

OUC Deputy's Quarterly Newsletter

TO: Staff, Office of UC
FROM: Patrick Power, Deputy Director, Office of UC
DATE: August 29, 2003

Kudos to Staff

Again this quarter, we received correspondences regarding two employees who took the initiative to "go the extra mile" in helping our customers. The letters are attached to this newsletter and the kudos is for Bobbie Imowitz and Cindy Gerhan. I hope you take the time to read the letters and congratulate Ms. Imowitz and Ms. Gerhan for their exemplary customer service.

Ohio Job Insurance (OJI) Project

The OJI project team has been very busy. There are nearly 90 State and contractor staff working on the project full time. As previously reported, a change request has been processed to include TEUC and TEUC-Air into OJI. Requirements and business rules for TEUC and TEUC-Air are being finalized. The next step is the detailed system design of these programs.

The third round of testing has been completed. As we prepare for rounds 4 and 5, some of the tasks the test staff are working on include writing conditions and scripts for Bundle 2 change requests (which include TEUC and TEUC-Air), performing design validation of all screens, testing user roles and security features in staff view, testing from outside the firewall, testing interfaces, and re-testing bug fixes from round 3.

Staff assigned to the conversion task is busy testing programs used to convert the data from the Unisys mainframe to OJI on the IBM mainframe. Staff assigned to the interfaces task is currently working with all of our partners to ensure that all external systems can interact with OJI as designed.

Work continues on training modules with staff training to be scheduled for early in March with the roll out of OJI scheduled for April 12th.

ERIC

The ERIC RFP (request for Proposals) was published July 21, 2003. More than 1500 vendors received a noticed the document was on the DAS Acquisitions web page for their reading.

Vendors have until September 12, 2003 to ask questions about the RFP. They must then respond with proposals by September 16, 2003. Our evaluation team will read every proposal we receive.

Depending upon how many vendors respond our goal is to award a contract by January 2004.

Campaigns

With half of 2003 gone, the Campaign Team thanks everyone for making the summer months successful in contributions to our various agency-sponsored campaigns. During the months of May, June and July, the agency did not have designated campaigns, so the Campaign Team held activities that would sponsor events that are normally scheduled during the holiday season. Staff in OUC contributed \$1,155.00 towards the Adopt-a-Family; \$598.00 towards the Holiday Food Basket; \$109.00 towards the Support Our Troops; and \$878.00 towards the Partners In Education programs.

BPC/Investigation Update

We are having another extremely productive year in the area of fraud detection and overpayments. For the period of January - June 2003 BPC has produced the following:

5,190 total overpayments
\$7,955,970 in total overpayment dollars
341 Redeterminations
55 Criminal Prosecutions
130 Forgery cases

Due to the increase in the number of unemployment claims, especially TEUC, we have seen a significant jump in the detection of potential fraud (New Hire Crossmatch). We are averaging approximately 80 cases per day, up from the low 60's the beginning of the year.

Also showing a significant rise is the number of Forged UC warrants. One of the reasons for this is the number of Identity Theft cases we are involved in. This is a national issue on the rise with a recent landmark prosecution in California involving over \$16 million. It has affected claims in Ohio as well. Several individuals have had their claims "stolen" after returning to work and claims continued with other individuals claiming the benefits and cashing the checks. States are looking into ways of using data to point out irregularities to combat this.

The latest survey results reflected increased satisfaction of the BPC staff compared to the 2002 survey. Areas of concern in the prior survey (Communication and employee recognition) showed considerable increases this year after efforts to deal with these issues were implemented

UC University

The 2003 UC University Summer quarter, (July 1, to September 30) will see 43 individual courses available. 21 of which will be UC Benefits related. This is an increase in both areas from the 2003 spring quarter.

UC Benefits will be providing courses in; Appeal Processing, Benefits Account Maintenance, BPC Field Investigations, BPC Examining Unit, Processing Benefits Paid and Charged Statements, and UC Basic.

It's clear that UC University is taking the lead with succession planning, staff knowledge, staff training and staff opportunity.

On the Horizon...

UC University is looking to provide an Unemployment Compensation overview course. This course will give the big picture of unemployment compensation; from applications for benefits, wage bases and separation issues, to employer liability and tax rates; a sort of "everything you wanted to know about UC, but were afraid to ask" course.

UC University is looking to develop a Degree program. This program would combine several courses together to make-up a given degree. Example; the successful completion of 80 hours of coursework in a given bureau would obtain an Associate's Degree, 160 hours of coursework, including a minimum of 24 hours of coursework outside the student's own bureau would obtain a Bachelor's Degree. Other degree will follow. Interestingly enough, at the end of March 2003, there were five students already eligible for an Associate's degree.

UC University committee members will soon be discussing opening up the program to Local Operations staff. With succession planning being a key issue, the broadening of this agency's knowledge base is a must. What better direction to go then with our partners in Local Ops. Take advantage of this great opportunity.

Red Cross Bloodmobile

On August 7, 2003, Kimberly Parkway had its first Red Cross Blood Drive. There were 61 employees that tried and/or did give blood; 11 were first time donors. This drive contributed 43 productive units of blood. Donors are eligible to give blood every 56 days and we expect to have this as an on-going drive for the Red Cross. Look for the next drive to take place in October or November.

Extended Benefits for Airline Related Workers

With the recent addition of Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation Airline, (TEUC-A) we have had over 525 allowed applications that met the criteria paying out over \$995,823 in TEUC-A benefits to our customers. With this addition to regular TEUC that was triggered in March of 2002 it brings our total dollar amount paid in extended benefits over \$476,837,181.

For the second quarter of 2003 UC Tech prepared Mass Layoff packets for 220 employers covering 49,876 employees.

UC Tech continues to work closely with Operations and MIS during the ODJFS transition of Local Offices. We have been preparing the requested changes for MIS to facilitate the movement of staff when an office closes or combines, to update the Benefits system of the changes. We provide letters to our UC Customers to inform them of the changes during our transition of Local Offices.

Training of Unemployment Compensation Benefits-UC Tech has been able to provide training to 58 central office staff in UC Basic and is currently working on a train the trainer class for non-monetary training for Field Operations. Tentatively scheduled for the week of August 18, 2003.

Ohio Business Gateway (OBG)

2nd Quarter 2003

4,335 employers filed \$ 2,512,739 with \$ 2,023,804 paid

1st Quarter 2003

3,317 employers filed \$ 4,678,678 with \$ 3,741,136 paid

Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (ATAA)

The Trade Act of 2002 establishes ATAA as an alternative assistance program for older workers certified eligible to apply for Trade Adjustment Assistance. This program is effective for petitions filed on or after August 6, 2003. The Act requires that petitioners who request that workers be certified for the ATAA program must do so at the time the petition is filed. ATAA is designed to allow TAA eligible workers for whom retraining may not be appropriate and who find reemployment to receive a wage subsidy to help bridge the salary gap between their old and new employment. To receive the ATAA benefits, workers must be TAA and ATAA certified.

Under the ATAA program, workers in an eligible worker group who are at least 50 years of age and who obtain different, full-time employment within 26 weeks of separation from adversely-affected employment at wages less than those earned in the adversely-affected employment, may receive up to half of the difference between the worker's old wage and the new wage. The wage subsidy may be paid up to a maximum of \$10,000 during a two-year eligibility period. To be eligible for the ATAA program, workers may not earn more than \$50,000 per year in the new employment. In addition, the worker group must be certified as eligible to apply for TAA benefits and meet other ATAA eligibility criteria listed below. Workers who begin receiving payments under the ATAA program cannot receive other TAA benefits and services except for relocation allowances and the Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC).

Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC)

The Trade Act of 2002 created a federal tax credit that subsidizes private health insurance coverage for displaced workers certified to receive certain trade adjustment assistance (TAA) benefits and for individuals receiving benefits from the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC). The tax credit covers 65 percent of the premium amount paid by eligible individuals from qualified health insurance coverage. This credit is referred to as the Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC), and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is responsible for administering the HCTC program.

The Act provides two (2) options for an eligible individual to receive the benefit. Taxpayers may elect to claim the credit on their federal tax return when filing at the end of the tax year, or beginning no later than August 2003, eligible individuals may request the 65% credit for qualified premiums be paid on their behalf on a monthly basis as they are due to their insurance providers. Taxpayers must pay the 35% premium difference if they choose the advance option.

Automatically qualified health plans for the HCTC program include COBRA continuation coverage, spousal coverage plans where the spouse's employer pays for less than 50% of the premium and individual (non-group) health coverage that began at least 30 days prior to separation from employment. If eligible individuals are not currently enrolled in a qualified health plan, the state of Ohio has qualified the following two (2) health plans: Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield - Ohio and Kaiser Permanente (select counties). A big thanks goes to the state Department of Insurance for working with the private insurers to expand the choice that eligible individuals will have.

An HCTC office has been created within the IRS to design the infrastructure for the advance option that the IRS will operate. This HCTC office is responsible for the collection and verification of information related to eligibility, such as whether the individual has qualified health coverage. The Financial Management Service of the Department of Treasury will certify funds to the IRS for payments to health insurance providers. The responsibility of ODJFS Trade Section is to identify eligible TAA recipients, as defined in the Act, and report those individuals to the HCTC office for its use in determining who qualifies for the credit. ODJFS will also be required to report the Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (ATTA) recipients when the ATAA program becomes operational.

During the Week of August 11 through 14, 2003, OUC participated, along with representative from the IRS, the Ohio Department of Insurance, and representatives of the two (2) Qualified Health plans, in a series of HCTC on-site registrations sessions in Columbus, Cleveland, Youngstown and Toledo. The Cleveland session had approximately 120 potential eligible HCTC participants register. Future site registration sessions in Ohio are in the planning stages with the IRS. Customers may also register by calling the HCTC Customer Contact Center at 1-866-628-HCTC.

AG Agreement Performance

At the beginning of the fiscal year, we set a goal, with the AG, to reduce our accounts receivable balance by 10%, to \$143,359,130. As of June 30, 2003, our receivables balance was at \$131,993,384, a reduction of 17%. Through June 30 we cancelled almost \$35,000,000 in uncollectible debt.

Through July 31, 165 liquor permits have been cited, 30 suspended, 76 accounts had payment activity for a total collected of \$533,000. We continue to work closely with the Attorney General's Collections Enforcement Unit to utilize this very effective collection tool.

Also we are starting to see some real progress from the work of local attorneys who provide assistance to the AG in collection action. The Special Counsel process has resulted in collection of over \$500,000 since March 1, 2003.

Local Operations Meets DOL Standards

KUDOS also goes to the Office of Local Operations staff that worked hard bringing up the statewide timeliness on separation determinations. For the month of June, the statewide separation determination timeliness was 80%, which is a great accomplishment.

Based on the Mapper system, the statewide total number of separation determinations for 06-01-03 through 06-30-03 is 10,177. Of those 10,177 separation determinations, 80% were timely. DOL standard for timely separation determinations is 80% of separation determination must be issued within 21 days from the detection date. Based on information provided by the Unisys Mapper System, the statewide total number of non-separations determinations for 06-01-03 through 06-30-03 is 6,666. Of those 6,666 non-separations determinations, 60% were timely. DOL standard for timely non-separation determinations is 80% of non-separations determinations must be issued (mailed) within 14 days from the detection date. All Local Offices, Processing Centers, and Adjudication Centers are asked to provide a Mapper print out providing their office stats. We would like to congratulate all the offices meeting or exceeding 80% timely separation determinations, and also those who continue to bring your percentages up. We encourage all offices to do the same.

Collection Stats

3rd SFY Quarter (April - June 2003):
43,400 Accounts Worked
14,600 Collection Letters Mailed
17,000 Telephone Calls Handled
\$7,528,135 Collected

SFY Totals (July 1, 2002 – June 30, 2003):
150,400 Accounts Worked
54,000 Collection Letters Mailed
57,400 Telephone Calls Handled
\$21,945,885 Collected

"What is an Over Post?"

Over posting is a tactic we employ in our hiring strategy to put us in a position to become fully staffed, something that has not happened in a long while.

Traditionally, we would post a position at the time we knew of a vacancy and attempted to fill it as quickly as possible. This practice always left us short of our staff ceiling because so many people promoted from within.

In an effort to fill more positions we now post more positions than we have vacancies so that we always have recruitment actions in the "pipeline." The positive aspect to this is that we are coming ever so close to our staff ceilings. The down side is that as we inch closer to the ceiling we will have to cancel or delay some of these actions so that we do not exceed the ceiling levels assigned to UC sections. In fact we recently had to pull a posting for an auditor position because of this.

We will do our best to post the right number of positions so that we have a substantial chance to hit our ceilings but be aware of the fact that occasionally positions will be pulled as sections hit their ceilings. Please feel free to talk to the section chiefs and assistant chiefs about the status of their staff ceilings.

Web Site

We continually add additional links to improve our web site. The newest links provide tax information for the unemployed from the Internal Revenue Service in an English and Spanish version. This new link is listed at the bottom of the Deputy's page. Click here to see this new addition:

<http://www.state.oh.us/odjfs/ouc/DeputyDirector.stm>

School Claim Workload Soars

Staff that work in UC benefits know that claims for people who worked for school systems are more labor-intensive on the benefit system than other types of claims. They also require knowledge of specific law and policy provisions. Add to this the fact that the number of school claims filed this last June was up 52% from June 2002. The result, backlog, and more calls and e-mails from claimants wanting information. This burden has hit the field offices as well as the Claims Processing Section.

To try to rectify this problem staff in the Claims Processing Section have been working overtime since May 2003. Intermittents are used to answer calls and perform other duties to free fulltime staff to process claims. To assist the field offices in providing some information to the claimants, the Office of Operations is being provided with not only backlog numbers, but the by of the claims that are currently being worked on to give people an idea of when their claim will be handled. The Bureau of Benefits Payments appreciates all suggestions to help work through this problem.

Natural Disasters Hit the Bureau of Benefit Payments

There have been four President-declared disaster events in Ohio since November 10, 2002. This is an extraordinary number for Ohio. Generally there have been one to two events in any given year. The last one prior to November 2002 was a tornado in Xenia in September 2000.

When the President declares a disaster in one or more counties in a state, staff from the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) is dispatched to the state and coordinates activities with all agencies that provide services to individuals involved in the disaster. Disaster Unemployment Compensation established by the Disaster Unemployment Act (DUA) is one of these services. The Claims Processing Section in the Bureau of Benefit Payments is responsible for processing these types of claims. Terry Sword, Section Chief, keeps in close communication with disaster officials and ensures that claims are processed promptly.

ODJFS to Host National Conference

ODJFS won the bid to host the 2004 Interstate Benefits Training Conference. It will be held in Columbus in September 2004. Attendance at this conference is from staff around the country that includes program users as well as MIS ICON staff and can run as high as 300 to 400. Terry Sword, Chief of the Claims Processing Section is a member of the national Interstate Benefits Committee that sponsors these conferences. She and section staff, Geri Rosser, will attend this year's conference in St. Petersburg, Florida to monitor conference activities and obtain knowledge from the staff's experiences. Every other year this conference is in St. Petersburg so much can be learned from them.

The Bureau of Benefit Payments has established a committee to develop and hold next year's conference. This committee's first priority will be to pick a hotel. Information obtained from next month's conference in St. Petersburg will be reviewed and used to establish a registration form and create lists of tasks for committee members.

Succession Planning

The Succession Planning team met on August 19, to talk about next steps in our quest to begin the development process for employees who seek to manage their careers here in JFS.

We reviewed the products we have received from the SHL Work Profile performed on frontline supervisors and the work product of Strategy Works, Inc. As a result of these two efforts we have a very nice picture of the competencies required to be a leader or manager in our organization. Our discussion included a presentation that will help everyone understand what succession planning is and what the benefits are to our organization. You can expect that very shortly we will be talking to you about this topic and asking some of our managers and

supervisors to begin working closely with employees to assist in building road maps to help them achieve career goals. If you are interested in taking steps to move your career forward we have a means to help you.

Please be ready to participate when we finalize our presentation and begin this discussion with you and your fellow employees.

Succession Planning Team

The Succession Planning Team has taken some very significant steps in the area of leadership development. Using Saville & Holdsworth Ltd. (SHL) Work Profiling System (WPS), the Columbus State Community College, with participation from ten (10) ODJFS front-line managers, systematically and objectively, identified core management competencies/attributes, core purpose and primary objectives, and ideal personal characteristics of the front-line managers.

Information gathered from the ten (10) subject matter experts (front-line managers), produced:

A Job Description report.

A list of Enhancers & Barriers to optimal on-the-job performance.

A set of standard interview questions.

A Person Specification report.

A Perspectives on Management Competencies report.

A Individual Development Planner.

A Performance Review form.

and

A Recommended SHL Assessment.

Basically, this program took some of this agency's best front-line managers and determined their competencies and attributes. Then a self-assessment was developed to help any individual identify how their own skill-sets measured-up to the skill-sets of the subject matter experts.

With the successful completion of the front-line managers profile, attention has now been turned towards middle managers. The same assessments will be conducted, and the result of the middle-managers profiling should be produced within weeks.

The Succession Planning Team is now focusing on the best ways to train, educate and/or develop individuals to be the best they can be. And with the product we now have and are developing, consideration is being given to the best way to package and promote this leadership opportunity. Additional planning steps will be to develop good assessment questions to put ourselves in the best position to identify the best candidate for these positions. Another potential use will be the development of a package to help recruit potential external folks into our organization.

Seeing how far we've come over the past several months, and knowing what we can do in the future, this truly is an exciting time to be involved in career and leadership development.

Employee Recognition

I'm sure that you are familiar or have heard of the GEM Program, maybe you have even used the program. Since its implementation, January 2003, employees in the agency have been recognizing their coworkers for "going the extra mile" with an on the spot GEM. Also since its implementation, 8,615 GEMs have been awarded across the agency. I encourage you to continue thanking your coworkers when they exhibit behaviors and/or produce results that reinforce the mission, vision and values of the agency with a GEM.

The other Agency recognition program is the "Employee/Team of the Month" Program. Three out of the past four award recipients have been employees from the Office of UC. Jeff Ault was the most recent employee selected (May 2003) and we asked Jeff if it's made a difference to be recognized by his fellow coworkers through the program. Jeff stated "he was honored by the nomination, but more importantly, the team deserves recognition for their hard work and positive outlook." Again, I encourage you to continue recognizing your fellow coworkers for good performance. This recognition is valuable to your coworkers and the organization.

Office of UC Facilitates Access to Information for Performance Evaluation

Wage information reported by employers to the Office of Unemployment Compensation is rapidly becoming the primary source of information to be used by workforce development agencies in determining the employment outcomes of individuals served through employment and training programs.

We are actively facilitating access to wage information while assuring confidentiality to meet federal and state legal standards. To enable access to wage information we have entered into agreements with the Department of Education, the Board of Regents, the Rehabilitation Services Commission, counties and local area contractors and service providers. Confidentiality requirements and access procedures have been built into one-stop MOUs, the SCOTI system, and inter-agency agreements under which access is provided.

Wage information collected by the Office of UC must be used in determining whether individuals served through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) enter employment the quarter after exiting the program and to determine the wage at placement. It is the primary source of information to be used in evaluating performance under the USDOL common performance measures to be implemented beginning July 1, 2004.

Ohio is among the leading states in facilitating access to wage information for local program delivery as well as securing wage information from other states where individuals may have located after being served in Ohio. We have actively pursued agreements with surrounding states and the federal government to determine employment outcomes on a national basis. Information from other states has been obtained through a Mid-Atlantic Region (DOL Region 2) information sharing arrangement as well as through the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) composed of 43 states and growing.

The use of and access to confidential information is coordinated through an inter-agency committee convened by the Office of UC on a monthly basis with representatives from the Governor's Workforce Policy Board, the Department of Education, the Board of Regents, the Rehabilitation Services Commission, and ODJFS offices of MIS, ORAA, Workforce Development, and Local Operations.

We expect to be ready to support workforce development agencies with the information they need not only to meet performance standards under WIA, but also to meet the statewide performance measures established through inter-agency workgroups and the Governor's Workforce Policy Board in the coming year. Questions concerning the access and use of wage information may be sent to Rich Gordon at 614-995-5627 or by email at Gordonr@odjfs.state.oh.us.

I hope that you find this newsletter helpful in keeping you up to date on the many issues that affect our workplace. Please email me any comments or questions that you have. Keep up the great work!