

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

The determination of a claimant's eligibility for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits is a critical UI program function. When issues arise that may affect a claimant's past, present or future benefits, the adjudicator is responsible for determining the claimant's eligibility for those benefits. Such determinations may also affect an employer's liability for benefit charges, depending on the type of issue adjudicated. The adjudicator's work impacts the rights of both claimants and employers.

Through the nonmonetary determination process, all necessary facts concerning an issue must be gathered from claimants and employers, or a reasonable attempt must be made to obtain such facts, and a determination is rendered to ensure that payments are made only when due. The Employment Security Manual at Sections 6010-6015 (see Appendix B) clearly assigns to the State Workforce Agency (SWA) the responsibility for investigating claims, i.e., obtaining facts "as will be sufficient reasonably to insure the payment of benefits when due." Further, the responsibility of the SWA to obtain and record the relevant facts and to make eligibility determinations may not be shifted to the claimant or employer.

Evaluations of nonmonetary determinations are appropriate and necessary to ensure that this component of the UI program is properly administered. Because the determination to pay or deny unemployment benefits is a critical UI program activity, management must be kept informed about how well this function is being performed. This review guide was designed as the evaluation tool—known as the Benefits Timeliness and Quality (BTQ) review—to be used in determining if a SWA's performance is meeting the standards which have been set by the U.S. Department of Labor.

The quality review serves two distinct purposes. First, the review assesses the overall quality of the nonmonetary determination process using a set of prescribed evaluation criteria. Each determination sampled is measured against federally established minimum criteria, evaluating the quality elements of the determination. Second, the review includes a data validation component to ensure that the SWA is reporting its nonmonetary determination activities in accordance with UI reports (UIR) instructions contained in ET Handbook 401, Unemployment Insurance Reports Handbook.

Data used to generate Federal reports on nonmonetary determination issue types and timeliness (ET 207 and ET 9052/9053) must be validated to ensure the quality of the reported data. Data validation elements are now included in the nonmonetary determination review and a continuous measure of data validity is available without the need to select and review a separate sample for data validation purposes.

This handbook includes detailed instructions for evaluating the quality of the nonmonetary determination process from factfinding to the written determination. Key elements of the process are assigned a numeric score to indicate the adequacy of the information obtained and its impact on other related elements, where applicable. A point system is used to evaluate each element. This point system allows SWAs to ascertain how well a function is being carried out, identify and analyze weaknesses, and determine how best to make program improvements. Each determination must receive 95 or 100 points to meet the quality standard. Measures for BTQ nonmonetary quality require that 75% of all nonmonetary determinations reviewed meet the passing score.

Although the nonmonetary determination process includes an inherent degree of subjectivity, the BTQ review instructions are designed to guide the reviewer toward producing a fair and unbiased assessment of the quality of the SWA's nonmonetary determination process. Further, these instructions are designed to provide uniform application of the review methodology so that results are consistent and can be replicated by any reviewer. ***It is essential that evaluations be conducted by individuals who have nonmonetary determination expertise and who have received training on the instructions contained in this handbook.*** In addition, the three-tiered ("tripartite") review methodology assures that the review is conducted in an equitable manner. (See Chapter IV for details of the tripartite review process.)