

**CHAPTER 26-A**

**PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

**SUBCHAPTER 1**

**PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR DISPLACED WORKERS**

**§2061. Program created**

The Peer Support Program for Displaced Workers is created within the department to provide advocacy and information for workers displaced by significant layoffs. The program may initiate one or more projects to assist employees as provided in this chapter and as resources permit. The department is authorized to use any available resources or to apply for federal grants to implement this chapter. Any funds appropriated by the Legislature for a pilot program or this program may not lapse but must be carried forward. [PL 1999, c. 506, §1 (NEW); PL 1999, c. 506, §3 (AFF).]

**SECTION HISTORY**

PL 1999, c. 506, §1 (NEW). PL 1999, c. 506, §3 (AFF).

**§2062. Peer Support Projects**

**1. Initiation of project.** When 100 or more employees of a single employer are laid off, the department shall initiate a peer support project to assist the affected employees. The department may initiate a project when 50 or more employees are laid off if the bureau determines that a peer support project is warranted, after considering the particular needs of the affected workforce and the affected communities.

[PL 1999, c. 506, §1 (NEW); PL 1999, c. 506, §3 (AFF).]

**2. Employment and role of peer support workers.** For each project, the department shall employ one or more peer support workers who must be displaced nonmanagerial employees from the affected workforce. The department shall attempt in all cases to hire one peer support worker for each 50 affected employees and to hire at least 2 peer support workers for each project. A peer support worker shall serve as a worker advocate and an information source connecting the affected workers and the State's workforce development programs. The peer support worker shall use the resources of local employment assistance programs as well as state programs. The department shall collaborate with employee representatives in hiring and overseeing peer support workers. The department shall ensure that peer support workers have an opportunity to receive training and to work as a team even if they are geographically dispersed.

[PL 1999, c. 506, §1 (NEW); PL 1999, c. 506, §3 (AFF).]

**3. Duration of project.** The department shall determine the duration of each project, taking into consideration the size, scope and nature of the layoff and the period of time over which the layoffs occur.

[PL 1999, c. 506, §1 (NEW); PL 1999, c. 506, §3 (AFF).]

**SECTION HISTORY**

PL 1999, c. 506, §1 (NEW). PL 1999, c. 506, §3 (AFF).

**SUBCHAPTER 2**

**PEER WORKFORCE NAVIGATOR PILOT PROGRAM**

## §2065. Peer workforce navigator pilot program

**1. Peer workforce navigator pilot program.** No later than January 1, 2022, the Commissioner of Labor, referred to in this subchapter as "the commissioner," shall adopt a peer workforce navigator pilot program to support the Governor's Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan dated May 4, 2021. The Department of Labor, referred to in this subchapter as "the department," shall contract with qualified entities to operate the pilot program for a period of 2 years. The pilot program must:

A. Target underserved populations as described in subsection 2, paragraph A to expand opportunities for employment through reemployment services, education or training opportunities, apprenticeships and other models that result in skill development and family-supporting careers; [PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

B. Assist individuals with meeting basic needs in order to help them persist in education and work; [PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

C. Connect individuals with services and job training programs provided by career centers operated by the department or its workforce partners, including the Maine Community College System and the University of Maine System; [PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

D. Conduct outreach and provide individual assistance and education to individuals applying for and making ongoing claims for unemployment compensation benefits, including partial unemployment benefits and assistance for dislocated or marginalized workers; and [PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

E. Identify systemic issues creating barriers to successful reemployment for individuals seeking jobs, including improvements to the unemployment compensation system in chapter 13 to reduce those barriers. [PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

[PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

**2. Qualified entities.** To be eligible to receive a navigator contract under this section, an entity must:

A. Demonstrate that it has existing peer relationships with underserved populations, including immigrants, individuals with limited English proficiency, inexperienced and untrained individuals, low-income and homeless individuals, individuals who have been out of the workforce for an extended period, individuals with low literacy and individuals with disabilities; [PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

B. Have the capability to carry out the duties of this section, including knowledge of eligibility requirements and application processes related to the unemployment compensation system in chapter 13, reemployment services, education and training services and other resources necessary to help underserved populations increase their economic security; [PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

C. Comply with existing confidentiality standards to ensure the privacy of all information collected from individuals receiving navigator services; and [PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

D. Provide services under this section without charge to the individuals receiving those services. [PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

[PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

**3. Commissioner's duties; award criteria; navigator services.** The commissioner shall establish standards for the awarding of contracts to qualified entities in accordance with this subsection.

A. The commissioner may award multiple contracts to perform one or more of the navigator services described in this section. [PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

B. To support the maintenance of relationships between qualified entities and underserved populations and to ensure a high quality of service, the commissioner shall award contracts to

qualified entities for the duration of the pilot period as long as the qualified entities satisfy performance standards set forth in the contracts. [PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

C. The commissioner shall give priority for navigator contracts to qualified entities that are a recognized source of support or advocacy for underserved populations as described in subsection 2, paragraph A, such as racial and ethnic minorities, persons with low literacy, persons with disabilities and others seeking to improve skills and gain employment. [PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

D. Navigator services provided by qualified entities that receive navigator contracts must be coordinated with and supplement, not supplant, services provided by the department. [PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

All navigator services provided under this subsection must be performed in a manner that is culturally and linguistically appropriate to the population served, including individuals with limited English proficiency, persons with low literacy and persons with disabilities, recognizing the varying levels of digital literacy and access to technology among individuals in need of services.

[PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

**4. Funding.** The department shall seek available workforce development funds for the pilot program under this section.

[PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 2021, c. 456, §37 (NEW).

The State of Maine claims a copyright in its codified statutes. If you intend to republish this material, we require that you include the following disclaimer in your publication:

*All copyrights and other rights to statutory text are reserved by the State of Maine. The text included in this publication reflects changes made through the Second Regular Session of the 131st Maine Legislature and is current through January 1, 2025. The text is subject to change without notice. It is a version that has not been officially certified by the Secretary of State. Refer to the Maine Revised Statutes Annotated and supplements for certified text.*

The Office of the Revisor of Statutes also requests that you send us one copy of any statutory publication you may produce. Our goal is not to restrict publishing activity, but to keep track of who is publishing what, to identify any needless duplication and to preserve the State's copyright rights.

PLEASE NOTE: The Revisor's Office cannot perform research for or provide legal advice or interpretation of Maine law to the public. If you need legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.