

4 Closing Doors—UI at a Glance: Build UI Systems That Are Understandable and Accessible

PROBLEM:

As states move primarily or exclusively to online claim-filing, disqualifications for procedural reasons have nearly doubled over the past five years, with 14 states denying more than 1 in every 10 claims for a reason that is essentially procedural.

SOLUTION:

States must ensure that new UI technologies and systems do not create barriers (e.g., procedural, technological, or informational) that prevent individuals from accessing UI benefits.

Access to UI benefits is a civil rights issue. Each state should take seriously its responsibility to ensure that new UI technologies and systems do not create barriers that may prevent individuals from accessing UI benefits. Worker advocates should engage state UI agencies to ensure that every state UI system includes the following:

1. **At least one easily accessible alternative means to online filing** (telephone or in-person customer assistance in the completion of an initial claim and weekly certification). All alternative filing mechanisms should be meaningful, accessible, and prominently publicized to claimants who cannot navigate the online systems.
2. **Compliance with anti-discrimination laws.** Online applications comply with their states' obligations to individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by translating applications into other

languages common in the state, as well as making sure that non-English speaking claimants have access to interpreter services (e.g. Language Line). This includes compliance with [UI Program Letter 02-16](#) and other applicable federal access guidance.

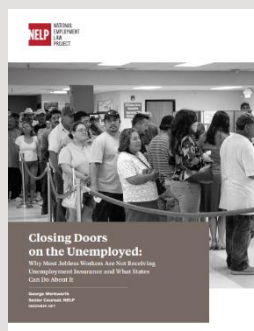
3. Necessity review. Review of legal requirements to insure that online documentation/ transactions are actually necessary and are constructed in a readily understandable manner.

4. Good cause. An up-to-date definition of good cause for late filing (or failure to comply with instruction) that recognizes and excuses good faith errors based on misunderstanding, an automated system feature, and first-time filing mistakes.

5. Access enforcement. A serious agency commitment to taking access and reciprocity seriously by making UI access an EEO enforcement priority, establishing regular lines of communication with representatives of underserved worker communities.

In addition, states should consider state supplemental funds for UI administration.

Many states have imposed special taxes for a variety of purposes including UI administration, job training, employment service administration, or special improvements in technology. Most recently, Pennsylvania addressed major UI service breakdowns by allotting a portion of employee UI taxes to improving services to claimants. States should maintain some form of dedicated tax that insures states have the resources to maintain efficient UI systems through the ebbs and flows of federal appropriations.



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