More Guidance and Evaluation of Worker-Profiling Initiative Could Help Improve State Efforts

What GAO Found

Forty-five of the 53 states and territories use statistical models that facilitate the ranking of claimants by their likelihood to exhaust benefits, while 7 states use more limited screening tools that do not facilitate a ranking. Florida delegates the selection of profiling tools to local areas in the state. Factors used to determine the probability of exhaustion include a claimant’s education, occupation, and job tenure. Many states have not regularly maintained their models, and as a result, the models in some states may not be accurately identifying claimants who are likely to exhaust benefits.

Although Labor data provide a limited picture of states’ implementation of the worker-profiling initiative, 6 of the 7 states we studied did not provide the in-depth approach to services as recommended by Labor. Overall, an average of 15 percent of profiled UI claimants were referred to reemployment services, and 11 percent completed these services between 2002 and 2006. Six of the 7 states we contacted referred claimants to services, held them accountable for attending the services, and provided an orientation. However, only 1 of the 7 states provided individualized needs assessments, and developed service plans, as recommended.

Little is known about the effectiveness of the worker-profiling initiative as it is currently operating. Although studies using data from the 1990s generally indicated that claimants who were referred to services had reduced reliance on UI, there are no more up-to-date studies. Further, some of the program data collected by Labor are not reliable, and the data are not being used by Labor or states to evaluate the initiative.

Profiling Techniques Used in the United States

- Characteristic screens
- Statistical model with variables beyond those recommended by Labor
- Delegates profiling to local areas

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Department of Labor data; (Map) Map Resources.