



Serving the Long-term Unemployed

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Service-delivery model

To better meet customer needs and ensure that people receive the services they need to return to work as quickly as possible, a new service-delivery model was implemented in WorkSource offices across the state about two years ago. Under this model, WorkSource customers can receive an assessment to identify each individual's skills and determine his or her best options for finding meaningful employment, job-search preparation, job and training referrals, connection to other employment and training resources, and information about other community resources.

Statewide investments

Over the past two years, the agency has invested in additional staff and new services to help unemployment insurance claimants return to work faster and reduce their likelihood of exhausting benefits. Staff investments include:

- 36 positions dedicated to providing re-employment services to unemployment-insurance claimants
- 35 business services staff specifically focused on pursuing job openings that match the skills of unemployed workers in their respective areas
- 33 career broker positions to provide long-term support for job seekers who do not qualify for special programs

The Employment Security Department has also invested \$350,000 to offer unlimited access to Microsoft's e-Learning library for WorkSource customers to build their computer skills and become more competitive in the job market. Additionally, WorkSource has ten locations where people can take free exams to earn Microsoft Office Specialist certification. The certification will confirm to employers that they've achieved a high proficiency in the specified program, and that they're ready to apply those new skills.

Local Strategies

Recognizing that different areas around the state have unique needs and the availability of local resources varies, the department elected to provide flexibility for local offices to meet the needs of their customers. Local offices have implemented new, focused strategies. For example:

- WorkSource teams across Washington are reaching out directly to job seekers who are approaching exhaustion of their unemployment insurance to ensure that they are aware of the services available through WorkSource (includes mail, email and phone contacts).
- Many claimants receiving unemployment insurance through federal extensions (EUC) are being invited to attend new, targeted orientations at their local WorkSource office. The orientations are intended to motivate the job seeker and to explain employment services available to them. They also focus on overcoming barriers many long-term unemployed claimants face, such as depression, loss of confidence or the need to access community resources to mitigate their financial needs.
- New workshops and work groups that focus on the realities of today's economy and the needs of long-term unemployed job seekers are in use or are being developed. Several are highlighted:

- **Living Through Job Loss** – WorkSource Kitsap County offers a detailed workshop to assist job seekers in understanding their feelings of grief and depression during a period of unemployment and how to start over.
- **Surviving the Recession** – This workshop at WorkSource Skagit offers tips on how to avoid evictions and utility disconnects, connects job seekers to services in the county and offers the help needed to survive the recession.
- **Resource Fairs** – WorkSource teams in Eastern Washington are planning several Resource Fairs to be held for job seekers in their local communities. The fairs will highlight community resources available to job seekers and their families who have run out of unemployment benefits or may soon run out.
- Local networking clubs or groups are valuable ways for job seekers to connect with employers and fellow job seekers. For example:
 - **Employment Opportunities Network** – WorkSource Lewis County in Chehalis offers a unique, ongoing opportunity for job seekers to network with each other. The job club focuses on the art of networking, portfolio building and various job search strategies.
 - **Meet the Employers!** – Spokane County WorkSource offers this unique opportunity to job seekers, allowing them to meet with a panel of local employers to learn about current and future employment opportunities. The local employers are available to answer job seekers' questions about resumes and interview techniques.

Community Response

Local workforce development councils across the state have taken a lead role in raising awareness about the needs of the long-term unemployed and rallying resources in their areas. As members of these councils, Employment Security's area directors are focused on educating local boards on the number of claimants and potential exhaustees in local areas so that they can devise strategies to best meet local needs.

Many areas have already organized community response systems to provide access to resources that are available to address various needs. These systems provide direct links to 211 services, job training, financial help, rental assistance, utility assistance, food assistance, medical and dental services, emergency shelters, mental health and counseling support, veteran services, and child care assistance.

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