TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 18-11
	DATE November 30, 2011

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES

FROM: JANE OATES /s/
            Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Unemployment Insurance (UI) Community of Practice (COP)

1. Purpose. To announce an exciting new tool for the UI system that allows for knowledge sharing, dissemination of successful practices, program improvements, reemployment and integrity-related initiatives as well as networking through use of a flexible technology platform. The UI COP Web site is an online resource that states and the U.S. Department of Labor (Department) jointly own to highlight and showcase UI program initiatives that promote exemplary UI program operations and enhanced program performance.

2. References. Improper Payments Information Act of 2002 (31 U.S.C. 3321 note); Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act of 2010 (31 U.S.C. 3321 note); Executive Order 13520, 74 Fed. Reg. 62,201 (November 20, 2009); Unemployment Insurance Program Letter (UIPL) No. 17-11, *Proposed Performance Measure for Unemployment Insurance Integrity*; UIPL No. 19-11, *National Effort to Reduce Improper Payments in the Unemployment Insurance Program*; UIPL No. 21-11, *Additional Planning Guidance for the Fiscal Year 2012 Unemployment Insurance State Quality Service Plan*; and UIPL No. 26-11, *Unemployment Insurance Supplemental Funding Opportunity for Program Integrity and Performance System Improvements*.

3. Background. The UI program is a unique federal-state partnership based upon federal law, but administered by states under their individual state UI laws. The program is one of the largest benefit entitlement programs in the United States, specifically designed to provide benefits to eligible unemployed individuals and help stimulate the economy. Especially during difficult economic times, the UI program is vulnerable to fraud and improper payments.

The Department issued a "call to action" to all states in UIPL No. 19-11 to develop and implement strategies to help prevent and reduce improper payments. The Department has developed its own Strategic Plan that includes a number of strategies to support states in reducing the UI improper payment rate. One of these strategies is to establish a means for states to communicate important information and exchange and share successful/best practices in a secure manner. The UI COP was designed as the vehicle to accomplish this strategic goal.

Earlier this year, the Department held the first ever UI Integrity Institute, which consisted of a series of collaborative online webinar sessions and telephone clinics to work (initially) with 11 "high impact" states. The Institute was very successful and resulted in all 11 states developing robust strategic plans to reduce UI improper payments. The Department utilized the same framework to establish the "Institute in a Box," exporting the initial Integrity Institute experience to the remaining states and utilizing the UI COP to facilitate technical assistance to the states. All the work products from these state efforts are available via the UI COP.

4. **A Practical Approach.** In general, a COP is formed and established by people who share similar interests, and who engage in ongoing collective learning. The UI COP is a dynamic resource available to staff and empowered by staff within the UI community. This exciting new resource will be a premier on-line clearinghouse of content for "all things UI" with a particular focus on key priorities such as program integrity, improved program performance, and reemployment. Individual state-specific Web pages will be made available later this year for states to showcase their progressive UI initiatives. The success of the COP will only be as good as the efforts of its members. Ongoing usage, input, and feedback will be required to effectively populate and continuously improve the COP to ensure its effectiveness and value.

5. **Register Now!** Federal, state, and local UI staff are encouraged to register for UI COP membership by visiting the Web site at: http://ui.workforce3one.org/member/register/ . Specific instruction on how states can submit content will be provided under separate cover via the Regional Offices.

6. **Action Requested.** State Administrators and UI Directors are asked to support and promote participation in this initiative by encouraging their UI staff to register on the UI COP as members and contributors.

7. **Inquiries.** Inquiries should be directed to the appropriate Regional Office.