**DOL Responses to Questions & Suggestions from 10.20.23 Steering Committee Meeting for DOL**

**Questions:**

1. What does DOL view as the steps to access available supports? In person, online, websites etc? By appointment?

It largely depends on the region that the customer lives in, however enrollments for programs should be available virtually and in-person. Some regions require attendance at an orientation that provides an overview of the services that we provide. To ensure customers, have time to gather documentation there may be a follow-up appointment. From initial contact to enrollment the process should take no more than 1-2 weeks based on availability.

Direct Title I WIOA programs include:

Adult – Low income with barriers or disabilities.

Dislocated Worker- Individuals collecting unemployment benefits or who have exhausted

their benefits and are long term unemployed.

Youth- Youth from age 14 through 24. School age youth who are participating considered In School

1. How is DOL able to help our folks- what services are offered? Are they statewide?

Regions and Workforce Development Boards braid programs and services regionally based on what funding is available. Services include all supports that lead to employment outcomes. These include:

* Job Search/Placement, Resume preparation, Workshops to gain soft skills/information. Veteran priority.
* Case management supports are available through WIOA Title I funding including, training dollars for short term occupational trainings that lead to or result in credentials.
* Variety of work experiences both paid and unpaid.
* Apprenticeship opportunities.
* In-school/Out of School youth career exploration, guidance and training.
* Supportive Services including funding (if unavailable from other sources) for housing, food, work clothing, computers, internet connectivity. Mental health and substance use support. Disability supports through Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.
* Ancillary workforce programs using non-WIOA funding such as state or federal investments.

1. Are partnerships available to streamline services to our population? Ex: folks have different experience/comfort with technology and can use additional supports around technology

All regions have staff available to assist individuals with enrollment. Workshops are available to assist individuals in gaining technology skills required for a successful job search. These include internet workshops, interviewing techniques and developing an effective resume.

1. Are programs available with paid on the job experience to offer access to income on a faster timeframe?

There are several programs depending on the region that offer paid on the job experience. Included among these are apprenticeships, job development and work experience programs.

1. Is any flex funding available to assist with interview clothing, transportation to interviews to address employment barriers?

Yes, we call this funding “supportive services” and it can be used to assist with the following:

* Transportation
* Daycare
* Linkages to community services
* Housing assistance
* Educational testing
* Accommodations for individuals with disabilities
* Legal Aide
* Work clothing/tools required for work
* Internet/Communication Laptop etc.
* Application tests and licenses

In addition, youth between the ages of 15-24 may receive counseling services for mental health and or substance use treatment. Services are available based on funding and may be capped based on the region. Regions often braid funding sources from federal, state and local charitable/non-profit organizations.

**Note:** The supportive services mentioned above are contingent on meeting workforce development eligibility requirements.

1. Is any access available in the state to obtain/repair a car to access employment?

Yes see #5

1. Will employment specialists be available to enter shelters/offer workshops locally through the CANs?

Generally, services are accessed through the American Job Centers located in each of the states 5 regions. Locations can be found here: <https://portal.ct.gov/ajc> Employment and Training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development are considered core partners under WIOA legislation as indicated in 20 CFR 678.400. CAN’s should reach out to their local American Job Centers to discuss partnership options including cross-referral location strategies. Some regions have housing specialists co-located within their AJC’s.

1. Does DOL assist in ID obtainment?

Yes, as a supportive service, however most eligibility requirements may be self-attested under WIOA. We do assist individuals in obtaining ID’s for training programs where there is a requirement.

1. Which sectors have the most job options (so people can determine which skills are most needed)?

Sectors vary regionally based on the local economy. Individuals seeking information on labor market information can register with the CTHires system to conduct research at [www.cthires.com](http://www.cthires.com) or access Career Paths 2023 at <https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/careerpaths.asp>.

In addition, the American Job Centers offer workshops on the labor conditions and individuals seeking training dollars must select training based on regional labor market information. Generally, CT is strong in manufacturing for defense-related products and WDB’s currently have programs available to fill those pipelines. In addition, health care, transportation and hospitality and tourism are also in demand.

1. Would DOL be open to altering AJC curriculum in partnership with CLIP to create a more innovative approach to workforce development and training? CTDOL is always willing to work with partners with the **goal** of providing services to individuals who face barriers. Each AJC currently has a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist who has lived experience and is able to provide non-judgmental assistance to individuals who have been affected/stigmatized by mental health/substance use or trauma. In addition, CTDOL is working in partnership with the Department of Mental Health and Public Health to certify employers as Recovery Friendly.

Info can be found at: <https://www.recoveryworksct.org> and AJC Locations can be found at [American Job Centers (ct.gov)](https://portal.ct.gov/dol/Divisions/American-Job-Centers?language=en_US)

1. What are DOL services doing to market their services to those who are homeless or facing a housing crisis? WIOA federal dollars are limited and generally underfunded. Historically federal law disallowed direct marketing of our services, however recently the Federal Government provided some additional flexibility around this, and we are currently working with our partners to increase marketing goals. You may see billboards, bus panels and additional marketing information. You can contact your local American Job Center for additional marketing information and/or request a tour of your local AJC to learn about the service offerings.

**Suggestions:**

1. It would be helpful to lessen the impact of background checks so that applicants with a criminal justice history can find employment. This would require legislation but we agree and our working with other state agencies to change laws in regard to prior arrests/convictions.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2023, public and private employers in Connecticut must comply with new rules regarding the use of criminal background information.

Employers were already prohibited from seeking information regarding criminal history that was erased, including where an individual was granted youthful status.

The new law broadens the definition of “erased criminal history record information” to refer to any erased records, information relating to persons granted youthful offender status, and continuances of a criminal case that are more than thirteen months old.

Employers also may not deny employment to a prospective employee or discriminate against a current employee based solely on “erased criminal history record information” or based on prior convictions for which the individual received a provisional pardon or certificate of rehabilitation.

**Criminal Inquiries**

As a reminder, existing Connecticut law prohibits employers from inquiring about a prospective employee’s prior arrests, criminal charges, or convictions on an initial employment application.

There is an exception when the employer is required to do so by state or federal law and to comply with bonding requirements.

Employers are permitted to ask about criminal background at other steps in the hiring process.

1. American Job Center training programs aren't suited for Persons Experiencing Homelessness (PEH)- the resources available to PEH need to be tailored to their needs and with far more urgency than usual programs offer.

CTDOL recognizes that having a safe home is necessity for individuals to be successful in career goals. Our career specialists in WIOA are specifically trained to help individuals in crises by making referrals to services to remove barriers. Unfortunately, as we are all aware, federal, and state program regulations are required to receive dollars and qualify for services. We must all continue to advocate to reduce eligibility and program service requirements.

PEH need mentorship. DOL should be engaging with SS regarding work incentive program for SSI/SSD recipients and engaging with Chambers of Commerce.

CTDOL paused its JFES program during COVID relaxing work requirements for those receiving services. The pause recently ended, and we have resumed providing those services including work incentive programs. CTDOL would encourage and love to provide additional services for all SSI/SSD recipients if state funding was provided. CTDOL pursues available grants based on resources and requirements.

1. PEH need trainings around benefits counseling, interviewing skills, resume building, technical skills (entry level computer and clerical skills).

The American Job Centers provide those workshops. See # 10

1. DOL funded services don't necessarily seem equipped to work with our clientele, folks with multiple barriers.

Historically that may have been the case but today with 1-4 individuals suffering from mental illness at work CTDOL and USDOL are better equipped and trained to work with individuals with barriers. CTDOL is in the process of putting state-wide training to staff and resources together for staff on the following issues/barriers:

* Mental Health/Substance Use
* Person centered Case Management
* Trauma informed care
* Deversity/Equity

Cross-training using leveraged resources is an important opportunity to learn about your clientele, and DOL welcomes any training offerings that are available to understand the un-housed and folks with multiple barriers.

1. There is a real need for employer development

Agreed…. AJC’s offer job development in various ways, including work experience, OJT’s and skills development upgrading.

At the Department of Labor, we have the Business Engagement Unit (BEU) which notifies job seekers about job opportunities through a new, centralized portal. We’d like your assistance in spreading the word to job seekers. Please share this link with customers so they may subscribe to the distribution list in their region(s):  [Subscribe Here](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fconfirmsubscription.com%2Fh%2Fj%2F8F5CED7CBB161E6C&data=05%7C01%7CHeriberto.Cajigas%40ct.gov%7Cd6f28c65ddfe41ac24e308dbd175c190%7C118b7cfaa3dd48b9b02631ff69bb738b%7C0%7C0%7C638334075911573326%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=6nGD5Z0cueifDp%2FHFd853Mm5vKk%2FH6EZaJTuRN8gXG0%3D&reserved=0) You may also direct them to the [Recruitment Events](https://portal.ct.gov/AJC/recruitmentevents) page on CTDOL’s Website to view upcoming events. Jobseekers **MUST** sign up voluntarily to receive notifications! They can unsubscribe at any time. Please contact the BEU via email at: [dol.beu@ct.gov](mailto:dol.beu@ct.gov) with any questions.

1. We recommend that DOL work with our sector (through the CANs) to resource the modification of the front door of the American Job Centers to reflect trauma responsive principles. We could be excellent partners (paid) to create a productive handoff to the AJC's. As many mentioned above- people have difficulty with legal documents, and co-occurring housing crises that affect everything. We need to build a strong connection between us (sending organizations) and DOL funded programs to design and implement a layer of services that improves employment outcomes.

We would welcome the CAN’s input as partners to the development of our training and resources. We also understand that any learning opportunities to increase AJC referrals to open slots at housing shelters are equally important.