



A Inside Workforce Legislation: A Look at DWD's Role

The Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD) completed another productive legislative session, advancing several measures to strengthen adult education, improve unemployment insurance operations, and bring greater clarity to the state's workforce statutes. While this legislative session was short, DWD's involvement begins long before a bill has even been introduced.

Throughout the year, DWD works with the Governor's office, the Legislative Services Agency, and members of the General Assembly to shape technical language, offer data driven insights, and ensure that proposed laws align with real world operational needs.

"Workforce legislation is about strengthening opportunities for Hoosiers," said Mike Smith, DWD Interim Commissioner. "Our responsibility is to help lawmakers understand how policy decisions impact our staff, our partners, and the people we serve every day."

Indiana's legislative process moves quickly once a session begins. Bills must be drafted, introduced, heard in committee, amended, debated on the floor, and passed through both chambers before they reach the Governor's desk. At every stage, DWD provides clarification and technical guidance, answering questions about how a change in statute may affect system modifications, a claimant's eligibility, or how an employer will report wages. This collaboration helps legislators make informed decisions and ensures statutory language truly supports a functional, fair, and accessible workforce system.

DWD's collaborative approach was evident in several bills this session. House Enrolled Act 1195 updated Indiana's High School Equivalency program by adjusting eligibility for learners under 18. These changes give young Hoosiers earlier access to adult education while allowing the state more time to measure outcomes.

Senate Enrolled Act 214 modernized and clarified unemployment insurance operations by codifying longstanding administrative rules on experience accounts, employer reporting, seasonal workers, work searches, claim filings and more. The bill also updated DWD's authority over cooperation agreements, reducing ambiguity for employers and claimants.

Continuing these improvements, Senate Enrolled Act 162 refined parts of the unemployment insurance statute by removing vacation and sick pay from deductible income, updating definitions of suitable work, adjusting nonprofit employment

language, and clarifying how benefit determinations are served. These updates improve clarity and help DWD deliver benefits more efficiently.

“Good legislation only works when it’s grounded in practical experience,” said Sarah Potter, DWD Director of Government and Legislative Affairs. “Our team works closely with legislators so the final product is clear, accurate, and implementable for staff, employers, and Hoosiers who need our services.”

As these new laws take effect, DWD is preparing guidance, system updates, and communications to ensure a smooth transition. The goal is to reduce administrative burden, modernize Indiana’s workforce infrastructure, and make it easier for Hoosiers to access the support and skills they need to succeed.

Visit <https://www.in.gov/dwd> to learn more.