Reemployment Questions and Answers for Workers in TAA Training

Do I Have to Seek or Accept Work While I Participate in Approved Training?
Workers enrolled in TAA-approved training are not required to seek or accept employment while participating in training. If you are approved to attend TAA training, the approval is based, in part, on a finding that there is no suitable employment available to you and no reasonable prospect of obtaining suitable employment in the foreseeable future. If eligible for unemployment insurance (UI) or Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA), while participating in approved training you are relieved of the job-seeking obligations required of other workers filing for UI and TRA; you may instead devote your attention to completing your approved training program.

What If I Decide to Take a Job?
TAA training is intended to expedite your return to suitable employment. As a result, there may be implications if you accept employment during training and achieve the goal of the program earlier than expected. You must report any employment to your TAA counselor because work obtained during training may affect your eligibility for TAA benefits.

Determining Whether Your Employment Is “Suitable”
If you obtain employment after training is approved, the Connecticut TAA program must determine whether the employment meets the definition of “suitable” by comparing the skill and wage levels of your new job with that of your trade-impacted employment.

If the new job pays at least 80% of your past average weekly wage AND is of equal or greater skill level, it will be considered "suitable." (Generally, part-time and temporary employment will not be deemed “suitable.”)

The “average weekly wage” from past employment is calculated by dividing the total wages earned during your “high” quarter by 13; 80% of that figure is the target wage. The “high” quarter is the highest of the first four of the last five completed calendar quarters that precede the quarter of your first TAA-qualifying separation. Your TAA counselor can help you determine your “average weekly wage.”

The Impact of “Suitable” Work on Your Training
If a training participant obtains suitable employment before he or she has completed training, is the state obliged to continue with funding the training as stated in the training plan?

Yes, if certain conditions are met. TAA training is designed to lead to sustained employment for training participants. The acquisition of industry-recognized credentials forms an important part of that long term reemployment strategy. Therefore, states must provide training for TAA training participants as approved by the state and the individual in the training plan, even if the individual becomes employed in suitable work during that training, provided that: (1) the state determines that training completion serves the long term employment goals of the individual; and (2) the training participant continues to meet benchmarks that were established as part of the training plan, even though the employed training participant will no longer be eligible for TRA.

The Impact of “Unsuitable” Work on Training and Other TAA Benefits
Training: If you obtain full or part-time work deemed unsuitable, you may continue to participate in training with TAA approval and funding while working.

- If your Trade Act petition number is between 70000 and 84,999 and you are covered under 2009 or 2011 program rules, you may attend training either full or part time and, if you are 50 years of age or older, may qualify for Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA) for working at least 20 hours per week in a lower-paying job while training. To remain eligible for TRA while working part time (in lieu of RTAA), your training participation must be full time.
- If your petition number is less than 70000 or greater than 85,000 and you wish to continue in TAA training while employed in “unsuitable” work, full-time training participation is required.
The Impact of “Unsuitable” Work on Training and Other TAA Benefits, continued

TRA: Earnings -- and any separation, if found disqualifying for UI purposes -- may affect your entitlement to TRA, if otherwise eligible.

- **Receipt of TRA while working.** You may not receive TRA if working full time, but you may remain eligible for TRA while working part time. The duration of basic TRA may be extended if your weekly TRA amount, when reduced by two-thirds of your weekly gross wages, still permits payment of partial benefits.
  - *Exception if your petition number is between 70,000 and 84,999 and* you are covered under the 2009 or 2011 program rules: If wages from full-time or part-time employment (other than the Trade impacted employment) are less than or equal to the amount of your TRA, you will experience no deduction to TRA based on earnings while you participate in training. Weekly claims for regular UI, including Emergency Unemployment Compensation and Extended Benefits, are always subject to a two-thirds deduction based on part-time wages, however.

- **Receipt of TRA while eligible for UI.** Generally, workers may not receive TRA if eligible for UI, and wages from employment may provide you with entitlement to a new UI claim if you are partially or totally unemployed, possibly at a lower weekly benefit amount than TRA.
  - *Exception if your petition number is between 70,000 and 79,999:* If your eligibility for a UI benefit rate that is lower than your TRA is based on wages from short-term or part-time employment that followed your most recent total separation from trade-impacted employment, you may elect to continue receiving remaining weeks of TRA instead of UI.

**If I Already Have a Job, Must I Continue to Work During My Training?**

- You may elect to terminate from or reduce hours at *unsuitable* employment, if reasonable and necessary to begin or continue TAA-approved training, without being subject to UI or TRA disqualification as a result. If your petition number is between 70,000 79,000, this includes any work performed temporarily during a break in training or while waiting for training to begin.
- If you are participating in pre-layoff training as an adversely affected incumbent worker (currently working in trade-impacted employment but notified of a future partial or total separation from such employment), you may not voluntarily terminate from or reduce hours at your trade-impacted employment to pursue training. Your training program should permit you to continue working to the extent required by your employer, for the duration of your employment. Separating from your trade-impacted employment for other than lack of work will void your continuing eligibility for TAA training and other future benefits that may be available to you under the certification.

**May I Leave Training to Take a Job?**

In most cases, you may choose to discontinue training to accept employment, whether suitable or unsuitable, and will not be penalized for failing to complete TAA training because such action would generally constitute justifiable cause for leaving training. Consideration would be given to your actual return-to-work date and the amount of time remaining to otherwise complete your training program. If you leave training for unsuitable employment, consideration would also be given to the extent of your financial need and changes to your personal financial circumstances since the training was approved.

References: Sections 232(a), 232(d), 236(a) and 236(d) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended; Title 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 617.2, 617.22(a)(1), 617.22(g), 617.18(b); Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 567, Section 31-236b, 31-236d.