

U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration
Office of Adult Services
Division of Adult and Dislocated Workers
National Dislocated Worker Workgroup

Quality Rapid Response Principles

1. *Timeliness*

The more quickly Rapid Response is begun, the more time is available for workers to overcome their fears and begin their re-entry into the workforce. Early intervention allows employers and workers to communicate about worker concerns, to take advantage of worker transition committee opportunities, to initiate peer worker projects, and to identify, design and oversee layoff aversion and incumbent worker strategies.

Having time available to undertake these activities can lead to improved morale and productivity and lower worker absenteeism due to reduced stress. There may also be fewer problems associated with workplace sabotage. In addition, the workers may be able to begin services, including training, before they are laid off. The sooner this process is begun, the sooner it can be completed and the more likely that the full array of needed services can be provided to help dislocated workers obtain re-employment. It is beneficial to conduct as much of the process as possible while workers are still employed or while unemployment insurance benefits, severance payments or other financial resources are available.

It is important as well to link Rapid Response with the Trade Act programs to deliver timely benefits and services to trade-affected workers.

Including Trade Act representatives or staff trained in Trade Act programs on Rapid Response teams can benefit workers through earlier filing of Trade Adjustment Assistance or

North America Free Trade Act-Transitional Adjustment Assistance petitions, thereby increasing the likelihood that the petitions will be approved by the time of the layoff. The Rapid Response team should also gather information from the employer that would assist in early identification of firms whose workers might be secondarily affected.

2. *Convenience*

Affected workers are better served when meetings and other Rapid Response events are provided on-site rather than off-site, and when individuals are not required to accommodate their working schedules to One-Stop Center regular operating hours. "On-site" means at a convenient place for the workers. This can be at a work site, when the employer permits and there is space available; at a site close to the workplace; or at a local community center or union hall. On-site promotes convenience and ease of access for the workers. Also, the workers are in familiar surroundings and near their coworkers. Ongoing services may or may not be provided on-site depending on various factors including logistics and how many workers are involved. Special hours outside of regular operating hours of the One-Stop may be needed to assure optimal access to early intervention services.

3. *Customer Choice*

The State Rapid Response Dislocated Worker Unit (DWU), in collaboration with local Boards and One-Stop operators, ensures that as many Rapid Response strategies are available and

used as are appropriate to the event. The DWU and One-Stop, in consultation with the employer, the worker and worker representative (and the union if present), will determine which services will be made available. Customization of services for the specific population being laid off enhances the success of Rapid Response in helping people transition back to employment.

It is recommended that Rapid Response practitioners administer a worker survey prior to or during orientation sessions. A survey can provide a snapshot of worker interests and profiles and is one of many pieces of information that need to be gathered. The usefulness of the survey data will depend on the information available on the dislocation at that point, and how the workforce is facing the reality of the layoff. It is important that every worker voices his or her needs.

4. *Consistent and Accurate Information*

Rapid Response practitioners provide information to workers, employers, worker representatives, and the community. The information concerns the availability of services such as unemployment compensation, labor market information and strategies for re-employment, as well as Trade Act program information where appropriate. In order to maximize the utility of the information, it needs to be consistent, accurate, locally-driven and timely. Also, in the best situations, information will be specific to the work site and will include non-job specific referrals to services and agencies. Rapid Response staff and their partners at the state and local level must engage in an ongoing information gathering process and establish contacts that can provide information for dislocated workers.

5. *Leveraging Resources*

State Rapid Response resources, combined with other available resources, should provide workers with services they need to ease the adjustment process and return to productive employment. These should include services

that are provided by the employer, union, community (including volunteer, religious, and service organizations) and other partners. Resources can be in-kind (equipment, staff time, space and so on) or cash. The foundation for leveraging resources for a specific layoff should be laid in advance by identifying all the resources available and thinking through the needs of dislocated workers. When learning about a specific layoff, these resources can be fine-tuned and organized to meet the needs of that group of workers. By leveraging and coordinating resources, a wider range of assistance can be directed at the effort to help workers and their families adjust to job loss and help the workers re-enter the workforce. Also, leveraging resources shows the workers that there is a support network for them beyond Rapid Response activities and the local One-Stop.

Early intervention and a timely certification of Trade Act petitions provide an additional resource to One-Stop operators to design individual service strategies for trade-affected workers that may include job search and relocation allowance, training, and income support in addition to the mix of core and intensive services provided to all dislocated workers in a One-Stop center. Through cooperative arrangements with One-Stop partners, as well as with company and union officials, community-based organizations, and agencies with federal, State and local funding, a more effective and efficient use of available resources is possible.

The delivery of services provided by different agencies, programs or groups needs to be seamless; that is, the differences in programs or source of funding should be invisible to the customer. In order for this to occur, thorough coordination among partners and stakeholders is essential. The basis of coordination is a solid understanding of one another's goals and practices, and a willingness to work together so the customers (the workers and employer) have a smooth and productive experience.

Written agreements, procedures, and common information systems can all help. These agreements can be based on a master state-developed agreement that is similar to an MOU or can be based on a standard framework that is customized to each dislocation event. A good communication system among all parties is also essential.

Fully integrating the Trade Act programs into the One-Stop service delivery system ensures that trade-affected workers have access to the same comprehensive services as all dislocated workers. Providing services to trade-affected workers through One-Stop outreach, intake and assessment processes should ensure a seamless delivery of services where the various programs are invisible to the customer and opportunities for increased performance outcomes are maximized.

7. Active Promotion

Active promotion means having a strategy for making employers, workers and others aware that Rapid Response exists and is available to help. It can involve the dissemination of information through brochures, presentations at meetings with employer groups (Chambers of Commerce and others) and unions, public service announcements, and networking activities. A comprehensive marketing and promotion approach is necessary to ensure that employers, workers, and others (organized labor, community groups, etc.) involved in dislocation events are aware and take full advantage of the wide range of reemployment services available to all dislocated workers. When promotion is an ongoing activity, Rapid Response is more likely to be successful.

8. Layoff Aversion

Layoffs should be averted through the use of strategies that help retain or save jobs, if possible. With a range of tools and relationships with other programs and organizations, the Rapid Response team is in an ideal position to coordinate aversion

strategies. In many cases, the Rapid Response staff may refer companies to other entities that can help to avert a layoff. The aim of the aversion could be to help the company make changes so that layoffs are reduced or completely avoided. In other cases, the strategy will be to find a buyer so that the layoffs are averted in that way.

9. Measures of Success

Measurable goals established by State and local programs will provide valuable feedback to allow staff to determine whether Rapid Response activities are successful and to identify potential problems. By determining whether a goal has been met, Rapid Response staff will have the information necessary to make changes that will ensure continuous improvement of Rapid Response activities.

10. Partnerships

Partnerships help communities pull together during a dislocation because they can lead to the allocation of additional resources and information to address a dislocation. Some common partners that are involved in Rapid Response events are the local One-Stop operator, Unemployment Insurance, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), and local economic development agencies. Other groups that are also sometimes involved in dislocation events include a variety of One-Stop partners such as vocational rehabilitation, child care agencies, mental health services, and community-based organizations. The involvement of additional partners in a particular Rapid Response event is flexible to reflect the needs of that unique workforce.

For more information on Rapid Response and on other Dislocated Worker issues, visit the U.S. DOL's Dislocated Worker website at www.doleta.gov/layoff.

September 2001