



Sandra Winston
AWIB Director



Artee Williams
AESD Director

Rapid Response provides information to make layoff, closure transitions easier

Expecting a layoff or closure? Call the Arkansas Workforce Dislocated Worker Unit to get Rapid Response services to help employees prepare for the future.

The unit is a division of the Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force, which is comprised of the Arkansas Employment Security Department/Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, Arkansas Department of Workforce Education, Arkansas Department of Economic Development and the Arkansas AFL-CIO.

When the Arkansas Workforce Dislocated Worker Unit is notified of a layoff of 50 or more employees or a closure affecting at least 25 employees, Rapid Response begins.

The unit first notifies the employer and sets up a meeting. During this meeting both sides exchange information such as why the layoff/closure occurred, how many people are affected, etc.

"All this information is confidential," said Rebecca Schwarz, a Rapid Response specialist. "It's done at the employer's discretion."

After this meeting, a planning meeting is scheduled. Local members of the Governor's Task Force, other state agencies and community members (the Chamber of Commerce, mayor and county judge) attend to

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discuss what services are available for the workers.

Finally, a workshop is planned for the company's employees. Representatives from other agencies attend and inform the workers about unemployment insurance, training opportunities, insurance, job service, credit counseling and other topics.

Other services the Governor's Task Force provides include career and education fairs. The Task Force also provides a mobile RV onsite. Employees can use the computers and education resources to search for jobs after attending the workshop.

All of these services are free and beneficial to employers.

"If the employer keeps the employee informed about the timeline of the layoff/closure, it will reflect in higher moral, higher productivity, lower absences and lower unemployment insurance costs," said Billy Vanlandingham, a Rapid Response specialist.

To contact the unit, call (501) 682-1818.

Tax credit helps pay insurance premiums

The Health Coverage Tax Credit is a program by the Internal Revenue Service to help pay health insurance premiums for qualifying individuals.

The federal tax credit pays 65 percent of eligible individuals' qualified health plan premiums.

Those receiving certain Trade Adjustment Assistance, Alternative TAA benefits-50 and older, and Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation benefits who are between 55 and 65 years old may be eligible. They also must be eligible for or receiving Trade Readjustment Allowance to be eligible for the tax credit.

Health plans that qualify include COBRA, a spouse's plan in which the employer pays less than 50 percent, and an employee's health coverage that began at least 30 days before the employment ended.

To find out more, call Rob Marek at (501) 371-1009.

Williams, Winston named new directors, tour state

Artee Williams is the new director of the Arkansas Employment Security Department, and Sandra Winston is the new executive director of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board.

Since becoming the directors, both have been traveling around the state visiting with employees of both agencies and those at the Arkansas Workforce Centers. While at the meetings, the directors listened to employees' concerns, questions and comments regarding agency matters.

Both directors recently began visiting with members of the Local Workforce Investment Boards in the 10 areas as well.

June 2004

Employer & Legislative Newsletter

AESD AWIB *update*

**Arkansas Employment Security Department
Arkansas Workforce Investment Board**

Arkansas Employment Security Department
P.O. Box 2981
Little Rock, AR 72203

AWIB releases occupation CD

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board recently released a CD listing the Top 10 Occupations in Arkansas by educational level (on-the-job training, associate's degree or bachelor's degree or higher).

The CD includes the top 10 skills for each occupation and average wages as determined by the Arkansas Occupational Employment Statistics Wage Survey. The CD also includes brief videos featuring workers performing each occupation.

To obtain a free CD, contact Shirley Johnson at (501) 683-0035.

Can your community benefit from federal tax credits?

For more information,
go to our Web site at

[www.accessarkansas.org/esd/
ForEmployer/A_wotc.htm](http://www.accessarkansas.org/esd/ForEmployer/A_wotc.htm).



You can also call
your local
Arkansas
Workforce Center
or
1-866-330-9459.

Revised reporting software ready

The revised Arkansas Employment Security Department Diskette Reporting System software is available.

Some employers use the software to report their quarterly employment wage and contribution reports. The software was revised because the annual taxable wages employers pay per employee increased to \$10,000 on Jan. 1.

To download the free software, go to www.arkansas.gov/esd. Then click on For Employer, Magnetic Media for UI Wage Reporting - Diskette, and **DOWNLOAD DOS VERSION 3.0.**