

## Rapid Response Policy

### Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to document how Rapid Response is currently carried out in the state. The policy outlines the total process from the time the Rapid Response Unit (RRU) learns of a layoff until all workers, when possible, have received Early Intervention services. It also includes general guidelines for Rapid Response

### Background:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Section 134 (a)(2)(A) declares that the state shall use funds to carry out statewide rapid response activities which shall include the provision of rapid response activities, carried out in local areas by the state, working in conjunction with local boards and chief elected officials for the local areas.

### Policy:

Connecticut's Rapid Response Team: Connecticut's Rapid Response Team (RRT), headed by the State Department of Labor's Rapid Response Unit (RRU), exists to ease the impact of layoffs and to assure that workers are offered a full range of benefits and services. RRU staff, located in the DOL Central Office in Wethersfield, coordinates all Rapid Response activities in the State.

The Team is made up of representative from the RRU, Labor Department field offices, the local workforce development board and/or American Job Center staff contracted by the local workforce development board to provide WIOA services. Representatives of other state, federal and municipal agencies, elected officials and community service organizations such as the US DOL Employee Benefits Security Administration, Access Health CT (Connecticut's health insurance marketplace), the Department of Social Services, and the AFL-CIO may be added to the team as needed. The RRT also works with the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) in cases where there may be a chance of preventing imminent or future layoffs. DECD and the RRT also share news of yet-to-be announced layoffs or business expansions where Dislocated Workers could potentially be placed.

The goal of the RRT is to provide employers, workers, and unions with information up-front on the many local, state, and federal programs that are available to potentially prevent layoffs or, if that is not possible, assist in making the transition to new employment as quickly and as easy as possible.

How the Process Begins: The Rapid Response process begins when the RRU is informed of a possible layoff or plant closing. Notices of layoffs or closings are obtained through any number sources including:

NRWIB  
WIOA POLICIES  
RAPID RESPONSE  
Adopted 3/10/16

- Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) notices
- Phone calls or e-mails from employers, employees, unions, state and local representatives
- Referrals from Rapid Response Team members and other field and central office DOL staff
- Calls from private outplacement firms or reemployment support groups
- Media announcements and/or inquiries
- Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA) petitions
- Shared Work applications and Unemployment Insurance dismissal pay pending decisions for large layoffs

Initial Contact: Upon hearing of a possible layoff/closing, the RRU initiates contact with the employer and/or union to verify that the layoffs are being contemplated, offer layoff aversion strategies such as the Shared Work Program if the decision to lay off has yet to be made, and provide preliminary information about the many free job search and supportive services the Rapid Response Team can provide to the company and affected workers.

Rapid Response Meeting: In cases where the decision to lay off workers has been made and will affect 100 or more employees, or if the company, union representative, or other party requests, an initial **Rapid Response (RR)** meeting will be scheduled. The RR meeting is an information gathering meeting where the company and/or union provides information on the affected workers and, in turn, each RRT member explains, in detail, the array of services that his/her agency or affiliated partners can offer relative to the specific workforce. This meeting can be held in person or via conference call.

RRT members are notified of the RR meeting through a Rapid Response notice that is e-mailed by a RRU staff member. Team members must advise the RRU representative who will be attending the meeting.

For layoffs affecting fewer than 100 workers, or due to time constraints or other reasons, the company and/or union representative may prefer to have the RRU representative explain the entire Team's services and provide the details of the layoff event over the phone or via e-mail.

Information gathered through the Rapid Response meeting is compiled into a layoff/closing fact sheet. The fact sheet contains details on the reason for the layoff, layoff dates, types of skills/positions affected, ages, educational levels, length of service, and wage ranges. The sheet also contains the company and union contacts (where applicable) as well as benefits the company is providing to workers such as extended health benefits, outplacement assistance, retraining assistance, and dismissal pay and/or retirement benefits.

During the course of the RR meeting, an initial assessment of worker needs is developed. This assessment would include whether or not the company is a candidate for Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) or if there is a need to apply for a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG).

When it appears that increased imports, foreign competition, or a shift of work to another country are a factor in the decision to lay off workers, the RRU will assist the employer or union in filing a TAA petition. In cases where a trade impact is indicated but the employer is reluctant to file a TAA petition, the RRU representative will submit a petition on behalf of workers.

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When it appears that there may be a need to apply for a NDWG, the RRU will conduct needs assessment surveys of workers which will assist in the application process.

Early Intervention Meeting: During the course of the RR meeting, the RRU representative will ask the company and/or union if the RRT can provide an on-site Early Intervention (EI) session where workers can learn about available reemployment services. In cases of large layoffs or closings, a number of meetings might be set up.

The EI sessions last approximately one hour, with each Team member speaking to his/her area of expertise. An additional half hour is usually built into the schedule to allow adequate time for questions. Sessions may run longer if a translator is needed or if TAA or another applicable program or speaker is being incorporated into the presentation. The RRU staffer will e-mail an EI notice to RRT members. RRT members must advise RRU staff who will represent his/her agency or if they will be unable to attend the EI meeting(s).

All workers in attendance at EI sessions are asked to sign-in and are given a Rapid Response information packet. The packet contains information on filing for unemployment benefits, locations and the array of services available at comprehensive and affiliate American Job Centers, on-line resources for job seekers including the Connecticut Department of Labor's (CTDOL) website, CTHires (the state's employment and training site), Dislocated Worker services, networking groups, health insurance options, and community services. Additional pamphlets on veterans' benefits, upcoming job fairs or recruitments/job postings, and other local or company-specific programs may also be provided.

Other Services: The RRT will offer additional on-site services such as job search workshops, health insurance options workshops and/or marketplace registrations, job fairs, unemployment registrations for large groups, and Dislocated Worker certifications. The RRU will also work with CTDOL Wage and Workplace Standards Division, Office of Program Policy, or the Attorney General's office to help procure unpaid wages/services or benefits for workers.

Mailings to Impacted Workers: In cases where workers have already been laid off, or if an employer declines an in-person EI meeting, the RRU representative will provide either the employer, union, or impacted workers, a complete EI packet or a one-page overview of services letter with an invitation to attend an EI session via webinar. Workers who are interested in attending a Rapid Response webinar register with RRU staff and are mailed a complete EI packet.

Follow-Up: Following each EI session, RRU staff sends an e-mail to EI participants summarizing the most important parts of the EI session. Additional e-mails on possible job opportunities, training options, or other programs are forwarded as well. All RRT members are responsible for following up with the employer, union, and/or employees should they have questions or need clarification or assistance after the Early Intervention meeting.

On-line services: All EI materials along with additional layoff-related information including help

for struggling businesses, requirements for WARN, a listing of WARN notices, and labor laws are available on the CTDOL website.

As mentioned previously, RRU staff conducts virtual EI sessions for workers whose companies decline on-site services. The RRU also provides virtual EI sessions to individuals who complete an on-line registration after clicking on an icon on the CT DOL website that asks if he/she was laid off due to a large layoff or plant closing.

## **General Guidelines for RR/EI Sessions**

- A. The Rapid Response/Early Intervention sessions (RR/EI) will be conducted according to the following guidelines:
1. Presenters, both individually and as a team, will be concise, professional, organized and consistent.
  2. Information will flow smoothly from speaker to speaker. Information covered will enhance, but not repeat, earlier speakers' presentations.
  3. Presentations will be company and laid-off worker specific. The particular information offered is appropriate for the company's dislocated workers.
  4. Presenters will be up-to-date on their respective agency's procedures and status. Presenters should have information such as details of services available at local AJC and satellite offices.
  5. Presenters need to be on time for the presentation (at least fifteen (15) minutes before the starting time) and end their presentation within the allotted timeframe.
  6. Presenters will bring suitable materials, in adequate supply, with them to sessions. Materials must be pre-approved by the Rapid Response Coordinator.
  7. Materials will be displayed on a table or distributed before each session begins, whichever is appropriate.
  8. Presentations will be positive but realistic.
  9. Basic EI Information will be uniform throughout the state.

### DOL Team Leader

1. The DOL Rapid Response Unit is the Team Leader responsible for the content and delivery of the RR/EI session to the employer, union, and/or employees.

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2. Upon receipt of a RR/EI notice, each agency will contact the Rapid Response Unit representative who sent the notice to advise him/her of the name of the representative who will attend the meeting. It is helpful to the Rapid Response Unit to have the representative's cell phone number in case there is a last minute change. In instances when an agency representative cannot attend a RR/EI meeting, the Rapid Response Unit representative will cover that agency's part of the presentation .
3. The DOL Team Leader has the responsibility, and the right, to address deficiencies affecting team performance. Also, feedback to the Rapid Response Unit is always welcome.
4. The DOL Team Leader will act as the "gatekeeper " in keeping presenters within time limits and monitoring content.

B. Duration of EI Session

The EI session will last approximately one hour. Up to an hour and a half should be allotted to cover questions. Additional time will be needed if translation is required. The Rapid Response Team is comprised of representatives from the Department of Labor's Rapid Response Unit, the local Department of Labor AJC office, local AJC WIOA provider, and community service representatives. Additional speakers such as representatives from DOL's Trade Act Unit, the Social Security Administration, or the Employee Benefit Security Administration may be added at the employer's request.

The approximate length of each section of the EI is as follows:

Introduction and unemployment insurance benefits	25 minutes
AJC Services (DOL & WIOA)	20 minutes
Health Insurance Options	10 minutes
Community Services	5 minutes