

# 3 Closing Doors—UI at a Glance: Make UI More Accessible

## PROBLEM:

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The percentage of unemployed workers applying for UI is dropping dramatically (by nearly one-fifth in the past five years). While some of this decline relates to improved economic conditions, state policies that discourage workers from applying for UI benefits and greater difficulty in online claim-filing processes are also major contributing causes.

## SOLUTION:

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As states transition to online systems, they should prioritize education, outreach, and program accessibility.

- 1. Improve access to UI and awareness of benefit rights.** One way to improve UI reciprocity is to make sure that unemployed workers who might benefit from UI know that they can apply, know how to apply, and receive any assistance they might need in the application process. This means that as state UI agencies transition to online systems, they should be more proactive about encouraging unemployed workers to file and making claim-filing systems accessible to workers at every educational level and regardless of their primary language.
- 2. Publicize UI.** Make sure that workers know what the program is through advertising and media outreach. Include website information and phone numbers that workers can access and call to learn about how to file for UI.

3. **Outreach.** Make sure employers notify separating employees about UI.

a. Rapid Response. State UI agencies should make sure that worker education about UI filing rights and agency assistance is part of the state’s rapid response approach to employer closings and mass layoffs.

b. Separation Notice. States can legally require that employers provide a formal notice to separating employees that includes basic information about the state’s UI program and how to apply for benefits.

4. **Fill in the Gaps.** States should publicize and expand ways the UI program can help underemployed workers and employers facing business disruptions, including:

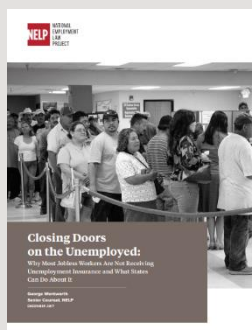
a. Educating workers and employers about partial unemployment insurance.

b. Making it easier to file for and access partial UI by legislatively adopting more progressive formulas that disregard part-time earnings at higher levels.

c. Enacting and promoting work-sharing programs that help employers facing economic downturns avert layoffs through prorated UI benefits.

5. **Employer-Assisted Filing.** State UI programs should provide methods for employers to file initial and weekly claims on behalf of their employees for short-term layoffs and business shutdowns, partial UI, and work-sharing claims.

6. **Set Application Standards.** States should treat the UI application rate as a performance standard in measuring the effectiveness of their program, setting a minimum application rate goal for newly unemployed workers.



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