

Connecticut Department of Labor

At a Glance

DANTÉ BARTOLOMEO, Commissioner

Daryle Dudzinski, Deputy Commissioner

Mark Polzella, Deputy Commissioner

Established - 1873

Statutory Authority - C.G.S. Sec. 31-1 to 31-403 (excluding chapter 568)

Central Office - 200 Folly Brook Blvd., Wethersfield, CT 06109-1114

Average number of full-time employees - 580

Recurring operating expenses 2021-22: Federal - \$137,205,533; State - \$70,252,739

Capital Outlay: Federal - \$11,587; State - \$3,231,720; CEPF - \$294,455; P&I - \$1,294,702

Website: www.ct.gov/dol

Mission

The mission of the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) is to protect and promote the interests of Connecticut's workers and assist workers and employers to be competitive in the global economy. The department accomplishes its mission by providing a variety of services that benefit the workplace. These services include income support that assists workers between jobs and stimulates the local economy; protection on the job (through statutes covering wages, safety regulations, working conditions, and on-site health and safety consultations); work-related training programs; Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAP) and other workforce pipeline initiatives; job search and recruitment; tax credit incentive programs; and maintenance of the collective bargaining relationship.

As the Connecticut arm of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the department collects, analyzes, and disseminates workforce data to inform businesses, the general public, educational institutions, and government planners and policymakers about employment issues and trends. Informational and enforcement responsibilities that serve both workers and employers are assigned to the department by statutes that cover the payment of wages, collection of Unemployment Insurance (UI) taxes, payment of UI benefits, health and safety, employment of minors, family and medical leave, representation by labor organizations, and resolution of labor disputes.

The department provides both employment and unemployment services to workers and employers, with a strong emphasis on continuous improvement in terms of quality and customer satisfaction. The department's website (www.ct.gov/dol) is highly utilized by jobseekers and employers interested in job fairs, wage standards, unemployment insurance, labor market

information, and a wide variety of other workforce services. CTDOL's major programs, Unemployment Insurance and the WagnerPeysner Labor Exchange/Employment Services, are federally funded. Federal funding for the administration of the state's UI program is tied to the unemployment rate. Connecticut's unemployment rate has ranged from 7.3 percent to 4.0 percent during 2021 to 2022. CTDOL continues to work with a coalition of business, labor, and state and federal government agencies to develop federal legislation that would, among other things, increase administrative funding for UI and employment services.

Statutory Responsibility

The Connecticut Department of Labor assists workers and employers to help them become—and stay—competitive in the global economy. CTDOL administers income support for workers who are between jobs; provides employment search assistance and job training; ensures wage protection and fair treatment while on the job; trains the next generation workforce through our Registered Apprenticeship Program; and provides data and analysis on the economy, wages, and the workplace. Services offered to employers include workplace data; labor market information, recruitment assistance; regional job fairs; programs to help maintain and improve employee skills such as apprenticeship and incumbent worker training; CONN-OSHA guidance and consulting services; tax credit information; informational services to workers and employers; enforcement responsibilities including payment of wages, health and safety, employment of minors, family and medical leave, and representation by labor organizations; and resolution of labor disputes. Pursuant to reporting requirements of CGS 4-61mm, CTDOL does not have a volunteer program.

Departments and Units

The Office of Apprenticeship Training (OAT)

The Office of Apprenticeship Training administers Connecticut's Registered Apprenticeship system, which is supported by the state's general fund, federal funding, and industry registration fees. Registered apprenticeship is a proven solution for training and retaining talent and offers individuals the opportunity to earn while they learn valuable skills.

OAT provides registration, monitoring, technical assistance, and consulting services for the administration of apprenticeship agreements. Registered apprenticeship provides a structured learning strategy that combines on-the-job training with related classroom instruction. The office also qualifies employers for tax credits; works in collaboration with the Department of Education, Department of Consumer Protection, and other state agencies; and performs outreach to veterans, employer groups, unions, schools, and community-based organizations to promote Registered Apprenticeship and Registered Pre-Apprenticeship programs. Currently there are over 1,775 active employer-sponsors and over 6,300 registered apprentices enrolled in the program. In addition, over 1,400 apprentices completed their apprenticeship training while over 3,350 new apprentices were registered in the program this year.

Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative: With the support of the General Assembly and the Bond Commission, five regional partnerships have implemented training programs administered by CTDOL under the Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative. Program proposals from the state's five Workforce Development Board Regional Partnerships were submitted to and accepted by CTDOL as follows:

- The Capital Workforce Partnership - Manufacturing, Healthcare, Construction & Transportation
- Eastern Workforce Investment Board Partnership - Healthcare & Manufacturing
- Workplace Inc. Partnership - Healthcare & Manufacturing
- Northwest WIB Partnership - Manufacturing focused on plastics manufacturers
- Workforce Alliance Partnership - Hospitality

This funding provides support to train qualified entry-level workers for manufacturers and employers in industries experiencing work shortages. The certified pre-apprenticeship training programs were developed in consultation with employers or modeled after the Eastern CT Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative in consultation with industry partners. These training programs continue to address Connecticut's sustained workforce shortage by expanding the number of manufacturing workforce pipeline job placements within the state and providing training and job placement to healthcare and other industry sectors which continue to experience long-term workforce shortages.

State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity, and Innovation (SAEEI): The U.S. Department of Labor awarded a 4-year, \$10 million *State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity, and Innovation (SAEEI)* grant to the Connecticut Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship Training. The SAEEI Grant is effective from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2025. The purpose of the grant funding is: 1) support the development of new, innovative apprenticeship program(s) in industries severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and 2) provide career opportunities to individuals who were impacted by the pandemic with a particular focus on unemployed, under-served, and under-represented populations.

Yale New Haven Health System (YNHHS) was selected by CTDOL as its partner for this grant to fund a new Patient Care Associate/Patient Care Technician (PCA/PCT) Registered Apprenticeship Program. This program is providing classroom learning and on-the-job training to a minimum of 1,250 individuals over the 4-year life of the grant. These individuals will receive full-time pay and benefits and earn a nationally recognized certificate of completion. The program will produce highly skilled and capable PCAs/PCTs which will reduce employer turnover rates. YNHHS Connecticut-based hospitals hire approximately 400 PCAs/PCTs annually. YNHHS and CTDOL partnered with the CT NAACP to encourage members to participate in these programs. Many candidates are also from the communities surrounding the hospitals.

Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA)

In State Fiscal Year 21-22, CTDOL received **\$29,236,281** in federal funding, provided workforce services, and helped state workforce partners increase the availability of employment and training assistance. CTDOL and the Workforce Development Boards created new employment and training initiatives to promote employment opportunities that show the best potential for job growth and funded projects that strengthen Connecticut's businesses and workforce.

Rapid Response (RR): The state Rapid Response (RR) Unit, in conjunction with local Workforce Development Boards and other One-Stop partners, is responsible under WIOA Title I (20 CFR, Part 682, Subpart C) for carrying out layoff and closings rapid response activities statewide. Headed by the Connecticut Department of Labor, the RR Unit reaches out to employers contemplating or experiencing layoffs and plant closings. Employers, affected workers, and their unions are provided information on layoff aversion, mass layoff/plant closing, unemployment insurance, WIOA, One-Stop employment services, and various labor laws. The RR Unit also makes referrals to, and coordinates services with, CTDOL units, other agencies, and programs for special intervention or supportive services applicable to dislocated workers and struggling businesses.

During the period of July 2021 to June 2022, the RR Unit made 174 initial outreach calls regarding potential layoffs and responded to nine Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) notices affecting 1,371 workers. WARN lends timely re-employment assistance to workers who will soon lose their jobs. This federal program requires Connecticut employers with 100 or more full-time workers to give 60-days advance notice of a plant closing or mass layoff allowing state and municipal entities to offer workforce assistance to affected employees prior to layoffs. Additionally, RR staff made 80 presentations to 685 impacted workers. The presentations included two Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) information sessions, 29 WIOA information workshops, and 37 webinars for workers from companies that did not avail themselves of Rapid Response services prior to layoff.

Additionally, 1,427 webinar invitations were sent to workers whose employers either declined pre-layoff presentations or who were identified by the Connecticut Department of Labor after layoff as being part of a mass reduction in force.

As a means of layoff aversion, RR staff also reached out to 57 employers that were participating in CTDOL's Shared Work program to advise them of their status and make appropriate referrals to Economic Development or other resources if the employers indicated that they continued to have difficulty emerging from a downturn in business.

In December of this program year, RR Unit staff began an outreach initiative to target unemployed workers who were not part of a mass layoff but met the definition of a Dislocated Worker based on the fact that they had been laid off or terminated, were eligible for unemployment benefits, and who had unsuccessfully sought employment for

a minimum of four weeks. A total of 15,484 WIOA outreach letters were sent to workers who met that definition. Of those, 339 workers attended a WIOA information webinar, and 141 of those attendees were referred to WIOA programs for enrollment.

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program: The Trade Act of 1974 established Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) to provide assistance to workers whose employers are hurt by foreign trade. The TAA program offers a variety of benefits and services to eligible workers including job training, income support, job search and relocation allowances, and a wage supplement to certain reemployed trade-affected workers 50 years of age and older. These benefits are provided at no expense to employers.

In SFY 21-22, 22 petitions for worker group certifications were filed on behalf of workers whose separations were potentially impacted by foreign competition. Of those, 10 were certified and 12 were denied by the US Department of Labor. Additionally, 195 individual applications were filed with 85 becoming fully enrolled. There were 367 active participants with 164 exited cases and \$860,083 in training payments were made. There are currently 61 participants in training.

Income support payments made in the form Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA): \$1,147,210 in total was provided for 2,019 weekly TRA claims including 686 weeks of basic TRA; 1,294 weeks of additional TRA; and 39 weeks of completion TRA. Workers who satisfy applicable program requirements may receive one or more types of TRA income support: up to 26 weeks of basic TRA; up to 65 weeks of additional TRA; and up to 13 weeks of completion TRA. \$33,918.62 in payments was issued to eligible workers.

The Trade program reverted to the 2002 amendments on July 1, 2021, which excluded service sector employment and limited certifications to only manufacturing companies.

Job Corps Vocational Training: Administered by the US Department of Labor, this program served more than 400 students at the Hartford and New Haven locations. Low-income youths ages 16-24 receive intensive wraparound services including life skills and social skills training; career and mental health counseling; basic health care; residential housing; a bi-weekly living allowance; an annual clothing allowance; driver education; on-the-job training; high school diploma and high school equivalency attainment; academic and career technical training; employability skills training; job placement and retention; and support services after graduation. CTDOL has an assigned staff member providing support to the Hartford Job Corps and New Haven Job Corps Centers. Job Corps success in Connecticut is largely due to the collaborative efforts of CTDOL, the Workforce Development Boards, state and local agencies and organizations, and Job Corps program operators.

National Health Emergency - Dislocated Worker Opioid Emergency Grant: In 2020, there were 1,359 accidental intoxication deaths in the state (Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, 2021), a 13.3 percent increase in drug overdose deaths compared to 2019. The average percentage of fentanyl-involved overdose deaths was 85% as of December 2020. In Connecticut, residents are more likely to die from unintentional drug

overdose than a motor vehicle accident. The majority of these deaths are linked to an overdose of prescription opioid painkillers or illicit opioids. According to the CDC, the 2016 Connecticut age-adjusted rate for drug-induced mortality is 25.1 per 100,000 population compared to the 2016 national rate of 17.1. The most recent data from the National Safety Council reveal that while 70% of employers report being negatively impacted by prescription drug misuse and also feel strongly about helping their employees return to work after substance abuse treatment, approximately 80% of employers lack a comprehensive workplace substance abuse policy, and a similar percentage lack training on identifying substance abuse in their workplaces.

In October 2019, the Connecticut Department of Labor was awarded \$1,585,948.00 with up to \$4,757,845.00 for the Connecticut National Health Emergency (NHE) Dislocated Worker Grant (DWG). An additional \$1,585,948.00 was awarded for Program Year 2021-2022. The “Recovery Works” program provides workforce services to Connecticut’s diverse population by leveraging existing resources with new initiatives. To date, the grant has served 211 participants and has provided workforce services including training individuals to support those affected by substance use disorders and retraining individuals directly affected by the crises. The grant services assisted employers engaged in “Recovery Friendly Employment” implementation. A Recovery Friendly toolkit to assist employers with this process was developed sharing resources available from CTDOL as well as from our partners, the CT Department of Public Health and the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

National Health Emergency - Dislocated Worker Covid-19 Emergency Grant: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CTDOL was awarded \$2,331,000.00 in April 2020 as part of a National Dislocated Worker Grant to provide disaster relief employment, along with employment and training services, to eligible individuals significantly impacted by the spread of COVID-19 in the state of Connecticut. The grant provided for disaster relief cleanup and humanitarian assistance activities including cleaning/sanitizing public facilities; delivering food, medicine, and other supplies to people in quarantine; and healthcare support positions caring for vulnerable populations. In addition, employment and training activities included online learning platforms such as Metrix Learning, Work-Keys, and Year Up Career Readiness online suites. Short-term, demand-driven, customized training programs are available that target occupations with immediate job openings. Eligible participants included workers laid off due to quarantine orders or business closures related to disruptions caused by the outbreak. Workers unable to go to their regular workplace due to social distancing requirements, as well as those missing work to care for a family member were also eligible. The grant served a total of 64 participants and it concluded on 3/31/2022.

Jobs First Employment Services (JFES)

The JFES Program serves recipients of Temporary Family Assistance (TFA), Connecticut’s cash assistance program for low-income families. The program is administered by CTDOL in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) and Connecticut’s five Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) - Capital Workforce Partners, Workforce Alliance, the

Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, The Workplace, Inc., and the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board. The goal of the program is to help people who are receiving Temporary Family Assistance to find work so they can become independent of cash assistance, move their families out of poverty, and provide a better life for themselves and their families.

The JFES program served a total of 2,504 clients during State Fiscal Year 21-22. CTDOL collaborated with DSS, the five Workforce Development Boards, and refugee resettlement agencies to develop a new process to facilitate the enrollment of Afghan and other refugees into the JFES program. CTDOL also worked closely with DSS to develop brand new guidelines for program participants which are more flexible and accommodating to parents based on information collected and analyzed by the Two-Generational Initiative (2Gen). The 2Gen Initiative is a holistic approach to supporting families. 2Gen puts the whole family—both children and their caregivers, on a path to economic stability. CTDOL also implemented Financial Literacy workshops for all JFES participants in partnership with the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS).

Employment Services

Employment Services (ES) Operations is responsible for administering the following federally funded programs: Wagner-Peyser Labor Exchange (WP), Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (UI RESEA), Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), and Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). ES is responsible for the development, project management, testing and implementation of automation initiatives across multiple systems, managing virtual service delivery platforms, technical assistance, workshop curriculum development and delivery, American Job Center (AJC) staff training for applicable programs, service delivery, performance reporting, monitoring, and data validation for assigned programs. The WP, UI RESEA, and JVSG program services are provided throughout the AJCs. These programs provide high quality, integrated labor exchange services to unemployment insurance claimants, job seekers, workers, veterans, and employers.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC): This is a federal tax credit available to employers. WOTC reduces a business's tax liability and is an incentive to hire individuals from demographics who face barriers to employment. The US Department of Labor (USDOL) and US Department of Treasury, through the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), jointly administer the implementation of the WOTC program. USDOL, through the Employment and Training Administration, provides grant funding and policy guidance to the Connecticut Department of Labor and other State Workforce Agencies to administer the certification process, while IRS administers all tax-related provisions and requirements. WOTC is one of several workforce development programs that promote diversity in the workplace and access to jobs. During program year 2021, CTDOL processed a total of 107,351 WOTC applications from employers, of which 38,248 resulted in certification.

Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG): This program helps Connecticut veterans through its team of Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local

Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), located at the American Job Centers (AJCs). DVOPs provide individualized career services to eligible veterans and their spouses who have significant barriers to employment, as well as other populations that include certain transitioning service members; members of the Armed Forces who are wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in a military treatment facility or warrior transition unit; and the spouse or other family caregiver of such Armed Forces members. A "family caregiver" is someone who provides personal care services as a parent, spouse, child, step or extended family member, or as an individual who lives with, but is not a family member of, the veteran. The program emphasizes meeting the employment needs of economically or educationally disadvantaged veterans. LVERs conduct outreach to employers to promote the hiring of veterans and facilitate veteran employment, training, and placement services within the AJCs. In partnership with the Department of Defense and the Connecticut Military Department, JVSG staff assist service members and their families, including those returning from the CT National Guard and US Armed Service Reserves, by participating in Yellow Ribbon events and Soldier Readiness Program briefings that inform members and their families about the services available to them.

Reemployment Programs for Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claimants (RESEA):

The agency provides a variety of federally funded reemployment services to UI claimants through the Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (UI RESEA) program which serves claimants who are either profiled as most likely to exhaust benefits or those receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service members (UCX). The goal of this program is to provide UI claimants early access to services provided by the American Job Centers that will help get them back into the workforce faster. The UI RESEA program also serves as a prevention/detection program for improper UI payments. From July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, CTDOL completed 6,225 virtual Initial RESEA appointments. For this same time period, 5,885 claimants participated in a required reemployment activity.

In November of 2021, CTDOL successfully implemented a RESEA impact study in partnership with the New York Department of Labor. The study is designed to evaluate UI claimants' receipt of various reemployment services and their impact on reemployment outcomes including wages. CTDOL began selecting individuals on November 26, 2021, with initial appointments beginning on December 14, 2021. All individuals who completed their initial RESEA appointments during the study period were referred to a new virtual RESEA Bootcamp Workshop which included job search, interviewing, resume preparation, and LinkedIn content. CTDOL's RESEA Bootcamp Workshop will serve as one of multiple reemployment services under evaluation in the study.

Performance & Accountability

The Performance & Accountability unit has a variety of functions within the Department of Labor's Employment Services division. Primarily, the unit administers the case management system used for federally funded employment and training programs and is responsible for meeting federal reporting requirements for those programs. The unit is also responsible for the Migrant Seasonal Farmworker program which provides outreach to workers and growers to ensure compliance and assist when issues arise, Foreign Labor Certification which assists employers in obtaining workers from outside the United States, and in administering the Manufacturing Innovation Fund Incumbent Worker Training Program.

Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Program: The Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker Program provides agricultural employers recruitment, mediation, and interpretation assistance, along with technical guidance on compliance with Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker related regulations. In SFY 21-22, 1,410 outreach contacts were made, providing workers with information on available workforce services and labor protections as well as resources for education on the COVID pandemic and personal protective equipment/vaccinations from healthcare partners. The programs can provide assistance with UI related issues and referrals to the National Farmworkers Job Program partner agency and other supportive services as well as resolution to complaints and apparent violations.

Manufacturing Innovation Fund Incumbent Worker Training (MIF IWT) Program: The Manufacturing Innovation Fund Incumbent Worker Training (MIF IWT) Program provides financial assistance to Connecticut manufacturers for growing innovative and technology-based manufacturing businesses. MIF IWT helps employers meet emerging market needs and improve productivity and efficiency by enhancing the skills of their current workforce. Despite continued training delays caused by COVID-19, the program served 42 manufacturing companies and trained 1,092 Incumbent Workers in PY 2022.

Foreign Labor Certification Program (previously called Alien Certifications Program): The Foreign Labor Certification Program ensures that employers have exhausted all efforts to hire workers in America before recruiting foreign workers prior to receiving certification. Acting as an agent for USDOL, staff processed 116 H-2A job order certifications for approximately 1,500 temporary foreign agricultural worker positions and conducted 126 pre-occupancy housing inspections in connection with agricultural certifications for the 2022 growing season. In addition, more than 14 job orders were processed for the H-2B temporary foreign non-agricultural worker positions.

Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity

The agency's Office of Diversity and Equity is charged with developing, implementing, and monitoring the agency's affirmative action plan. The plan documents the agency's good faith

efforts to achieve compliance with the law and to further equal opportunity in its hiring, promotions, training, and other employment-related duties.

During the plan period of May 1, 2020, through April 30, 2021, the agency achieved 37% of its hiring goals, 42% of its promotional goals, and 100% of its program goals. Details can be found in the agency's Affirmative Action Plan, which was approved on November 10, 2021, by the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities.

American Job Center Services

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and its federal and state partners provide universal access to an array of employment services offered at American Job Center (AJC) locations throughout Connecticut. These services include virtual and in-person assistance with career choices and job searches; employment referrals; placement assistance for job seekers; reemployment services for claimants receiving unemployment insurance; job posting and employer recruitment services to businesses with job openings; workshops covering résumé writing, interviewing, and career exploration; and provides access to computers with internet connection, copiers, and fax machines.

During state fiscal year (SFY) 2022 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022) a total of 36,150 Wagner-Peyser program participants received services (staff-assisted or self-service) through AJC offices, both in person and virtually, with 80,197 staff-assisted services provided statewide. In addition, statewide virtual workshops included Fundamentals of Resume Writing, Successful Job Search Strategies, Interviewing Techniques, and LinkedIn. CTDOL conducted 199 virtual workshops that were attended by 6,340 individuals.

Business Services: Business Services helps Connecticut's employers to hire, train, and retain workers by analyzing the needs of businesses and developing customized solutions. From July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, a total of 1,350 business registrations were processed by CTHires staff. During this same period, employers posted 73,276 new Connecticut job orders and jobseekers placed 916 new résumés into the system. In addition, 259,617 job orders were indexed from corporate websites.

Jobs Funnel Initiative

Comprised of public-private joint efforts around the state, this program places unemployed and underemployed clients in a variety of employment opportunities including construction and non-construction jobs in both union and non-union settings and apprenticeship training programs. Jobs Funnel partnerships have placed 5,000 clients into jobs since its inception in 1999.

State Board of Labor Relations (SBLR)

The State Board of Labor Relations defines and protects the statutory rights of employees including the right of public employees to form, join, or assist labor organizations. The Board also encourages and protects the right of employees and employers to bargain collectively and remedy certain practices on the part of employees and employers that are detrimental to the collective bargaining process and general public. More than 80% of filed cases are resolved prior to a Board hearing, largely due to successful mediation efforts of Assistance Agents. A total of 293 case were filed with the Board in state fiscal year 2021-2022.

The State Board of Mediation and Arbitration (SBMA)

The State Board of Mediation and Arbitration provides the services of mediators for impasses in contract negotiations and grievance disputes. Mediators also provide outreach and educational programs on the art of dispute settlement. The Board provides arbitration services for the purpose of mediating disputes concerning the application or interpretation of the terms of collective bargaining agreements. This year, SBMA provided mediation services for 229 grievance or interest arbitration cases. Settlements were achieved in many instances saving significant tax dollars for many towns and cities. Over 294 contracts expired in 2022; many required mediation services while a significant number necessitated the imposition of binding arbitration.

The Board administers the Binding Interest Arbitration Statutes under Section 7-473c, Municipal Employees Relations Act (MERA), and Section 5-276, and State Employees Relations Act (SERA). Under MERA the Board fully processes the statutory requirements from inception to completion.

Employment Security Appeals Division

An autonomous, quasi-judicial agency housed in the Department of Labor, the Employment Security Appeals Division's primary function is to hear and decide appeals arising from decisions made by Connecticut's Unemployment Compensation Department, from which it is statutorily independent. From July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, the lower authority (Referee Section) decided 23,023 appeals and the higher authority (Board of Review) decided 785 appeals.

Connecticut Occupational Safety and Health Division (CONN-OSHA)

Connecticut Occupational Safety and Health Division (CONN-OSHA) enforces safety and health standards in public sector workplaces by conducting compliance inspections, responding to complaints or requests, and investigating fatalities and serious accidents. Citations are issued where violations are discovered. Training, education, and onsite safety and health consultations are provided to both private and public sector employers upon request, and the division offers no-cost technical assistance and information on workplace hazards. In SFY 2022, CONN-OSHA provided training, education, and outreach to 3,637 attendees at 72 activities. CONN-OSHA's monthly Employer Roundtable Discussion series features guest speakers, panel discussions, and an overview of safety and health regulations in the workplace. Participation in the monthly

roundtables averaged 48 attendees per event in SFY 2022, and the division also publishes a newsletter on a quarterly basis and distributes it via email to over 3,000 subscribers.

CONN-OSHA conducted compliance inspections at 210 public sector work sites in SFY 2022; violations were documented in 176 of those inspections and the remaining 34 were considered “in compliance.” Citations issued in SFY 2022 resulted in a total of 1,119 violations, identified as follows: 945 “serious” violations; nine “willful” violations; 160 “other than serious” violations and five “regulatory” violations. The division also provided safety and health consultations to 282 private sector businesses that collectively employ 13,339 workers, where 1,261 hazards were identified, and conducted 130 consultations at public sector workplaces with a total of 5,137 employees where 447 hazards were identified.

Wage and Workplace Standards Division (WWSD)

The Wage and Workplace Standards Division (WWSD) recovered more than \$3.4 million in owed wages for Connecticut workers in this fiscal year. WWSD enforces more than 160 general statutes and administrative regulations which include minimum wage, overtime wage payments, prevailing wage, standard wage, employment of minors, misclassification of workers as independent contractors, and working conditions. Despite the continuing pandemic, WWSD conducted 32 inspections at construction project sites, reviewed contractor records, and issued 52 Stop Work Orders, which require cited employers to show proof of appropriate coverage—such as worker’s compensation—before worksites can be re-opened and work resumed.

WWSD and the UI Tax Division work together to ensure workers are not misclassified to prevent independent contractors from experiencing a loss of many protections such as UI benefits, workers’ compensation coverage, overtime pay, pay below minimum wage, and health benefits. A total of 416 cases were assigned to the workplace standards team during this fiscal year. Violations were cited in drug testing, personnel files, electronic monitoring in prohibited areas, electronic monitoring not posted, meal periods, night work, or other prohibited employment of minors at restaurants, labor hours of minors (restaurant and other establishments), prohibited hazardous employment of minors, working papers/certification of age, and working papers not on file. The UI Tax Division conducted nearly 400 employer audits and approximately 5,000 individual wage investigations, resulting in the reclassification of approximately 3,800 workers and the discovery of more than \$30 million in previously unreported payroll.

Communications

The Communications Unit had two major priorities for 2021-2022 to improve digital services and support users through the launch of ReEmployCT, the state’s new unemployment benefits and tax reporting system. The unit made significant headway on a multi-year project to migrate the agency’s website from its 10-year-old digital platform to the state standard Sitecore platform. The unit, working with DAS web services experts, undertook a full site content audit, design changes, and created a knowledge base that feeds into CT.Gov. Communications completed phase 1 of the migration which included moving the agency homepage and nearly a dozen unit pages; integrating the new ReEmployCT chatbot; and training digital staff on the new system.

Over the year, the website had 24 million unique visitors with 20 percent of those going directly to the unemployment benefits page.

Communications also managed the ReEmployCT education and outreach campaign to prepare more than 20,000 unemployment filers and 115,000 employers for the transition to ReEmployCT. This effort included creating new content and features for the website and social media, conducting informational town hall sessions for employers, and coordinating media events and notification. The unit created a ReEmployCT email update list that currently has more than 7,000 subscribers.

Between July 2021 – July 2022, Communications built and launched 40 webpages, drafted and sent out 29 press releases, and created 747 social media posts and videos that garnered 48,700 interactions.

Office of Research

In cooperation with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Education and Training Administration (ETA), the office collects, analyzes, and delivers information on the state's labor market. Information is collected and disseminated on employment levels, unemployment rates, wages and earnings, estimates of available labor, employment projections, business staffing patterns, and career planning information. A survey of workplace injuries and illnesses and a census of work-related fatalities is conducted annually. In addition, the Office of Research completes special state, local, and regional studies and economic analysis to provide information for economic transition, workforce development initiatives, education program analysis and development, and responses to major layoffs or disasters. Strategies for addressing issues such as labor gaps and for positioning the state's educational and workforce systems to respond quickly to critical areas of workforce need are a fundamental part of Connecticut's workforce and economic development efforts. Employers, career counselors, educators, economic developers, training program planners, policy makers, economists, and the general public utilize the information.

The Office of Research produces the Labor Situation report and, in partnership with the Department of Economic and Community Development, the Connecticut Economic Digest, which provides data and articles on the state's workforce and economy. The Labor Situation provides a monthly and over-the-year snapshot of the state's industry sectors and unemployment rate.

The Office of Research is both a participating agency and the Data Integration Hub for P20-WIN, Connecticut's State Longitudinal Data System which links individual student records across education institutions and in the workforce to permit the building of safe, de-identifiable databases to evaluate education programs and their impact on workforce outcomes. An example of the potential of this linkage is the Higher Education/Workforce Report Card that annually traces (by school and program of study) the employment and wages earned for all graduates of Connecticut's Higher Education System. P20-WIN has expanded to include other agencies and the Office of Research acts as the Hub for all P20-WIN data requests.

In response to increased demand for information regarding job openings as the state recovered from the COVID-19 crisis, the Office of Research published weekly updates of job postings from Help Wanted Online in addition to a comprehensive monthly report of job postings by industry, occupation, and employers for each of the state's workforce areas.

Unemployment

The following information regarding the State of Connecticut's Unemployment Insurance program is reported pursuant to CGS 31-250. Due to the ever-changing nature of this program and the needs of its consumers, legislative suggestions remain under consideration.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) is a monetary benefit provided to an unemployed worker while they seek new work or take part in approved training programs.

Consumer Contact Center (CCC): Phased in on July 8, 2020, the Consumer Contact Center (CCC) is a cornerstone in CTDOL's customer service delivery system, which relies on technology to provide a convenient and efficient system for filing and inquiring about an unemployment claim. The CCC is staffed with both intermittent and permanent agency employees providing a direct link for Connecticut Department of Labor customers needing to file for unemployment insurance and respond to UI questions or to a claimant's particular benefits. During State Fiscal Year 2021-2022 (SFY 20-21), the CCC's agents handled more than 970,000 customer calls and cases which represents a weekly average of more than 18,700.

Twelve experienced Consumer Contact Center agents provide virtual and in-person unemployment insurance claim services for customers visiting the department's six comprehensive American Job Centers. These services include general claim status inquiries, unpaid claims, identification verification and assistance navigating the system. During SFY 20-21, the Consumer Contact Center agents served more than 7,000 customers who visited the state's American Job Centers.

Unemployment Compensation: The Unemployment Insurance (UI) Tax Division administers a UI tax program that protects both workers and employers through fair enforcement of the UI law. CTDOL administered nearly \$489 million in state unemployment benefits in SFY 2022. Of that amount, nearly \$447 million was paid to claimants formerly employed by employers paying quarterly UI taxes under the regular UI benefits program, and about \$42 million was provided to claimants formerly employed by non-taxable employers. Total taxes paid by more than 118,000 employers whose employees were covered by UI totaled \$685 million.

Shared Work: The Shared Work program helps businesses experiencing a downturn prevent layoffs by allowing the qualifying businesses to reduce overhead through temporarily cutting employee hours and using partial unemployment benefits to help replace some of the lost wages. This helps ensure employers may preserve their labor force and avoid expensive future recruitment, hiring, and training when business improves. Employees retain their positions and benefits while working a reduced schedule. During the year, staff from the Shared Work program assisted nearly 240 companies and more than 5,700 participating employees.

Information and materials regarding the *Shared Work* program can be found at www.sharedworkct.com

SIDES: Developed through a strategic partnership between the US Department of Labor and state UI agencies, the State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES) and SIDES E-Response offer employers and Third-Party Administrators - free of charge - a secure, electronic and nationally standardized format in which they can easily respond to UI information requests, attach documentation when needed and receive a date-stamped confirmation of receipt. SIDES is also an important fraud detection tool. Employers are able to quickly respond to notices and identify potential fraudulent UI claims. This partnership with employers is a first line defense against fraud and helps CTDOL stop fraudulent claims and overpayments.

Occupational Analysis Products and Publications

The Office of Research: The CTDOL Office of Research website contains an exhaustive collection of data and tools useful for Workforce Development Planning as well as understanding Connecticut's labor market and each of the state's five Workforce Development Areas, including population and population density, labor force, employment and wages by industry sector, commuting patterns, and new housing permits.

Connecticut Career Paths: Developed for high school students and others making career choices, Connecticut Career Paths is a guide that profiles nearly 500 occupations, along with their employment levels, growth potential, expected earnings, skills requirements, and education paths. Connecticut Career Paths is distributed to schools, colleges, libraries, and job centers throughout the state.

Education and Training Connection (ETC): The Education and Training Connection site merges information from the Office of Higher Education (OHE) with the Eligible Providers Training List (ETPL) to provide contact information for all educational and training programs within the state.

Employer Database: A tool for job seekers, the Employer Database provides contact information compiled from publicly available sources of businesses in the state.

Economic Indicator Scorecards: Monthly updated economic indicators that present an overall picture of the current conditions in the Connecticut labor market, business climate, and consumer sector. These include charts, trends, year-to-year changes, and data for 24 economic indicators.

Agency Improvements and Efficiencies

ReEmployCT

CTDOL launched the state's new unemployment benefits and tax system on July 5, 2022, after a one-year pandemic delay. The transition to ReEmployCT, a coalition system, began in 2016 and was financed by state and federal funding to support approximately 115,000 employers as well as unemployment benefit filers. ReEmployCT replaced an antiquated 40-year-old system and offers 24/7 access to filers; gives employers real-time notification for charge liability to reduce overpayments and fraud; and makes several employer reporting processes more efficient by bringing them online or reducing the number of reports required.

The Office of the Unemployed Workers' Advocate

The Unemployed Workers' Advocate (UWA) is a new unit being built within the Connecticut Department of Labor to assist unemployed residents who need more resources than available in the Consumer Contact Center. Created by PA 21-2, the UWA was legislatively designed to fill a need which emerged during the COVID-19 related influx of unemployment claimants. Through direct contact with the unemployed worker, the Advocate Unit will support individuals in such areas as understanding documents provided by CTDOL, reducing barriers to receipt of benefits and navigating the appeals process. Beyond assistance on individual cases, the unit will also track reported issues to support the department in improving client communications and recommend policy changes.