

JOHN HICKENLOOPER Governor		ELLEN GOLOMBEK Executive Director	
Workforce Development Programs 633 17 th Street, 7 th Floor Denver, Colorado 80202-3627		COLORADO Department of Labor and Employment	Division of Unemployment Insurance 633 17 th Street, 7 th Floor Denver, Colorado 80202-3627
ELISE LOWE-VAUGHN Director			JEFF FITZGERALD Division Director

Subject: Unemployment Insurance Chat Initiative
Colorado Policy Guidance Letter#: WP-2016-03
Revise/Replace PGL#: N/A
Date: July 1, 2016
Distribution: CDLE Management/Finance, State/Local One Stop Directors & Staff, UI Division Staff, Partners

I. REFERENCE(S):

- a. **Laws.** Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, Public Law 113-128; Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 as amended by Title III of WIOA; Colorado Employment Security Act (CESA) 8-73-114 and 8-73-107(4) and Regulations Concerning Employment Security (RCES) 2.6.
- b. **Issuances.** Unemployment Insurance Policy Letter (UIPL) No. 20-15 – Unemployment Insurance and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014; Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 14-15 – WIOA Requirements for Unified and Combined State Plans; TEGL No. 3-15 – Operating Guidance for the WIOA.

II. PURPOSE:

To provide guidance regarding the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Chat Initiative, developed to establish an additional means of communication between Comprehensive One-Stop Center customers and UI Customer Service Center staff.

III. BACKGROUND:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 requires the Division of Unemployment Insurance (UI) to provide access to UI expertise through the One-Stop delivery system, beyond what job seekers could obtain on their own using self-service tools. This customer assistance may be offered remotely via technological tools, but the level and timeliness of remote service should be comparable to assistance the customer would receive in person.

In order to comply with this provision of WIOA, Workforce Development Programs (WDP) and UI launched a pilot project in several Colorado One-Stop Centers on February 29, 2016. This pilot initiative brought real-time UI expertise into workforce centers through an online “chat” or “instant messaging” initiative. After the initial period of the project, the Division of Unemployment Insurance, Workforce Development Programs and the

participating workforce centers shared insight and analysis on the process in order to implement the **initiative** in Comprehensive One-Stop Centers, statewide, throughout the local One-Stop system.

The initiative was initially piloted in five One-Stop Centers, then expanded to all Comprehensive One-Stop Centers, as below:

Pilot Introduction and Participating One-Stop Centers - February 29, 2016:

Southeast (SE) - LaJunta; Western (WE) – Delta; Jefferson County (TR) – Golden; AD Works! (AR) – Centennial; Larimer (LR) – Fort Collins.

Comprehensive One-Stop Centers - 2016 Expansion:

Pikes Peak (ET) – Colorado Springs; Weld (WL) – Greeley, Ft. Lupton; Boulder (BO) – Longmont, Boulder; Adams (AD) – Aurora, Brighton; Denver (DE) – Westside; Mesa County (ME) – Grand Junction; Pueblo (PB) - Pueblo.

IV: POLICY/ACTION:

A. Access to the UI Chat Capability

UI Chat will be accessible from a shortcut placed on designated computers within the comprehensive One-Stop Centers. The shortcut links to a web URL as follows:

<https://askui.cdle.state.co.us/benefits/chatdisclaimer.html>

It should only be accessed via Internet Explorer, and only on the designated computer, also known as the “chat” station. Attachment 1: Instructions for Installing the UI Chat Shortcut is provided to assist local IT staff servicing One-Stop Center computers.

Initially, the chat shortcut will be installed on one resource room computer in each of the locally designated Comprehensive One-Stop Centers and will be available from 8am-4pm MST, with a break for lunch from 12-1pm. The chat shortcut will connect One-Stop customers directly to UI Customer Service Center representatives, without the need to wait on hold over the phone.

This initiative is intended to expand access to UI expertise for customers, and as such the chat initiative is not for WFC staff use. The expansion of chat to additional computer stations will require coordination between UI and the Comprehensive One-Stop Centers to ensure that the volume and work flow can be maintained by all parties.

B. Selecting Customers to Access UI Chat

Currently, UI customers may access UI representatives through the main call center phone number. In addition, One-Stop centers may provide additional opportunities to connect with a UI representative. One-Stop Center representatives shall assess the customer’s ability to use the chat technology and refer the customer to the most appropriate means of communication with a UI representative. CDLE encourages One-Stop Center representatives to discuss the chat technology with customers to determine the ease of use for both the customer and the UI representative. One-Stop Center representatives should be aware that the UI chat initiative is currently not available in Spanish or other languages, and so shall continue to direct monolingual customers to the Customer Service Center via phone.

Workforce representatives shall triage customers requesting UI assistance in order to route the customer toward the correct method of service for their particular concern. One-Stop Center representatives shall continue to address general UI questions which do not require knowledge of any specific issues on a claim. An FAQ-style guide to common general questions is available at <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/unemployment->

[frequently-asked-questions](#) and should be used as a guideline for those questions (and answers) that shall continue to be addressed by WFC representatives in order to reduce wait time for UI resources.

Both chat and phone lines are available to customers with UI-specific questions. Some questions may be more challenging to handle over chat, such as a Workers' Compensation claim or health or medical issues; in those cases it is more appropriate to refer the customer to a phone line or the Hot Line, if available, for assistance. Workforce representatives shall focus on which method of access is most comfortable for the customer rather than which method is most appropriate for the customer's concern, as chat and phone representatives will be equally equipped to assist the customer. In addition, UI chat representatives will be able to refer customers to phone representatives if Workers Compensation or medical issues become apparent. When faced with a customer inquiry that requires UI expertise, staff in participating centers should follow the attached flowchart (see attachment 2: Triage Flowchart for WFCs) in order to route the customer to the appropriate resource.

C. UI Chat Procedures

Before directing a customer to the chat station, the workforce representative shall determine whether the customer has registered in Connecting Colorado; if not, representatives shall assist the customer with the Connecting Colorado registration process. The Connecting Colorado registration will allow UI representatives to access personal identification information in cases where a new claim must be filed. When the registration is complete, customers may be referred to the chat station, or other means of accessing UI expertise as is appropriate for the customer, as follows:

1. UI Call Back Form, available to all One-Stop Center locations as a means of alleviating the time waiting on the main call center phone line during busier call volume times at UI.
<https://www.coworkforce.com/uicbf/CallBackForm.aspx>
2. UI phone Hot Lines available in select locations
3. UI outreach representatives located in select locations

Workforce staff shall avoid referring customers with UI questions directly to the standard UI customer service center phone lines whenever possible, and shall offer the aforementioned means of assisting UI customers before referring any UI customer to contact UI via telephone unless the customer would be utilizing a "Hot Line" expressly designed to expedite that customer's call.

Workforce representatives, when possible, shall accompany the customer to the chat station in order to determine whether the previous chat customer fully completed the session and closed the chat window. **This strongly encouraged practice will assist in maintaining customer confidentiality.**

Workforce staff shall direct reports of technical issues with the chat initiative to cdle_ba_support@state.co.us, with subject: "chat" and include the following information:

- Your name;
- Your Workforce Center Location;
- A good contact phone number; and,
- A brief description of the problem, including when the issue occurred.

If the customer receives a message back from the chat system stating that all lines are busy or that the system is experiencing technical difficulties, please refer the customer to alternate means of contact, such as online tools, a scheduled call back, or the Customer Service Center phone lines to avoid any long periods of waiting.

V. IMPLEMENTATION DATE:

July 1, 2016

VI. INQUIRIES:

Please direct all inquiries to Reemployment Partnership Initiatives team member Courtney Popp (Courtney.popp@state.co.us) at Workforce Development Programs.



Elise Lowe-Vaughn, Director
Workforce Programs, Policy, and Strategic Initiatives



Jeff Fitzgerald, Director
Division of Unemployment Insurance

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Instructions for Installing the UI Chat Shortcut
2. Triage Flowchart for WFCs