

RI.gov:

Providence, RI - Governor Lincoln D. Chafee announced today that, through several federal funding awards, the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT) will be able to hire back 15 full-time front-line staff in its unemployment insurance call center. The positions will be filled by recently laid-off DLT employees, and call backs will be by seniority.

Governor Chafee stated, "As Governor, I have been concerned with the effects of decreased staffing levels at the Department of Labor and Training, and have been awaiting news of additional federal funding for unemployment insurance staff. I am heartened that the return of these trained staff members will help reduce wait times for those seeking unemployment insurance benefits, and am extremely grateful to the U.S. Department of Labor and the Congressional Delegation for their support."

Funding for nine positions comes from \$780,000 in federal "Supplemental Budget Requests" – similar to competitive grants from the U.S. Department of Labor-for which the State of Rhode Island had applied earlier this year. The U.S. Department of Labor allotted an additional \$537,000 to fund six additional RI call center positions as part of a nationwide effort to help states struggling with staffing shortages in the area of employment security.

Due to fewer available federal dollars, the RI Department of Labor and Training in July laid off 65 employees – 51 of whom had worked in the area of unemployment insurance. In August, the U.S. Department of Labor allowed Rhode Island to use funding previously restricted for technology in order to rehire seven call center staff for the 2013 fiscal year. This latest influx of federal funding will bring the total number of recalled unemployment insurance staff members to 22.

Director of Labor and Training Charles J. Fogarty added, "Even when we knew that layoffs were inevitable for this fiscal year, we continued to work with the Governor's Office, the Congressional Delegation and the U.S. Department of Labor to find additional funding options for unemployment insurance staff. We are extremely grateful for all their efforts on behalf of Rhode Island job seekers, who have faced a longer and steeper recession than their counterparts in many other states."

Last month, more than 20,000 job seekers received unemployment insurance benefits in Rhode Island. Last week, wait times for the unemployment insurance call center averaged 43 minutes.

Related links

Department or agency: Office of the Governor

Online: <http://www.governor.ri.gov>

Release date: 09-27-2012