

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 43-16
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TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES

FROM: BYRON ZUIDEMA
Deputy Assistant Secretary



SUBJECT: Unemployment Insurance Call Center Study Final Report

- 1. Purpose.** To advise state workforce agencies of the release and publication of the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Call Center Study Final Report.
- 2. Background.** The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) conducted a study of UI call center operations in all 53 state UI agencies, which began in August of 2014. The study was designed to capture key information related to the current state of call center operations for UI program administration and the role that call centers play in the delivery of UI program services. Study objectives included capturing information about how both anticipated and unanticipated workloads are managed in the call centers, how states recruit and train staff, monitor staff performance, and adapt and use performance standards common to the call center industry.
- 3. Project Description.** The UI Call Center Study began with a short turnaround survey of all 53 state UI agencies (OMB Control No. 1205-0436) to capture basic information about functions performed by the different states' call centers and how they are organized and operated. Interviews with state administrators and UI staff in the 53 states and territories were subsequently conducted to get a better understanding of each state's operating challenges, critical technologies, performance management practices, management priorities, and future plans related to their call center operations.

The study also identified valuable industry metrics and performance standards used by state UI agencies to help improve call center performance and customer satisfaction. Additionally, the study assessed whether states knew about and had adopted the latest call center technology, forecasting software and management tools into their call center operations. The study explored whether any equipment upgrades and/or other investments had been completed recently. The study also captured information about management practices related to effective recruitment, training, deployment and retention of personnel as well as performance metrics used by states to assess the effectiveness of daily operations in call centers and the resulting impact on customers and staff productivity.

- 4. Key Findings.** The study found that although most states have moved in the direction of online processes in their UI claims operations, call centers remain a very viable and frequent point of contact for UI claimants in most states and for most stages of the UI claims process.

Significant investments have been made by many states in recent years to modernize their UI call centers and upgrade infrastructure, including establishing statewide virtual call centers in some states to provide flexibility in responding to workload fluctuations. Staff turnover is a challenge for states and recruitment and hiring is a lengthy process in most states. Most state UI agencies rely on overtime and redeployment of staff and temporary staff to help address surges in UI workloads. States are using performance metrics common to call center management in organizations outside of government but, in many states, there are fewer automated reports being generated, in part, due to old legacy systems or incompatible software. Most states, however, are examining emerging technologies, including mobile technology, while maintaining traditional call center operations for UI claims filing and customer service.

5. **Website.** The Final Report of the UI Call Center Study can be viewed on ETA's website at: https://oui.doleta.gov/unemploy/docs/CoffeyConsulting_UI_Call_Center_Study_Final_Report_January272017acc.pdf.