claimants indicated that more staff assistance in the resource rooms would make it easier for them to use the computerized self-access services. They also recommended increasing the number of services provided in resource rooms and providing more equipment.

Some claimants also recommended making it easier for claimants to find out about their claims at the One-Stop center. The separation of the programs and the difficulty of obtaining complete and accurate information about their claims frustrated some claimants in sites taking telephone claims.

V. UI AND ONE-STOP CONNECTIONS FOR EMPLOYER SERVICES

Services provided to employers in the One-Stop system are significantly different from those delivered under the previous system. In many ways they reflect the goals of the One-Stop system—to provide a variety of services that employers need in a delivery system that can be characterized as efficient, professional, businesslike, and non-bureaucratic. To make certain that these services are focused on employers' needs, states and many local sites have included employers' input in the design of their services. The most significant change, however, is the establishment of employer service teams that promote the One-Stop and its expanded range of services. Exhibit V-1 summarizes the ways that each of the eight sites in our sample organized these teams and the types of employer services these teams provided.

An important challenge that One-Stop systems face is how to inform employers about the transformed One-Stop services. Although most sites in our sample had developed effective-marketing strategies and other mechanisms to communicate to job-seeker customers about the One-Stop services available, many found that communicating to employers about the new services and their benefits was more problematic. One potential strategy is to develop connections with the UI program and arrange for UI staff—especially auditors and adjudicators—to market One-Stop employer services when they contact employers about UI issues.

Conversely, employers frequently need information about the UI system. UI can also benefit from connections with the One-Stop system, for example, by arranging for One-Stop staff to provide employers with information about UI or by using One-Stop facilities to provide employer seminars that include UI issues.

In this section, we investigate the connections between UI and One-Stop in providing employer services in our study sites. Specifically, we examine (1) ways that One-Stop systems used UI tax auditors and other UI staff to market One-Stop services to employers, (2) ways that UI programs used One-Stop services and facilities to enhance UI employer services, (3) factors that affected these connections, and (4) employers' opinions about UI and One-Stop services and their suggestions for improvements.

Exhibit V-1
Summary of One-Stop
Employer Service Teams and Services Provided

Hartford, CT. In Hartford, a Business Services Unit (BSU) is the primary link with employers. Composed of Community Service representatives, who have strong connections with local Economic Development, the unit is responsible for employer-based services, including helping employers access job bank and job training programs to which employers can refer their employees. (Individual job orders, however, are not handled by this unit.) Staff assist employers who wish to recruit and screen applicants, on-site or at their facilities. The unit also handles a state-funded customized training and upgrading program that includes an apprenticeship program. When they meet with new employers, BSU staff discuss the range of One-Stop services such as job matching and OJT contracts. JTPA has also established a BSU, and the two teams collaborate to market to employers. The BSU, with input from company executives, has created a single fax-back system for urgent job orders. Employers provide regular feedback to One-Stop partners about services.

The unit also provides special attention to job orders that the employer needs to fill very quickly. They arrange, where appropriate, supportive services such as transportation. The unit did not provide UI information to new employers that it worked with. That was the responsibility of the UI tax auditor.

Richmond, IN. At the Richmond site, services are provided by an ES Employer Services Team, which includes an ES specialist and a DVOP/LVER. The on-site JTPA supervisor—employed by the JTPA contractor—works with the team, but markets fee-based training services for employers' incumbent workers. The state's Department of Workforce Development has begun to work with local One-Stop centers to establish on-site "Resource Rooms" for employers that will include videos and materials available to them.

Baltimore, MD. At this site, a Job Service Employer Group, which includes a DVOP specialist, markets services to employers. Other services include planning meetings, arranging for speakers for JSEC, and providing employers with information about qualified applicants. Employers may also conduct mass recruitment on-site and work with the employer services group to arrange for recruitment promotions on TV and radio.

Springfield, MA. In Springfield, the Employer Services Unit is composed of three Account Representatives who serve employers. Although these representatives have no specific duties in contacting job seekers, they do assist job seekers with applications when there is an overabundance of applicants in a particular occupation or industrial group. They also follow up on all job orders at least every 30 days or until the order is filled. The unit also provides special attention to job orders that employers need to fill very quickly.

Exhibit V-1 (Continued)
Summary of One-Stop
Employer Service Teams and Services Provided

Minneapolis, MD. In this site, an ES Account Representative conducts resume search service for employers. This service consists of bringing up job orders on the Jobnet system and screening resumes for applicants with skills appropriate to the employers' requirements. This process includes contacting the employer and explaining how the system can be used for recruiting. The final step is to contact applicants and encourage them to fax their resumes directly to an employer. The VETs staff also have good contacts with employers. Staff also provide LMI data to individual employers at their request. The center conducts GATB testing for employers who request such assessments for individual applicants.

Durham, NC. At the state level, North Carolina emphasizes strong connections with the employer community. JSEC committees work closely with One-Stop centers and the Chamber of Commerce groups assist with outreach to employers. The Durham site has an Employer Services Team composed of the One-Stop partners, including the JTPA coordinator. The Team meets regularly to share information and discuss the employers they have contacted, in order not to duplicate contacts. Employers frequently take applications at the center and participate in the 2-week job search workshop.

Austin, TX. Both of the Austin sites in Texas are attempting to improve their employer contacts. They are planning to form Employer Services Units—which will include ES, JTPA, and TANF staff—to assist in marketing and outreach to employers. At present services available for employers at no charge include: (1) recruitment and screening of job applicants; (2) on-site interviewing of job candidates; (3) outplacement assistance for down-sizing; and (4) information and referral for job training programs. Fee-based services are available that include: (1) customized assessment; (2) job profiling and task analysis, and (3) other human resources related services.

Racine, WI. At the state level, an Employer Services Bureau has been established within the Department of Workforce Excellence. The Bureau works directly with employer associations and individual employers, as well as supporting the Employer Service Units in the local sites. The Racine site has a well-organized Employer Services Unit composed of former employees from Economic Development, the Chamber of Commerce and other agencies. The goal of this unit is to promote services to employers, not placement or job-matching assistance. The unit has generated over 1,000 active employer accounts. Employer services include free skills training for skills in short supply, seminars, and workshops and business development assistance.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN UI AND ONE-STOP EMPLOYER SERVICES

Connections from UI to One-Stop Employer Services

Although none of the sites in this study included UI staff on their employer service teams, the states and local sites had made a number of connections between UI and the One Stop system, particularly when UI staff were located at the One-Stop center. This section investigates the extent that UI forged connections with the One-Stop services to provide more complete services to employers.

Connections from UI Field Tax Auditors to One-Stop Employer Services

At five of the sites, UI auditors were located at the One-Stop site. They were not formally a part of the One-Stop system; typically the local audit staff reported to a regional UI audit manager or the state's central office. In these sites, UI tax field staff made efforts to connect employers whom they contacted to One-Stop services, although their practices varied. In these sites, the proximity of the UI offices to One-Stop employer service team members both raised UI staff's awareness of the One-Stop services and made it easier to refer employers to One-Stop staff.

In two sites, auditors made substantial efforts to connect employers to One-Stop services. For example, in the Durham site, the three field tax auditors' offices were located in the center, near the UI claims-taking staff. All the auditors at this site gave employers brochures about One-Stop services and referred interested employers to staff at the center. These local procedures were supported by the state, which sent out information to new employers about their One-Stop centers when audit staff identified new employers. Generally, North Carolina worked closely with employers and had a strong focus on meeting employers' requirements.

The Durham field tax audit staff whom we interviewed indicated that, because he was a former ES employee and was familiar with those services, he did what he could to provide employers with information about the Durham One-Stop services. He also referred other types of UI staff to employers who raised questions about claims issues. To further facilitate his ability to provide employers with up-to-date information, he attended UI and ES staff meetings when he had the time.

In Minneapolis, UI field audit staff were housed in and were an integral part of the One-Stop center, despite the fact that the other UI functions had been shifted to a call center. Auditors were successful in attracting employers to presentations about

One-Stop programs at the One-Stop center. Auditors have sometimes taken the ES manager along to their meetings with employers to discuss reemployment services.

In two other sites where the auditors were located at or near One-Stop centers—Richmond and Baltimore—the field tax audit staff made some efforts to connect employers to One-Stop services. Although their efforts were ad hoc, they did try to provide information when employers asked questions. However, in both cases, the state officials did not encourage auditors to provide such information because they were concerned that auditors did not have the time to do so.

For example, in Richmond, Indiana, the field auditor's location at the One-Stop center facilitated connections. Although the state's "Unemployment Insurance Employers' Desk Guide" did not mention reemployment services, the Richmond UI manager provided the auditor with brochures describing local One-Stop services to give to employers.

Finally, in Hartford, the fifth site where auditors were located at the One-Stop center, auditors did not systematically connect employers to One-Stop services. However, they were considered to be full-service representatives of the SESA and thus believed they were obligated to assist employers interested in placing job orders, for example by getting employers copies of the proper forms.

In the three sites where the auditors were not located in One-Stop centers, however, the auditors did not attempt to connect employers to One-Stop services, even informally.

Connections from UI Adjudication Staff to One-Stop Employer Services

Another way states market One-Stop employer services is through on-site adjudicators, particularly when they are located on-site at the One-Stop. In three sites, UI adjudicators were particularly successful in connecting employers to One-Stop services. For example, at the Baltimore office, adjudicators handed off employer inquiries to employer services team members. At the Richmond site, the adjudicator routinely asked employers whether they were interested in having more information about One-Stop services; if they were, she immediately passed this information on to ES staff, whose offices were located close to hers. Adjudicators who talked with employers about a separation also attempted to ascertain whether the employer would

V. UI and One-Stop Employer Service Connections

hire another employee; if so, they immediately referred the employer to an ES employee.

In Minneapolis, when the UI adjudication staff met with employers at the employer's offices, they left packets of information that describe One-Stop employer services. When employers came to the office for an appeal hearing, they were encouraged to use the One-Stop resource room to access labor market information on the Internet. At this site, the UI staff participated in the One-Stop's Workforce Center Advisory Committee, the former JSEC.

On the other hand, in the states that established call centers that were completely separate from the One-Stop centers, adjudicators were less likely to assist employers who wanted information about placing job orders through the One-Stop or ES offices. As we discuss below, time constraints and the lack of information about local One-Stop services prohibited most call center staff from providing One-Stop information to employers.

Other Connections from UI to One-Stop Employer Services

In our site visits, we found three additional ways that UI connected employers to One-Stop: through tax seminars, the quality control process, and written information. For example, in Richmond, employer seminars on UI taxation were used to market other ES and JTPA-related services. Because these UI seminars were located at the One-Stop site, employers were then given a tour of the facility. In Wisconsin, the Quality Control Manager attempted to help employers get the answers they need about One-Stop services. Finally, in some sites, such as Baltimore, the employers' UI handbook, which was distributed to all employers, included information about One-Stop employer services.

Connections from One-Stop to UI Information for Employers

Connections with One-Stop employer services can also benefit UI. Through these connections, One-Stop staff can provide UI information directly or coordinate with UI to include UI information in One-Stop activities involving employers. Sites used three methods to make these connections.

First, in many cases, One-Stop employer services teams or ES account representatives provided employers with UI information. When these employer services teams were marketing One-Stop services to employers, they also provided

some information to employers about UI tax-related information and UI services. In some cases, these connections were a systematic part of the One-Stop team's services. In other cases, connections were more informal, and One-Stop staff only provides UI information in response to questions raised by employers—most often about UI laws and regulations, and in a few instances, about specific adjudication decisions. Although One-Stop employer team staff attempted to answer the simpler questions, they referred employers with more complex questions to a UI staff person.

Second, several sites—among them Springfield, Racine, Baltimore, and Durham—regularly held workshops and seminars for employers that included information on UI issues, usually provided by UI staff. In some cases, seminars that were devoted entirely to UI issues were held at the One-Stop center. For example, an employer in the Durham area indicated that the JSEC had formerly held sessions about UI tax laws and regulations, which had been very useful to employers. Racine provided employer seminars on UI tax issues, and the Maryland state office of UI held employer feedback sessions when new UI initiatives were being proposed.

Third, EDWAA rapid response and Trade Adjustment Assistance teams from One-Stop centers often included UI staff and provided UI information. These teams—usually composed of JTPA, ES, and UI employees—often visited plant sites experiencing major layoffs to provide information about One-Stop and UI services. ES and JTPA staff who participated in these employer informational visits with UI staff indicated that these sessions helped them gain a better understanding of the other agency's roles.

Examples of ways that sites used these approaches include the following.

- At the Hartford site, the One-Stop Business Services Unit held employer seminars that include descriptions of UI services and the benefits of attending adjudication hearings. Staff in this unit were trained to answer basic UI questions, although they responded to employers' requests only if asked. The unit chief indicated that employer packets do not currently contain UI information, but this information will be added in the future.
- In Austin, UI and ES worked together to serve employers. For example, in 1998 the Workforce Development Board sponsored a one-day information seminar for 1,000 employers where ES and UI staff talked about their respective services. These staff indicated that ES and UI also work well together at the state level.

V. *UI and One-Stop Employer Service Connections*

- In Durham, the community college, a One-Stop partner, administered a new and expanded industry-retention program, which will advise employers about the UI program.

Factors that Affected Connections between UI and One-Stop Employer Services

A number of factors at both the state and local site level affected the linkages between the UI program and employer services.

Time Constraints. Respondents at all levels, from the state UI division to local staff, indicated that a major constraint in developing One-Stop linkages was that UI staff—including field tax auditors and staff at the local site—did not have the time to discuss ES and other reemployment services with employers. Three states specifically indicated that their UI staff did not have the time or resources to market ES services, particularly when staff are conducting an audit. For example, one state staff commented, “We do not pay our field auditors to market ES programs, that’s not their job.” Similarly, field auditors in some states felt pressure to “keep their audit numbers up” and to not discuss “extraneous” subjects. However, as discussed above, at several sites field auditors were willing to take the time to pass on information to employers—particularly those new to the area—about the One-Stop system.

UI State-Level Attitudes. Some of the state UI divisions discouraged UI field audit and adjudication staff from providing specific information about One-Stop and ES services, indicating that marketing One-Stop services must be done by the ES or designated One-Stop staff. Other states encouraged UI staff not to provide assistance routinely, but only answer questions when asked by employers. In contrast, a few states actively encouraged their audit and adjudication staff to work with the One-Stop centers in which they were housed.

Concern about the “appropriateness” of linkages was a term often used by UI respondents. They felt that UI and ES were dealing with separate issues—benefits and UI claims versus hiring and applications—and that the two should not be mixed. (It should also be emphasized that the UI was not always the source of a “separatist” attitude.) However, employers did not always agree with this sentiment: one employer indicated that she thought it was a good idea for auditors to cross-market services and that “employers are smart enough to keep the two issues separate.”

Attitude of One-Stop Management. A few One-Stop sites indicated that they prefer to “control” their marketing efforts to employers, including the information that

is provided and how it is provided. For example, the Springfield site manager indicated that they are currently incapable of handling more customers and, therefore, did not want their services to be marketed by external entities.

Specialized Employer Staff and Contractors. Often large employers have either separated their accounting offices from human resource offices or hired outside accounting firms to handle all UI and tax related issues. Similarly, some employers that we talked with hired outside agents to handle their UI adjudications. In these situations, cross-marketing by UI field tax auditors or adjudication staff was not possible because they were not in contact with the employer staff that would use One-Stop services. For example, the field tax auditor located at the Springfield site indicated that half of his accounts were serviced by “in-house” accountants or external contract accountants who had no responsibility for recruitment and thus no interest in One-Stop employer services.

Location of UI Staff. Sites where UI staff were located at the One-Stop center tended to have better employer-service connections. For example, the One-Stop manager at the Hartford site indicated that a positive change resulted from co-location of UI staff at the One-Stop center: it has fostered more interactions between UI and ES staff, and, as a side effect, it has provided more space for employers. Conversely, the off-site location of audit staff appeared to reduce such connections.

EMPLOYERS’ OPINIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Employers’ Assessment of Current Connections and Services

We asked employers a number of questions about their perceptions of the current connections between the various programs and the services they have received, especially connections with the UI system. Their perceptions are described below.

Impressions of Audit and Adjudication Staff. By and large, employers had positive impressions of the UI audit and adjudication staff. Most employers reported that UI audit staff were fair and that their judgments, as well as those of the adjudicators, executed the law fairly. Employers who participated in telephone hearings as well as those who attended in-person hearings held these favorable impressions. In addition, some respondents indicated that the auditors had been helpful—for example, explaining how they could improve their record keeping—and not merely concerned with compliance issues.

V. UI and One-Stop Employer Service Connections

Employers' favorable impression of UI may also be a result of state efforts. For example, in Maryland, the UI Director of the Contributions Division was concerned that employers often saw them as "punitive," even in random audit situations, so he tried to offset that impression by giving regular seminars for employers on how they could institute effective cost control measures. He also worked with the state UI director to convene employer committees to get employer feedback on new initiatives.

Some UI staff, however, expressed concern that, because employers might view UI auditors and adjudication staff negatively, it might not be useful to have them market One-Stop services. For example, in Wisconsin, the state UI division felt that it would be a mistake to cross-market One-Stop services through UI because employers were sometimes upset with the outcome of an adjudication, which would "taint" their opinion about the One-Stop services.

Impressions of One-Stop Centers. Although some employer respondents stated that the transformed One-Stop system was useful to them, just as many indicated that it had little impact on them, since what they wanted were applicants that were appropriate to their needs. One respondent, who had used ES for recruitment in the past, summed it up by saying, "Why fix something that isn't broken?"

Almost all of the employer respondents who were selected for our sample because they had recently undergone a tax audit were unfamiliar with the new One-Stop system. They would have welcomed more information about One-Stop, such as what it is and how it differs and is more useful than the previous systems. Respondents that were members of local Job Service Employer Committees (JSECs) were more knowledgeable about the One-Stop and were more likely to have favorable comments about One-Stop services.

Nonetheless, all the employers in our sample who visited the One-Stop were pleased and impressed with the "look and feel" of the building, and felt that staff were helpful, professional, and as one employer put it, "non-bureaucratic in their approach."

Employers' Recommendations for Improving Employer Services and Connections

Although several employer respondents indicated that they had seen a marked improvement in the provision of services because of the change to the One-Stop system, many stated that the services they most required were still not at the level that they required. These respondents appeared to be in agreement on the services that

would be most useful to them. Recommendations for the services that these employers most needed, in order of priority, were the following.

Provide More Assistance in Recruiting and Screening Skilled Job Seekers.

Many employers stated that the most valuable service that the One-Stop system could provide was access to qualified job seekers, particularly during this time of low unemployment. Employers from focus groups at several sites mentioned, in particular, their need for help finding skilled craftsmen, who were available from the One-Stop system.

One-Stop staff were also concerned that they were not providing employers with enough assistance in recruiting. For example, the Minneapolis staff indicated that “this would be a great time to build relationships with employers if we had the time, but with only 5 Wagner-Peyser staff to serve 5,000 employers in the city, it is too big a task to try.” And this sentiment was echoed by Employer Services Team members in Richmond, who were hoping that the new computerized intake system would free up their time to market more directly to employers. Connecticut attempted to address this problem by creating a centralized job order system for statewide employers already using the system. This freed local staff to work more closely with local employers.

Provide “Account Representatives.” Even as the sites were moving to more self-directed services for employers, most employer respondents indicated they were reluctant to use self-services. Instead, they preferred to have individualized attention from a staff person who understood their personnel requirements, who reviewed candidates’ skills and attributes for them, and who maintained a list of referrals.

Provide More UI Tax Information. As discussed above, employers often asked tax-related questions of One-Stop employer services team members. In our focus groups, employers indicated that they wanted more information about UI tax-related issues, and several said they would like to have such information provided in seminar or workshop. Although state workforce development web sites often contained a vast amount of information on UI tax laws and regulations, most employer respondents indicated that they did not use the Internet and thus that the on-line information was not helpful.

Provide More Information about One-Stop. Many employers—especially those who had no previous contact with the One-Stop system—recommended providing

V. UI and One-Stop Employer Service Connections

employers with more information about One-Stop, including information about both employer and individual services. Specific recommendations included the following:

- *Provide information about the transformed One-Stop system.*
Employers wanted information about who the partners were, how One-Stop differed from the previous system, what its advantages were over the previous system, how it attracted high-quality applicants and professionals, how employers could access applicants, and how to contact the One-Stop by telephone. Employers in several sites were particularly interested in learning more about the labor market information available in One-Stop centers.
- *Send out information on a regular basis.* Employers felt that providing information once was not enough, particularly since the system is still evolving. Employers recommended sending information quarterly, perhaps through a newsletter, that described continuing changes in the evolving One-Stop system.
- *Brochures and information about One-Stop services for workers.* Of particular interest to a number of employers was information about rapid response assistance and other services they could provide to individuals whom they were terminating. They also wanted brochures that they could hand to an employee, to say, in effect, "We are letting you go, but here is a place to get some help."
- *Provide One-Stop information in the UI handbooks for employers.* Employers recommended that providing information about employer services through One-Stop be included in the UI employer handbook. Several states already did this, most commonly including a page devoted to One-Stop, particularly using the One-Stop to place job orders. Even Maryland, where state UI leadership did not advocate cross-marketing by UI field tax auditors, the UI employer handbook included a one-page description of ES services.
- *Clarify the title or name of the new system.* At several sites, employers recommended clarifying the name of the One-Stop center (e.g., was it the Employment Service, Job Service, Unemployment Office?). Sites also recognized this as a problem: a few sites were so new that there was no signage in the front of the building, and the center was not correctly listed with the telephone company.

Employers' Recommendations for Improving Claimant Services

In addition to discussing the services provided directly to employers, several employers recommended improvements in individual claimant services that would also benefit employers.

Provide Services Attractive to High-Quality Job Applicants. Employers strongly recommended that One-Stop systems develop services that attract more high-quality job applicants. About two-thirds of the employer respondents indicated that they still did not receive applicants that have the right skills, even in the transformed One-Stop system. In sites where UI claimants were required to register with the ES, employers expressed concern that the One-Stop was “recycling” the same people—those who have difficulty holding a job. They indicated that this problem was further exacerbated by the “work first” emphasis of One-Stop programs for welfare recipients under the TANF program.

As a result, the employers reported that they tended to use a variety of ways to get the applicants they need, with the One-Stop system being only one such method. Some indicated that they thought that job seekers with good skills were not using the One-Stop system to find jobs.

Most employers were not aware of the self-directed participant services—a major feature of most One-Stops—which tend to attract more highly qualified, technical, and professional job seekers into One-Stop centers.

Provide More Support to Low-Income Job Seekers. If the One-Stop system wants employers to hire lower skilled individuals, such as those in the TANF work-first programs, employers recommended that One-Stop provide low-skilled workers with more supportive services, such as child care and transportation assistance.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has examined connections between the UI and One-Stop systems, both organizational connections and connections that link claimants and employers to services. In this chapter, we provide recommendations for improving the connection between UI and One-Stop systems, on the basis of key findings from the evaluation.

IMPROVING CONNECTIONS AT INITIAL CLAIM

- 1. States taking initial claims by telephone should design alternative ways to connect claimants to reemployment services.**

Within our study, states that took claims by telephone had few mechanisms to connect One-Stop services. Texas was the exception; it required claimants to register with ES, which directly connected claimants to services, and informed claimants about the nearest One-Stop center as part of the claims taking process.

The remaining telephone states in our study, however, made few systematic efforts to connect claimants. UI claims takers always provided information about One-Stop services when claimants asked for help or expressed anxiety about their job loss. Such connections, however, were very infrequent. The only way that claimants were systematically informed about services, however, was through written descriptions of services that were either included in the claimant handbook or mailed separately to new claimants.

These results for the telephone states in our study raise concerns because the momentum towards telephone initial claims appears very strong. As noted in chapter I, 26 states have now adopted telephone initial claims, of which 11 have implemented telephone systems statewide. Many other jurisdictions have reported that they were at least discussing the concept.

It should be noted, however, that some telephone claims states in our sample generally did not have strong connections to reemployment services before they changed claims-taking methods. It remains to be seen how states that have a stronger tradition and policy interest in directly linking customers to services will adapt their approaches when they shift to telephone initial claims.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

In any case, we strongly recommend that states taking telephone claims consider alternative ways to connect claimants to services at initial claim. Although it may be more difficult to directly connect claimants to services in telephone states, systematically providing more information to claimants about One-Stop services appears feasible. The following are examples of mechanisms that states could use to connect claimants to services through the telephone claims process:

- At a minimum, call center staff could provide all non-attached claimants with the address and telephone number of the nearest One-Stop center. Texas routinely provided this information by accessing a database of addresses keyed to the claimant's zip code.
- To strengthen the connection, call centers could maintain a database of services available in each One-Stop center and routinely inform claimants about these services.
- To strengthen the connection further, call centers could take advantage of networked calendar technology to make appointments for intake, orientation, or job search workshops at One-Stop centers for claimants interested in those services.
- An alternative to having call center staff provide One-Stop information would be to take advantage of telecommunications links. A UI call center might shift the telephone call to a One-Stop center that could then provide information to new claimants about services. This would reduce training and simplify cost allocation between UI and reemployment services, since only the costs of the telecommunications equipment and service would need to be shared.

Finally, states taking initial claims by telephone could require claimants to go to the One-Stop centers to register with ES, as was done in Texas.

2. In-person claims states should take full advantage of the opportunity to connect claimants to services while claimants are at the center.

In-person claims states have an opportunity to connect claimants to One-Stop reemployment services at a time when the unemployed worker is already on site. We strongly recommend these states assess their current connections and take steps to ensure they take maximum advantage of this opportunity.

The in-person sites in our study provided some examples of ways to connect claimants to reemployment services that other states may wish to adopt. Approaches that study states used included:

- **Integrating intake.** Integrating intake for all programs is a potentially convenient and cost-effective way for UI to connect claimants to multiple services. Under the system developed by Indiana, for example, all unemployed workers use an integrated intake system to enter information needed to file UI claims, register with the ES, and determine whether they are eligible for categorical programs. As a result, new claimants can be referred immediately to appropriate reemployment services.
 - **Coordinating intake.** A second approach that does not require an integrated, automated system is to coordinate UI claims taking with eligibility determination and intake into reemployment services. For example, Hartford integrated their ES and UI staff so that a single intake worker took an initial an UI claim and conducted intake into the major programs for unemployed workers.
 - **Developing staff-assisted linkages.** In some One-Stop centers, the UI staff informally assessed claimants' needs and directly referred them to other services. In other sites, UI staff provided orientations or tours of the One-Stop center's services.
3. **All states should provide claimants with improved written information about reemployment services.**

Many claimants told us they wished they had heard about the reemployment services sooner and had learned about all the services available at One-Stop centers. All states provide some information already, but in some cases, the information is hard to find and not detailed nor tailored to specific One-Stop centers or local sites. We recommend, therefore, states improve the information about One-Stop services in the claimant handbook, ideally tailoring the information to the services offered by centers located near the claimant. The information could be included in a separate section. Alternatively, this information could be provided in a separate mailing, an approach some states felt placed a greater focus on reemployment services.

IMPROVING CONNECTIONS AFTER INITIAL CLAIMS

4. **States and local areas should systematically provide information about reemployment services at adjudication.**

Strengthening connections at the time of adjudication, by providing information about reemployment services and referrals to those services, may be especially beneficial for unemployed workers whose claims are denied, and these workers lose weeks of benefits or receive no benefits at all.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

5. All States should consider administering an Eligibility Review Program (ERP).

An ERP can be especially important because it represents an opportunity to directly connect claimants to services after the early phase of their unemployment. The three study states that continued to use an ERP found it effective in meeting both the compliance and reemployment goals of the program.

6. States should provide information and access to reemployment services as part of their continued claims process.

The regular contact with claimants through the continued claims process offers an important opportunity to remind claimants about reemployment services and to provide some direct connections to services. Two approaches used by study sites included:

- Allowing claimants to access the job match system from the continued claims IVR system.
- Mailing information about reemployment services to claimants with their benefit checks.

IMPROVING CONNECTIONS THROUGH WPRS

7. States should consider referring more claimants to WPRS services.

WPRS is the only required link to services in many states. We recommend that states consider referring more claimants to WPRS services, especially states that do not have mandatory ES registration or other ways to directly connect claimants to services.

8. States and local areas should require more extensive, customized services for WPRS claimants.

The required WPRS services in our study sites ranged from a brief orientation and tour of the One-Stop center that lasted 30 minutes to an extensive 16-hour workshop that helped claimants develop job search skills and obtain information about jobs available in the area. We strongly recommend sites directly link WPRS claimants to extensive services rather than simply provide information about services. Further, as encouraged by DOL, we recommend sites help WPRS claimants develop individual plans for the services they need to meet their reemployment goals.

9. States should more strenuously enforce the requirement to participate in WPRS services.

Few study sites enforced the requirement that claimants make satisfactory progress in services, and some did not routinely enforce the requirement to attend the initial orientation. But even claimants who resented being required to participate reported they found WPRS services helpful. We recommend, therefore, states enforce the participation requirements.

IMPROVING REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO WHICH CLAIMANTS ARE LINKED

10. One-Stop systems need to ensure that UI claimants have access to appropriate services.

Claimants who received One-Stop services generally were quite satisfied with those services. However, both staff and claimants reported that lower-skill, less-educated claimants had difficulty using the computerized and other self-access services and participated less actively in job search workshops. One-Stop systems should consider ways to increase lower-skilled claimants' access to services. Some sites in our study addressed this problem in the following ways:

- Providing sufficient staff to help customers learn how to use self-access services that require computer skills.
- Providing job search workshops targeted to specific groups of workers to encourage participation by the more reticent claimants.
- Providing more staff-assisted job matching for claimants who need this service.

IMPROVING CONNECTIONS FROM ONE-STOP TO UI SYSTEMS

11. States and local areas should ensure that claimants have adequate information about how and where to file UI claims.

Although most claimants did not have trouble learning how and where to file a UI claim, staff and claimant respondents had suggestions for improving claimants' awareness. First, some sites conducted advertising campaigns to inform residents about the new One-Stop center and to make them aware of how to file a claim, either in person or by telephone. Second, other states involved employers by having them hand out brochures about how to file a UI claim and obtain reemployment services to individuals they were laying off. We recommend other states and local areas consider

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

these approaches as well. Enhancing employer-provided information should be in addition to the workplace posters that all states require.

12. Telephone claims-taking states should ensure that One-Stop staff have better access to UI information for claimant customers.

Many One-Stop staff reported claimants frequently asked them questions about their claims. In some sites, ES staff can access the UI database to provide some information, but One-Stop staff still had difficulty connecting directly to UI staff at the call centers to obtain answers to customers' other questions. We recommend, therefore, call centers establish specific telephone or e-mail mechanisms to permit One-Stop staff to reach appropriate UI staff for answers to more complex claims inquiries.

IMPROVING CONNECTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

13. One-Stop systems should use UI staff and materials to promote One-Stop services to employers.

Employers had a very favorable impression of UI audit and adjudication staff with whom they dealt. They considered UI auditors and adjudicators to be fair and professional, despite the sometimes adversarial nature of these activities. This finding suggests that these UI staff could effectively promote other One-Stop services. Further, states should consider including information in the UI employer handbook about One-Stop services for employers, such as how to submit a job order.

14. One-Stop staff marketing to employers should include information about UI.

States should consider including information about UI in the materials that One-Stop staff use to market One-Stop services to employers. Further, although not done by any of our study sites, One-Stop centers may wish to consider including some UI staff on their employer-service teams.

IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR SERVICE CONNECTIONS

15. To facilitate linkages, states and local areas should ensure that both One-Stop and UI staff are knowledgeable about each other's programs.

Staff reported that both formal training and informal sharing of information facilitated their ability to connect claimants to appropriate services. The need for formal training to share information was particularly acute in telephone claims sites. Because UI and One-Stop staff in these states were usually located in separate facilities,

staff did not have the advantage of learning about each other's programs informally that in-person claims sites enjoyed.

16. Telephone claims states should take steps to improve the working environment in call centers.

Within our study, the call center staff in telephone claims states reported that their working conditions involved pressure, anxiety, and loss of privacy, which they attributed to both the telecommunications technology and adherence to production standards. The predominant view among claims takers in call centers was that they worked on a production line with a factory atmosphere.

We recommend, therefore, that UI administrators consider steps to improve the general working environment within call centers.



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

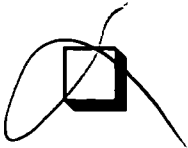


NOTICE

Reproduction Basis



This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.



This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").

EFF-089 (3/2000)