

REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT

STATE: North Carolina

DATE: October 7, 2004

STATE SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE REPORT (Add additional sheets if necessary.)

Describe activities and an overview of how the activities were accomplished. Include milestones, and positive outcomes achieved. Compare accomplishment of planned performance goals with the attainment of the performance indicators identified by the State in the annual plan

Activities Overview

For Program Year 2003, North Carolina continued to deliver reemployment services in accordance with the previous year's plan. To optimize the program's impact, North Carolina targeted the areas with high unemployment, allocating staff to twenty Employment Security Commission offices serving twenty-two counties, both urban and rural.

A major strength of the Federal Reemployment Initiative (FREI), as it is called in North Carolina, is the emphasis on collaboration with local JobLink Partners (a.k.a One-Stop Partners in other states) to provide a full range of seamless services to all unemployment insurance (U.I.) claimants. In North Carolina, the majority of the ESC local offices have been designated JobLink Career Centers, thereby facilitating cooperation with our JobLink Partners. Also, local ESC staff provides services at all JobLink Centers operated by other service providers, such as the Community College System, the Department of Commerce and the Division of Social Services. Half of the twenty FREI offices utilize partner agency staff to operate the workshop phase of the program.

The eight week FREI Program begins when the customer files an initial claim for unemployment insurance benefits. North Carolina has always had a strong commitment to returning claimants back to work. The Employment Service and Unemployment Insurance programs have always been housed under one roof, operating in tandem to offer referrals and other services to claimants when they apply for benefits. The thrust of FREI is early intervention and frequent customer contact. The Program goals are 1) Providing those services which will result in the most expeditious reemployment of FREI Program participants; 2) Maintaining reduced levels of employer taxes by generating Trust Fund savings through shortening the duration of the average unemployment insurance claim; 3) Helping North Carolina employers meet their labor needs by referring qualified job candidates with recent work experience; and 4) Expediting employers' interviewing processes as a result of FREI participants having better job seeking skills (interviewing, resume' preparation).

Due to the diversity of the local labor markets in North Carolina, the Federal Reemployment Initiative Program was implemented in a manner that encourages flexibility and control at the local level. Broad operational guidelines were developed so that local management and staff could customize the FREI program to meet the needs of the community being served. The lack of a regimented process for every location has proven to be another program strength. Local flexibility in developing the specifics of FREI has resulted in creativity and innovation in the delivery of meaningful services to customers.

Each of the twenty FREI offices is unique with a unique labor force and employer base. The flexibility to customize services gives local offices the ability to focus on services that will expedite reemployment in that respective labor market. This program development flexibility has proven to be a motivation to staff, which has been reflected in positive customer outcomes.

While all the workshops include instruction on job search techniques, application/ resume development, interviewing skills, and related available services, some offices add instruction on coping skills, such as managing finances and handling stress. Some offices enroll every claimant in the FREI program, some give the claimant the choice, while others allow the employment consultant to make the decision based on specific criteria. In some ESC offices, the workshops may be held once or twice a week, whereas other offices may offer them as many as seven times a week.

Some offices use the ESC Counselors to provide the workshops whereas other offices have Community College staff conduct the entire workshop. Another variation has the community college and other partner staff providing a portion of the workshop. The workshops may be held at the ESC office, the community college, or at a different JobLink partner site. Employers with large layoffs have allowed the workshops to be held onsite at the place-of-business.

A monthly year-to-date management information report was developed specifically to measure reemployment activity in those offices allocated staff as a result of the reemployment grant. This report affords management the opportunity to examine outcomes and monitor the effectiveness of program services. Additionally, information obtained from this report is used to target those offices that may be in need of staff support assistance.

The FREI Program is comprised of three components: *Orientation*, *Job Seeking Skills Workshops*, and *Intensive Job Search and Follow-up*. These components are designed to maximize exposure to the local labor market and to expedite the job matching process.

- The ***Orientation*** component is designed to familiarize customers with the services they will be receiving and to inform them about the automated service systems which can assist in their job search efforts. Questionnaires are frequently used in the Orientation component to assess the customers' strengths and needs. The information is used to customize elements of the Job Seeking Skills workshops. Referrals may also be made to other service providers.
- After the prerequisite Orientation, all participants attend a ***Job Seeking Skills Workshop*** to learn new and more effective job search methods. As mentioned earlier, half of the offices in the state utilize their community college partners in providing the workshops. In some offices, the entire workshop is conducted by the community college staff, whereas in other offices, the community college representative is one of many presenters. Employers are sometimes utilized to advise on interview and application techniques. Topics covered in the workshops are tailored to the local labor market conditions as well as to the education and experience level of the participants.
- In the ***Intensive Job Search and Follow-up*** component, customers develop a specific job search plan targeted to their job interests and the local labor market. As a part of this component, program participants have regular and frequent contact with staff. These contacts enable local staff to provide job referrals and develop job opportunities for unemployed customers, to review their work search efforts and to answer questions. Staff have contact with customers bi-weekly after the Job Seeking Skills workshop. After eight weeks, those participants that have not entered employment are transferred to the regular eligibility review program.

Positive Results

During Program Years 2002 and 2003, there was a significant increase in the number of unemployed individuals who were provided reemployment services. During PY2003, the number of individuals participating in the FREI program was 20% higher than the number served during PY2002. Also, the preferential services provided to FREI participants resulted in positive results when compared to non-claimant individuals. Almost 78% of the FREI claimants participated in job search workshops/activities compared to 51% of non-claimants. The number of FREI claimants participating in job search workshops/activities during PY2003 was 18% higher than during the previous program year. The number of FREI participants referred to jobs increased by 26% from PY2002 to PY2003. The percentage of entered employments exceeds that of non-claimants in seventeen of the twenty FREI offices. Statewide, over one fifth (21%) of FREI claimants entered employment, while 18% of the non-claimants entered employment. The number of FREI participants entering employment during PY2003 was 21% higher than the entered employment level for PY2002.

In recent years, our ability to provide reemployment services for unemployed individuals has been impacted by a major shift in North Carolina's labor market. Historically, North Carolina has had a strong manufacturing base; however, in recent years, there has been a major decline in manufacturing with companies moving operations overseas. The majority of the twenty-two counties where FREI services are provided have been impacted by this shift in the structure of the State's labor market. Since 2001, when the FREI program was implemented, North Carolina has lost almost 158,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector. Losses were primarily in the traditionally strong industries of textiles, apparel, and furniture, and also in electronic and computer equipment manufacturing. In addition, at the end of PY2003 (June 2004), over half of the twenty-two counties, where the FREI program is operated, had a higher unemployment rate than the 5.8 % rate of both North Carolina and the United States. Even though changes in North Carolina's economy have made it more difficult for many unemployed individuals to find work, the FREI program has had a positive impact in helping citizens return to work in those counties with the highest unemployment rates.

During Program Year 2004, the FREI program will undoubtedly be impacted by the dramatic transition that is underway in our Agency. During the current Program Year, we will begin processing most initial unemployment insurance claims via telephone and the Internet rather than through face-to-face interviews in our offices. As we transition to these new service delivery systems, we will continue to evaluate FREI enrollment criteria in order to improve selection for program participation and thus optimize resources. Currently, Agency staff is developing new criteria and methodologies for use in profiling U.I. claimants. Those most likely to exhaust benefits will be selected for participation in the FREI program and other reemployment services. The implementation of these automated service systems will enable staff to devote more time to providing intensive services to FREI participants and other U.I. claimants with the ultimate goal of finding jobs for unemployed individuals.

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**North Carolina Federal Reemployment Initiative
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