

# At-Risk Summary/Layoff Dynamics

It is the goal of the at-risk program and WISCERS to assist at-risk or laid-off employees and injured workers in finding other permanent, classified positions within state government. To achieve this goal, it is essential that agencies carefully plan the scope and timing of their at-risk designations.

While each situation is unique, the number of employees designated as at-risk and the timing of at-risk letters should reflect the actual impact of potential layoffs and allow employees enough time to make effective use of at-risk services. In cases where a large portion of a layoff group meets the at-risk criteria, the appointing authority may choose to designate additional employees as at-risk because any successful out-placements from the group will lessen the overall impact of the layoff. In all cases, designated employees must be clearly informed as to their specific circumstances and the services available to them through their agency. It is then the employee's responsibility to use the tools available, including searching and applying for jobs on WISCERS, attending scheduled interviews, requesting job-related training, and making reasonable employment choices. If time constraints do not allow for at-risk designation to occur prior to the issuance of a layoff notice, relevant information regarding the at-risk designation and use of WISCERS may be included with the layoff notice.

When designating employees as "At-Risk", it is important to conduct yourself with compassion. Below is an excerpt from the OSER Website on "**Understanding Responses to Job Loss.**"

Being laid off or having significant changes made to the duties, responsibilities, location, pay or other working conditions of a job can be a severe personal loss to anyone -- much like divorce or death. There often are accompanying feelings of failure and guilt; of having done something wrong to deserve such treatment. It is important that both the supervisor and the employee understand these feelings.

Management theorists suggest that employees who are affected by layoff commonly go through stages similar to those confronted by people dealing with death and dying. Employees may experience these stages at different degrees and lengths of time, but most will go through all of them in this order. These stages are:

- 1. Denial.** There isn't going to be a layoff. We have had scares like this before and no one ever got laid off.
- 2. Pseudo-Denial.** Although others may be laid off, it won't happen to me. My job is safe. I have a lot of seniority and I'm an excellent employee. I'll be taken care of. My case is different than the others.
- 3. Anger.** Management or "they" (the Department, Division, Human Resource Services, Supervisor) have done me in. I'm going to fight them on this. They can't do this to me after what I've contributed to this department.
- 4. Bargaining.** Why don't they lay off someone else? There are some who never have done an honest day's work since I've been here. That person really doesn't need a job as badly as I do. Get rid of those high paid managers. What about all those people that are near retirement, why don't they just retire and let people like me keep my job?
- 5. Depression.** I'm just a failure. If only I had worked harder. It's obvious that I'm never going to make it. What will I tell my friends and family? Who will want to hire me now? I really don't have anything to offer.
- 6. Acceptance or understanding.** There's really nothing more I can do to keep my job. I have to face facts and make plans for my future.

It is important that employees work through the first five stages as quickly as possible so that they are better able to positively accept the help the department and other resources have offered.