

## **Unemployment Insurance (UI) Benefit Operations Self-Assessment Tool: *Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA)***

This self-assessment review of the state's Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) functional area will examine DUA processes as well as program performance. The reviewer will consult with appropriate staff regarding each operational element, as necessary, to ensure accurate and complete information is reported. This will include Unemployment Insurance (UI) administrators, the office/call center managers, and supervisors.

Upon completion of this review, the results should be shared with UI administrators, program manager(s), and supervisors. The self-assessment findings can provide a very good analysis of the state's DUA processes and can be used to drive process/program-improvement initiatives.

A comments section is provided for each operational element, which the reviewer should use to document any observations regarding issues identified related to that specific operational element. This space may also be used to provide any additional information relating to a specific question in this section. In doing so, the reviewer should reference the specific question by number and insert the additional information related to that question.

In addition, a concluding comments section is provided at the end of the self-assessment instrument to capture any strengths identified by the reviewer in this functional area which could constitute a successful practice(s) to be shared with other states; any issues identified by the reviewer in the functional area that adversely impacts the state's performance and to identify any possible corrective actions to address the issue; and general comments about this functional area that are not covered elsewhere. The reviewer can provide information here that Federal reviewers and state UI administrators and managers can use to assess program operations and the state's effectiveness in providing quality services in this functional area.

***Save your entries regularly as you complete the review and when you close the self-assessment to ensure your answers are saved.***

## SECTION 1: Procedures, Policies, and Confidentiality

The purpose of this section is to review the policies and procedures provided by the agency for staff to use in operating this functional area of the UI program. These are the written (in hard-copy, electronically, or both formats) standards, instructions, and guidelines that staff regularly use in the operation of the program. The reviewer may utilize resources that include manuals, handbooks, desk aids, computer help screens, training guides, organized collections of procedures or policies, or other readily accessible instructions which can help staff do their work correctly, including [ET Handbook No. 356](#), the Disaster Unemployment Assistance Handbook, for guidance on the DUA Program. Instructions will normally include general information such as compilations of relevant laws and regulations, including the DUA regulations at [20 CFR 625](#), as well as detailed instructions for carrying out individual jobs in the agency. Reviewers may need to look in many places to examine all relevant instructions and consult with UI administrators, office/call center managers and supervisors and the state's DUA coordinator.

The reviewer will document whether the state has policies and procedures sufficient to provide guidance and instruction to staff responsible for processing DUA claims. Existing policies and procedures should be examined to determine whether they are up-to-date and address all law changes, organizational changes, and technology changes that occurred during the review period.

### Helpful Info.

Question 2: The reviewer will document the DUA activities that are covered by the state's written procedures. Any listed activities that are not included in written procedures should be noted in the Comments area at the end of this section noting the need for development.

Question 6: The reviewer should review requirements of [20 CFR 625.2](#) concerning the definition of eligible DUA claimants to determine whether the state conforms to the requirements set forth.

Question 7: The reviewer should review requirements of [20 CFR 625.8\(a\)](#) concerning filing deadlines to determine whether the state conforms to the requirements set forth.

Question 8a: The reviewer should indicate all methods the state uses to verify DUA claimants' identity, and indicate for each method whether the process is conducted in real-time or through a batch process. Please insert the name or description of any additional verification entities used by the state in the "Other" option.

Question 10: The reviewer should review requirements of [20 CFR 625.6\(e\)](#) concerning proof-of-earnings requirements for unemployed and self-employed individuals to determine whether the state conforms to the requirements set forth.

**Helpful Info. (continued)**

Question 11: The reviewer should review requirements of [20 CFR 625.2\(f\)](#) concerning the payment of DUA benefits only during the Disaster Assistance Period to determine whether the state conforms to the requirements set forth.

Question 12: The reviewer should review requirements of [20 CFR 625.17](#) concerning the development of a communications plan with provisions for the timely issuance of a Declaration Announcement and an Amended Declaration Announcement, as necessary, to determine whether the state conforms to the requirements set forth.

Question 13a: The reviewer should review requirements of [20 CFR 625.6\(b\)](#) concerning the quarterly minimum weekly benefit amount updates to determine whether the state conforms to the requirements set forth.

Question 16: The reviewer should review requirements of [OMB Circular A-102](#) for fiscal reporting requirements to determine whether the state conforms to the requirements set forth.

Question 17: The reviewer should review requirements of [20 CFR 625.16](#) for statistical reporting requirements to determine whether the state conforms to the requirements set forth.

Question 17a: The reviewer should consult with UI managers and the DUA coordinator to determine which agency staff is responsible for preparation of funding requests and for the development of the funding estimates for the initial disbursement request.

Question 19: The reviewer should review requirements of [29 CFR Part 31](#) and [29 CFR Part 32](#) Federal Equal Employment Opportunity laws and regulations to determine whether the state conforms to the requirements set forth.

Question 20: The reviewer should review requirements of [20 CFR 603.5](#) concerning confidentiality of DUA claim records to determine whether the state conforms to the requirements set forth.

Question 21: The reviewer will determine whether the state has procedures to request FEMA approval to have staff located at Disaster Recovery Centers to take DUA claims, as failure to secure prior approval will prohibit the use of administrative funds for this purpose.

## SECTION 2: Training

Managers/employees should possess and maintain a level of expertise which enables them to accomplish their assigned duties. Training systems should be sufficient to ensure that personnel understand and perform their duties properly. When reviewing training systems, the reviewer should consult with the state's training unit/staff and the DUA coordinator to examine formal training procedures (e.g., the training is conducted using an established schedule and using set guidelines to make judgments about the quality of work being produced). The state should have procedures for identifying general and specific training needs, for developing a training curriculum and training materials, and for delivering training as needs are identified. The reviewer must examine training methods used to ensure staff that takes and processes DUA claims is adequately trained.

### Helpful Info.

Question 3: The reviewer should determine whether staff that will take DUA claims in the event of a declared disaster have received training on the current technology that will be utilized for claims taking, etc.

Question 4: The reviewer will determine whether DUA training is provided to staff in other program areas, such as Appeals, BPC, etc., to ensure staff in all impacted areas is properly trained on DUA.

Question 5a: If the state took DUA claims during the review period, the reviewer should document any training needs that were identified as the result of this experience.

Question 5c: If training needs were identified in question 5a but the state has not yet developed and/or delivered training on the issue(s), the reviewer should document the reason(s) the training hasn't been given.

## SECTION 3: Workload Analysis/Management Controls

The reviewer will examine state's ability to implement the DUA claims program and manage DUA claims workloads—particularly during periods when resources are strained by the circumstances of the disaster—and will also document if the state experienced backlogs in processing initial and weekly DUA claims. The reviewer will interview office/call center managers, supervisors, and the DUA coordinator to thoroughly document the state's practices for managing its DUA program.

### **Helpful Info.**

Question 1a: If the state experienced any Federally-declared disasters during the review period, the reviewer will document the beginning and ending date of each Disaster Assistance Period.

Question 2a: If the state experienced a declared disaster during the review period, and experienced a backlog in processing DUA initial claims, the reviewer will explain the reason(s) for the backlog.

## **SECTION 4: Performance Management**

The reviewer will examine the state's practices for monitoring program performance and compliance with Federal and state law and regulations. If the state has a performance management unit, the reviewer should consult with performance management staff in addition to UI administrators, office/call center managers and supervisors, and the DUA coordinator when completing this section.

### **Helpful Info.**

Question 1: The reviewer should consult with UI managers and the DUA Coordinator to identify the unit or office that is responsible for monitoring the readiness and performance of the state's DUA operations.

Question 1a: The reviewer should consult with UI managers and the DUA Coordinator to identify the methods used for monitoring the readiness and performance of the state's DUA operations.

Question 3: The reviewer should consult with the DUA Coordinator to determine whether the state conducts a pre-disaster checklist to verify all mandatory DUA processes are implemented.

## SECTION 5: Information Technology

When completing this section of the self-assessment the reviewer should consult with UI and IT administrators, office/call center managers, and the DUA coordinator. IT projects relating to DUA that were completed during the review period and that are planned for the future will be detailed. The reviewer will assess the IT department's delivery of programming and technical support to the DUA functional areas, particularly if the state experienced a disaster declaration during the review period.

### Helpful Info.

Question 1b: The reviewer will describe any major IT projects that were conducted during the review period that impacted the DUA program and provide information regarding the project status and, if completed, the success of the project.

Question 2: The reviewer should consult with the DUA coordinator and IT manager to obtain information regarding the state's use of a telephone IVR system for filing DUA continued claims.

Question 3: The reviewer will indicate all methods used by the state for taking DUA initial claims.

Question 4a: If the state's computer system isn't updated quarterly with the DUA minimum weekly benefit amount, the reviewer will describe the methods used by the state to ensure the correct amounts will be used in the event of a declared disaster.

Question 5a: The reviewer should consult with the DUA coordinator and the IT manager to obtain information regarding the state's ability to "lock" its DUA Internet initial claims system when not in an active Disaster Assistance Period to prevent the filing of unauthorized DUA claims.

## SECTION 6: Claimant/Employer Access & Communication

The reviewer will examine the state's methods for taking DUA claims to ensure they comply with requirements set forth in Federal law. The reviewer will consult with UI administrators, office/call center managers and supervisors, and the DUA coordinator when completing this section of the self-assessment. The reviewer will examine the state's procedures for taking paper claims, handling incoming initial/weekly claims by mail and/or fax, storage and retrieval of paper claims, use of dedicated staff to open/sort/distribute claims for processing and incoming proof of wages and employment documents, provision of dedicated faxes for incoming mail, and

the methods used to ensure that forms contain proper mailing instructions. The state's methods for taking DUA initial and weekly claims will be reviewed to ensure they meet Federal regulations regarding accessibility.

### **Helpful Info.**

Question 1: For each type of DUA claimant indicated, the reviewer will indicate the initial claim filing methods used by the state. Check all responses that apply.

Question 3: The reviewer will indicate the methods used by the state to publicize DUA initial claims filing methods.

Question 5: The reviewer will indicate all DUA claims functions which are made available to claimants for each noted communications method.

Question 6: For each method the state uses for taking DUA initial claims (Internet, telephone, in-person, and mail) the reviewer will indicate the methods used by the state to deliver Benefits Rights Information to DUA claimants.

Question 7: If the state had a declared disaster during the review period, the reviewer will provide the disaster declaration number. If the state did not have a declared disaster during the review period, the review should skip to "Comments" or to the next Section.

Question 8: If the state had a declared disaster during the review period, the reviewer will provide the percentage of DUA initial claims filed by all methods used by the state. The reviewer may consult with the DUA coordinator or IT manager for this information.

Question 10: If the state had a second declared disaster during the review period, the reviewer will provide the disaster declaration number. If the state did not have a second declared disaster during the review period, the reviewer should skip to "Comments" or to the next section.

## **SECTION 7: Operational Efficiency/Resource Allocation**

Through interviews with UI administrators, office/call center managers, and the DUA coordinator, the reviewer will identify efficiencies and automation the state has used to improve performance and provide better service to the public.

### **Helpful Info.**

Question 1: The reviewer should consult with the DUA coordinator to determine whether they maintain a relationship with the state's emergency management organization and/or FEMA to foster communication and ensure early notification of pending disasters.

## **SECTION 8: Staffing**

The reviewer will examine how the state handles the responsibilities of the DUA coordinator, any impact on staff workhours if a declared disaster occurred during the review period, and the state's preparedness to staff DUA operations in the event of a declared disaster. The reviewer should consult with UI administrators, office/call center managers, the state agency's human resource manager, and the DUA coordinator when completing this section of the self-assessment.

### **Helpful Info.**

Question 1: If the state does not have a designated DUA coordinator, the reviewer should consult with the UI manager to obtain information regarding who handles the coordinator's responsibilities.

Question 2a: The reviewer may consult with the state agency's Human Resources or Fiscal departments for information regarding overtime usage.

## **SECTION 9: Fiscal Management**

The reviewer should consult with UI administrators, office/call center managers, the state agency's fiscal officer, and the DUA coordinator to determine whether the state's practices for managing its grants are in compliance with Federal and state law.

### Helpful Info.

Question 1: The reviewer will describe the methods the state uses to monitor DUA benefit payment expenditures from the DUA grant, such as time and cost accounting systems; and may consult with the UI manager, the DUA coordinator or the state agency's Fiscal department for this information.

Question 3: The reviewer will describe the methods the state uses to monitor DUA administrative funding expenditures, such as time and cost accounting systems; and may consult with the UI manager, the DUA coordinator or the state agency's Fiscal department for this information.

Question 4: The reviewer will describe the methods the state uses to monitor DUA administrative funding expenditures to ensure they remain within 15% of the state's funding obligation from FEMA, and may consult with the UI manager, the DUA coordinator or the state agency's Fiscal department for this information.

## SECTION 10: Concluding Summary Comments

For the following sets of questions, consider the overall operations related to DUA. This is an opportunity to identify successful practices and/or any needed corrective action measures along with any other general comments or observations concerning this functional area of UI Benefits. These comments are intended to provide Federal reviewers and the state's UI administrators with additional insight into these program areas, focusing on methods that have proven to be successful and can be capitalized upon or areas where corrective measures may be needed.

The first comment area provides the reviewer an opportunity to share any examples of good and/or exemplary operations in this functional area after reviewing each operational element. The reviewer can use this space to identify any policy, procedure or operation that would constitute a successful practice that can be shared with other states.

The second comment area provides the reviewer to document issues detected during the review that are having an adverse impact on the functional area, affecting the state's performance, ability to meet performance standards or customer service. It is also a place to recommend corrective actions for the agency's leadership to consider implementing.

The final comment area in this section provides the reviewer space to share any additional comments, concerns or observations regarding the state's operations in this functional area.