

**Additional Information and Resources to Ensure
Equitable Access to the UI Program**

A top priority of the Department is ensuring equitable and meaningful access to the UI program. Section 303(a)(1), SSA, includes a requirement that a state's methods of administration include insuring full payment of UC "when due." The Department interprets this to include a requirement of equity so that individuals have sufficient access to the program so that eligibility can be determined, and UC payments can be made, "when due." Promoting equitable access in state UI programs is also one of the enumerated purposes for which funding set out in Section 9032 of ARPA may be used.

On January 20, 2021, the President issued [Executive Order \(EO\) 13985](#) concerning advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities. This EO articulates the importance of advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. This includes, low wage workers, Black and Hispanic/Latino workers, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with limited English proficiency. Advancing equity requires a systematic approach to embedding fairness in decision-making processes and eliminating barriers to access. Public programs must be designed to serve all individuals. For this reason, the Federal Government should, consistent with applicable law, allocate resources to address the historic failure to invest sufficiently, justly, and equally in underserved communities, as well as individuals from those communities. State UI agencies must ensure that use of technologies and systems for administering UI programs and providing services do not create barriers (e.g., procedural, technological, or informational) that may prevent individuals from accessing UC, such as by denying a reasonable opportunity to establish eligibility.

In November 2023, ETA issued UIPL No. [01-24](#), which provides clarity around the Department's use of the terms "access" and "equitable access," and further describes how program integrity is impacted by efforts to ensure equitable access to the UI program. This UIPL informs states of ways that equitable access can be evaluated and enhanced, including through technical assistance and tools from various Department initiatives and state-based partnerships. States are encouraged to examine any available claimant demographic data to help inform strategies to enhance outreach and education about the UI program to underserved communities. Each state should also explore strategies to improve the state's UI program reciprocity rate. In addition, states should focus on UI functions and activities that ensure equitable access to these programs. UIPLs No. [02-16](#) and [02-16, Change 1](#), outline the requirements that states must meet to ensure access to the UI program, and ensure timely payments are made to eligible individuals.

States are encouraged to use the UI Equity Toolkit as a resource concerning equitable access to the UI program. See TEN No. [26-22](#).

In September 2023, ETA announced the availability of the first online training module concerning equitable access and the UI program. TEN No. [06-23](#) details the launch of the new “Fundamentals of Equitable Access in UI” training lesson, which is self-paced and can be accessed via NASWA’s learning management website (<https://www.naswa.org/learning>). ETA, in collaboration with NASWA, has created this online training to address challenges and possible solutions to help ensure equitable access to UI programs. Additional training modules are currently in development. ETA strongly encourages state to have all UI program staff and support staff participate in this online training.

States should discuss how they are improving their UI programs to reduce or eliminate barriers to access and any equity issues across the claimants’ journeys. This could include but it is not limited to discussing the state’s approach to:

- Simplifying communications using plain language and behavioral insights (referenced above);
- Enhancing language access and translation and interpretation services;
- Engaging claimant-focused community organizations to provide feedback on pain points, education campaigns, and cultural competency;
- Creating feedback loops across the states’ diverse communities and claimants;
- Developing and utilizing demographic, geographic, and industry data across the claimant journey to discover and fix pain points across populations;
- Improving in-person and phone services;
- Improving online accessibility and usability across computer and phone devices; and
- Improving educational content available in both in-person and electronic means.

States that received ARPA-funded equity grants as announced in UIPL No. [23-21](#) are encouraged to include the equity strategies they are pursuing using these grant funds in their FY 2025 SQSPs.