



Reemployment of Older Workers

Background

In June 2013, the program review committee authorized a study to examine the challenges facing unemployed older workers (aged 50 and older) and the strategies available to assist with reentry into the workforce.

Although older workers are the least likely to become unemployed, they are also the most likely to experience long-term unemployment (27+ weeks). Once faced with job loss, their continued unemployment is detrimental personally and to the state economy. The problem is further exacerbated by the increased need and desire to continue working and retire at an older age.

Reported advantages of older workers are stronger English language skills, work ethic, and workplace professionalism.

Challenges to reemployment for older workers include skills deficits, and increased family and financial demands such as college age children and mortgage payments. Negative perceptions about the long-term unemployed are also more likely to be faced by the older unemployed.

PRI staff developed a framework and identified occupations that might be a good fit for unemployed older workers, applying CT DOL information to the following factors: estimated annual job openings (demand); current pool of trained candidates (supply); physical activity requirements of the occupation (physicality index); and adequacy of wage (above the self-sufficiency standard).

PRI staff identified and analyzed information on 18 programs and services applicable to the reemployment of older workers. Where available, staff examined program components to address particular barriers to reemployment and program benefits, costs, and outcomes.

Main Staff Findings

There are a multitude of programs and services to assist with the reemployment of unemployed workers, including older workers; however, only a few programs are specifically for older adults. Both the state's technical high schools and community colleges provide resources to assist in the reemployment of adult workers. Although not limited to unemployed older adults, the more generally targeted programs can still be beneficial.

With programs and services scattered across many labor agencies, educational settings, nonprofit organizations and other resources, **there is no comprehensive, easily accessible way for unemployed residents to find out about these resources.**

Not all 50+ year olds looking to become reemployed have the same needs, and **there are program and service options available depending on the barriers to reemployment.** Also, for unemployed older persons struggling emotionally and financially, preparatory assistance to address these barriers is required before the person can become reemployed.

Some programs have higher reemployment rates than others. **On average, programs with an on-the-job-training component had a higher reemployment rate of 74 percent compared with 50 percent for programs without the component.**

PRI Staff Recommendations

Prohibit potential employers from publishing job vacancy advertisements that discriminate against the long-term unemployed.

Develop summary sheets and informational campaigns to inform job seekers of the resources available, address misperceptions about the Apprenticeship Program, and publicize the advantages of hiring older workers.

The **CTWorks Career Centers** should consider **requirement of a professional resume writer credential** and **expansion of online learning.**

With some modifications, **the STEP UP program should be reauthorized.**

Non-credit vocational programs should be **defined, outcomes uniformly monitored,** and **financial options for students explored.**

The **feasibility of expanding the Plus 50 Initiative** to all community colleges, and the **Advanced Manufacturing Center model to other high-demand career areas,** should be explored.

The **CT Technical High School System** should collect and report **outcome information on adult students** enrolled in vocational programs.