



## **“The Union Did Everything Possible”**

**A Guide for Union Leaders**

**To Effectively Respond to**

**IAM Members Facing Layoffs**

Website for IAM Retirees, Community and Membership Services Department:  
<http://www.goiam.org/index.php/headquarters/departments/retirees-community-and-membership-services>

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## **PART I: STATEMENT AND QUICK REFERENCE FOR FULL-TIME REPRESENTATIVES**

### **"THE UNION DID EVERYTHING POSSIBLE"**

That is what we want our members to say when employers decide to shut the doors and turn off the lights. We will be satisfied only when there are enough jobs for everyone who wants one. The sad reality is that some politicians act like they do not want full employment, and we cannot directly control the swindlers on Wall Street. However, we can influence what our members say when they lose their jobs. Our Union's future is dependent on the fact that when unemployment disperses our members to other employers, we end up with in-plant organizers promoting the Machinists Union and organizing their new workplace.

Those one-time members should be touting the benefits they enjoyed when they worked in a Machinist Union Shop. Our goal is for them to tell their non-union coworkers that the union tried everything possible to advance the interest of its members. And, yes their old boss did close the doors, but the Union tried to do everything possible to keep it from happening. Yet, when it did happen, the IAM negotiated a decent severance package and made sure everyone got all the benefits to which they were entitled. In addition, the IAM marshaled all the forces in the community to assist them. The IAM conducted job fairs, insurance seminars, mortgage assistance and much more to try to help.

Wow! Think of it – we end up with a force of in-plant organizers. Here are some things to do when a plant you represent is going to close, or you are going to have significant lay-offs there.

1. Contact your General Vice-President's Office.
2. Make sure you inform the Strategic Resources Department and the Retirees, Community and Membership Services Department.
3. In the work places are where political influence can be significant – contact the Legislative Department.
4. If the closing event is due to Foreign Trade, contact the Globalization and Trade Department.
5. Review the provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.
6. Identify what legislation may have an impact, i.e. WARN, TAA.
7. Distribute the IAMAW publications Guide to Survive and Decisions & Choices to the membership who are moving to lay-off or unemployment.
8. Put together a Community Services Committee and arrange for their training -- remember you will not be able to attend to all the needs of the unemployed if you are still servicing other shops. These are things that the Community Services Committee should do:

## A Guide for Union Leaders to Effectively Respond to IAM Members Facing Layoffs

- a. Develop Goals and Objectives
  - i. Explore employment opportunities for displaced workers.
  - ii. Develop strategies to help members with health insurance.
  - iii. Promote U-Cubed.
  - iv. Identify Central Labor Councils, Labor Agencies, and AFL-CIO Community Services that are available. In some states there are labor friendly college/university programs.
  - v. Provide support and counseling for laid-off workers and their families.
- b. Develop a data base of all displaced workers, i.e. contact information, job skills, etc.
- c. Develop a general message(s) for the targeted audience.
- d. Establish a communication delivery system.
  - i. Letters
  - ii. Emails
  - iii. Face-to-Face
  - iv. Telephone
  - v. Meetings
- e. Develop a preliminary schedule for communication, including meetings and job fair activities.
- f. Implement a communication and meeting schedule.
- g. Meet with community and subject matter experts, such as Workforce Investment Board Representatives, to determine their availability and the resources they can provide to our unemployed Brothers and Sisters.
- h. Fast track time sensitive activities such as health insurance contacts, before COBRA expires.
- i. Identify potential job fair employers.
- j. Be ready to adjust the schedule and repeat some of the initiatives.

## **PART II: REFERENCE FOR LOCAL LODGE LEADERS**

In the event of an anticipated layoff, your members will be looking to you for support and guidance. This guide was designed as a tool to be used by our union leaders in order that they may be better equipped to deal with layoff situations. It will cover the steps a union leader should take in the event of a layoff and will provide you with many available resources that you can access in order to become more informed on the subject.

One of the most valuable resources available to you and the members is the IAM Retirees, Community and Membership Services Department's Website (<http://www.goiam.org/index.php/headquarters/departments/retirees-community-and-membership-services>). When browsing through this website, you will find a host of valuable information that will provide the assistance our members need. Just a few of the topics covered are:

- Resume and budget templates
  - Links to state unemployment agencies
  - Job search websites
  - Retraining information
  - Railroad job vacancies and more
- *Decisions and Choices Manual* - An excellent resource to help displaced members come to grips with the emotional and psychological issues of layoffs. The manual focuses on:
- Self-evaluation
  - Skills assessment
  - Planning
  - Self-empowerment
  - Job searches and resumes
  - Health insurance
  - Budgeting
- The IAM's *Guide to Survive* – This step-by-step guide covers the following:
- Resume/application preparation
  - Job search techniques
  - Job interviews
  - Health insurance and drug savings
  - Housing, food and utility assistance

- Budgeting
  - Workforce Investment Act, Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notifications (WARN) and the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA)
- Contact information is provided for the resources mentioned in the *Guide* including computer links and phone numbers.

If you would like to obtain copies of this manual, or if you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to contact the Department of Retirees, Community and Membership Services at IAMAW Headquarters by phone (301-967-3433) or e-mail ([cmicallef@iamaw.org](mailto:cmicallef@iamaw.org) or [lwindsor@iamaw.org](mailto:lwindsor@iamaw.org)).

In the event of any layoff, the affiliated District Lodge should be notified immediately. Your District Lodge Directing Business Representative can be of great help to you and the affected members. He/she can order materials from this department that will be provided to those being affected by the layoff. These materials include copies of the *Decisions & Choices Manual* referred to above, the *Guide to Survive* and pamphlets covering insurance options and other available services. The Directing Business Representative can assist you by becoming involved right along with you in order to service the members better.

Also, remember to notify your Regional General Vice President's office in the event of a layoff. They may also be able to give you support and answer questions you may have.

Below is a checklist that union leaders have employed to provide benefits and services to members affected by job loss. It is our hope that these suggestions will prove beneficial to you and our members and make your job as a union leader easier. We realize that each time there is a layoff, circumstances are different and not everything on the checklist will apply. However, you may review the list and use the suggestions you believe would pertain to the layoff situation.

Make sure management has given the union members proper notice of layoff:

1. Review advance notification contractual provisions.
2. Review federal notification regulations.
  - Employees may be eligible for Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN). The purpose of the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act is to provide protection to workers, their families and communities by requiring employers to provide notification 60 calendar days in advance of plant closings and mass layoffs. Advance notice provides workers and their families'

transition time to adjust to the prospective loss of employment, to seek and obtain alternative jobs and, if necessary, to enter skill training or retraining that will allow these workers to successfully compete in the job market. WARN also provides for notice to state dislocated worker units so that dislocated worker assistance can be promptly provided.

- In general, employers are covered by WARN if they have 100 or more employees, not counting employees who have worked less than 6 months in the last 12 months and not counting employees who work an average of less than 20 hours a week. Private, for-profit employers and private, nonprofit employers are covered, as are public and quasi-public entities which operate in a commercial context and are separately organized from the regular government.
- Regular federal, state, and local government entities that provide public services are not covered.
- For more information go online:  
[www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-warn.htm](http://www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-warn.htm)

3. Review applicability of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program.

- The Trade Adjustment Assistance Program is a federal program established to aid workers who lose their jobs or whose hours of work and wages are reduced as a result of foreign trade with any country. TAA offers a variety of benefits and re-employment services to assist and prepare unemployed workers to obtain suitable jobs.
- This program provides affected workers with both rapid and early response to the threat of unemployment and the opportunity to engage in long-term training while receiving income support.
- For more information on how to apply go to the DOL's website:  
[www.doleta.gov/tradeact/petitions.cfm](http://www.doleta.gov/tradeact/petitions.cfm)
- Due to the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 significant enhancements have been made to TAA including expanded eligibility, health care coverage, money for training and income support, etc. The following websites have information regarding changes and information is being updated regularly:

<http://www.doleta.gov/tradeact/>

<http://www.nelp.org/page/-/UI/highlights.new.taa.pdf?nocdn=1>

Make sure the union stays fully informed and involved:

4. Coordinate Rapid Response team efforts to assist workers and companies facing layoffs.
    - Rapid Response services provide immediate aid to workers affected by announcements of plant closings and large layoffs. Your state Dislocated Worker Unit can get help to you as soon as possible. For layoffs that meet state criteria, Dislocated Worker Offices may send one or more representatives to the work site to coordinate the layoff before it occurs. During Rapid Response, specialists in helping workers cope with job change will gather information on workers' needs and begin to organize the services necessary to assist individuals in getting back to work.
    - Assure that the public Rapid Response effort does not interfere with the requirement that an employer negotiate the effects of a closure with the union.
  5. Create a workforce adjustment committee as soon as layoff notices arrive and begin designing a displaced worker program. Develop a workforce adjustment committee with full union participation to develop a comprehensive plan for assisting workers.
    - Every state has a Dislocated Worker Unit under Title 1 of the Workforce Investment Act. As a union leader, you will want to be alert to the services available for your members through the unit. The Dislocated Worker Unit is responsible for contacting the affected employer and union(s) to offer assistance including help in setting up a Workforce Adjustment Committee, which consists of both labor and management representatives.
  6. Insist that any on-site meeting or contact with workers upon receipt of information about a potential layoff or closure includes union representation.
- Take steps to respond quickly to assist members
    1. Maintain an up-to-date database of employees being affected by the layoff.
    2. Review the contract and be sure all existing benefit provisions are implemented e.g. advance notice, health/COBRA, severance, supplemental unemployment, pension, workers comp., etc.

3. Make sure that workers who are off due to occupational injury or illness receive proper notification of status, benefits and services.
  4. Negotiate with the employer to obtain additional benefits such as supplemental unemployment, training, and other services.
  5. Prior to layoff, locate early intervention services. Enroll workers into benefits and services as soon as possible and create easy access to services to facilitate intake and enrollment activities.
  6. Assist members in receiving public benefits in a timely manner and be sensitive to the concerns/needs of documented and undocumented immigrant workers.
  7. Take steps to insure that all services are accessible to workers with disabilities and other special needs and in languages spoken by the workforce.
  8. Keep information the workers provide confidential.
- Develop systems to promote delivery of programs
    1. Establish a peer advisor program to train union members with Rapid Response staff in helping laid-off union members enroll in local programs and services and in holding providers accountable for the provision of timely early intervention services.
    2. Seek adequate funding to provide a full array of services and benefits (both negotiated and public).
    3. Create a plan and procedure to ensure private-public cooperation so that workers have access to all the benefits and services that they are eligible for.
  - Connect with labor-friendly advice on developing programs or finding the resources available through private and public systems.
    1. Contact your Central Labor Council and State Federation. A number of state federations operate dislocated worker programs.
      - Your Central Labor Council can:
        - Help you locate the AFL-CIO Community Services staff in your area.
        - Direct you to the labor representatives on your state and local Workforce Investment Board.

2. Contact the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute Regional Coordinator  
[www.workingforamerica.org](http://www.workingforamerica.org)
- Identify support group services and have this information available to displaced workers.
    1. Displaced workers have access to many core services through their local One-Stop Center, such as:
      - Assistance in applying for unemployment insurance, pension benefits and health insurance coverage options.
      - Help in searching for new jobs, writing resumes, and seeking job training.
      - To find the nearest One Stop Center, call 877-US2-JOBS (1-877-872-5627), or visit the America's Service Locator Website at:  
[www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org)
    2. State employment service
    3. Non profit organizations, such as Salvation Army, Catholic Charities and United Way
  - Follow up with a survey, asking how union leaders helped, what other assistance could be provided, and how to improve.