

## **Career Counseling Displaced Workers**

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CNL-525: Career Counseling

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February 19, 2025

## Introduction

Job displacement occurs when individuals become unemployed due to external factors such as economic instability, industry shifts, automation, and corporate restructuring. Job displacement can leave workers unemployed, financially unstable, emotionally distressed, and with uncertain future career prospects (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). Displaced workers often experience a loss of identity, self-worth, and community, making career counseling essential to reintegrating into the workforce. This assignment explores the needs of displaced workers and the importance of career counseling to help them transition back to employment. This assignment uses the Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment (MTWA) to outline a structured counseling plan that addresses career goals, job market adaptability, and the psychological well-being of displaced workers (Foley & Lytle, 2015). This assignment examines employment barriers, available resources, and career sustainability strategies. This assignment also discusses the role of spirituality in career counseling and how it helps displaced workers find meaning, resilience, and purpose in the job-searching process.

### Population and Needs of Displaced Workers

Displaced workers have lost their jobs due to company closures, industry shifts, automation, or economic fluctuations rather than performance issues (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). Displaced workers often lose their jobs unexpectedly and are oftentimes left financially unstable, emotionally distressed, and uncertain about their career future (Brand, 2015). Career counseling is essential in helping displaced workers navigate employment transitions, regain confidence, and secure meaningful employment. Displaced workers experience isolation, loss of identity, and reduced self-esteem, leading to uncertainty about the future and stress-related health concerns (Hiswåls et al., 2017). Career counseling provides guidance, facilitates reemployment, and contributes to well-being and resilience (Robertson, 2013). Many displaced workers go through the stages of grief after job loss: denial, anger, depression, and eventual acceptance (Trent, 2018). The

psychological distress caused by unemployment can hinder motivation to seek new career opportunities, making career counseling essential in restoring confidence, setting realistic goals, and identifying transferable skills. Career counseling addresses the challenges of displaced workers by providing tailored career planning, skill assessment, and psychological support (Robertson, 2013).

### **Displaced Workers Statistics**

Displaced workers represent many unemployed people due to economic fluctuations, restructuring, technological advancements, and industry declines (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). Approximately 3.2 million workers were displaced between 2021 and 2023 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). By early 2024, 65% of these displaced workers were reemployed, leaving 35% struggling to regain stable employment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). Displacement affects various industries, but manufacturing, retail, and administrative support roles are most affected (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). Older workers aged 50 and above face more extended periods of unemployment and are less likely to secure jobs with similar wages (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). A significant portion of displaced workers do not utilize career counseling resources. While more than 50% of individuals seek career assistance, only 24% receive structured career counseling, suggesting a lack of awareness, stigma, or accessibility issues (Whiston & Blustein, 2013). Career counseling is crucial in reemployment, especially for individuals struggling with long-term unemployment. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Dislocated Worker Programs provide training, job placement assistance, and career development services (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.).

### **Displaced Workers and Career Counseling**

One of the most effective career theories for assisting displaced workers is the Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment (MTWA), which emphasizes the interaction between individuals and their work environments, suggesting that successful employment depends on both the individual's

abilities matching the job demands and the work environment fulfilling the employee's needs (Robertson, 2013). The MTWA theory focuses on adjustment and adaptability, which are crucial factors in career transitions and job-seeking behaviors, and on the degree to which the employee's needs are met (satisfaction) and the extent to which the employee's skills align with job requirements (satisfactoriness) (Foley & Lytle, 2015). Career counselors can use MTWA to help clients identify transferable skills, potential career shifts, and necessary retraining programs. Career interventions focusing on skill realignment significantly improve job-seeking success rates and job satisfaction (Whiston & Blustein, 2013). Career counseling improves self-efficacy and helps workers redefine their career identities (Robertson, 2013). Displaced workers experience increased emotional distress and social isolation, while those who engage in career counseling tend to have better overall well-being and higher job attainment success (Hiswåls et al., 2017). Career interventions utilizing structured assessment tools improve displaced workers' ability to find meaningful employment and transition successfully into new careers (Whiston & Blustein, 2013). The MTWA framework helps individuals assess transferable skills and identify experiences that apply to potential opportunities (Whiston & Blustein, 2013). The MTWA addresses psychological resilience by enhancing well-being and helping individuals regain career control (Robertson, 2013).

### **Displaced Workers Counseling Plan (Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment)**

The Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment (MTWA) is a structured framework for assisting displaced workers in reintegrating into meaningful employment (Foley & Lytle, 2015). MTWA emphasizes the person-environment fit, positing that successful career adjustment occurs when an individual's skills and values align with the requirements and rewards of a particular job (Foley & Lytle, 2015). Applying MTWA to career counseling for displaced workers involves assessing their work personality, identifying suitable job matches, and implementing a structured plan to ensure a smooth career transition. The first step is conducting a comprehensive intake session to assess their

career history, skills, values, and employment goals. Career counselors can administer Interest Inventories to identify career fields aligned with personal interests, skills, and competency assessments to evaluate transferable skills and work values surveys to determine intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in job satisfaction (Whiston & Blustein, 2013). Many displaced workers struggle with mismatched job expectations after reemployment, leading to dissatisfaction and further instability (Brand, 2015). Career counselors must identify work-related reinforcers, align the client's skills and values with potential careers, and provide realistic job previews (Robertson, 2013). Next, an action plan must be developed, including updating resumes to highlight transferable skills and relevant experiences, connecting clients with training programs and certifications to bridge skill gaps, conducting practice interviews to refine job-seeking strategies, and encouraging engagement with career fairs, LinkedIn groups, and mentorship programs (Trent, 2018; U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.; Whiston & Blustein, 2013). Finally, the MTWA framework includes an ongoing adjustment process after securing employment. Follow-up sessions ensure that the client's new job aligns with their career goals and values, that they feel adequately supported and confident in their new role, and that any adjustments can be made if needed (Brand, 2015; Foley & Lytle, 2015).

### **Barriers to Displaced Workers Finding Employment**

Displaced workers face several personal and environmental barriers that hinder their ability to attain stable employment. Some challenges displaced workers face include age discrimination, skill deficits, limited access to technology, psychological distress, financial strain, and lack of support (Brand, 2015; Hiswåls et al., 2017). Many displaced workers experience anxiety, depression, and feelings of worthlessness, negatively impacting their motivation and ability to seek new opportunities (Hiswåls et al., 2017). Unemployment is associated with increased stress, isolation, reduced life satisfaction, and greater intensity when prolonged (Robertson, 2013). Due to sudden income loss, many displaced workers struggle financially, making it difficult to afford necessary

career development resources, such as additional training (Brand, 2015). Limited job opportunities from industries undergoing layoffs require displaced workers to relocate or transition into new career fields (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). Older displaced workers often face age discrimination in hiring as employers may perceive them as less adaptable and less productive than younger candidates (Whiston & Blustein, 2013). Some displaced workers lack the technical skills required for newer jobs, making it difficult for them to compete in the evolving workforce (Brand, 2015). Limited job availability and unreliable transportation for displaced workers living in rural or economically depressed areas can make finding employment difficult (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). Many displaced workers struggle to rebuild their professional networks, especially if they were employed at the same company for many years; they often lack access to professional networks (Trent, 2018).

### **Local Resources for Displaced Workers**

Federal, state, and community-based programs provide career counseling, job training, and networking opportunities. These resources are designed to help individuals overcome employment barriers, develop new skills, and connect with job opportunities.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program is a federally funded initiative that assists displaced workers by providing career services, job training, and employment assistance (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). WIOA provides career counseling and job placement assistance, skills assessments and career planning, training programs, and support for transportation, childcare, and job search expenses (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). Displaced workers can apply for WIOA services through their local American Job Center (AJC) (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). American Job Centers (AJCs) offer comprehensive employment services for displaced workers. They provided resume writing assistance, mock interviews and job application support, networking and hiring events, and connections with local employers (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). Several

organizations, like the National Career Development Association (NCDA), offer local career coaching, peer support, and mental health services. LinkedIn allows workers to connect with professionals and recruiters.

### **Sustainability and Recommendations of the Proposed Plan for Displaced Workers**

The MTWA-based approach aligns well with the needs of displaced workers because it focuses on work adjustment, job satisfaction, and employer fit (Foley & Lytle, 2015). MTWA ensures job seekers match their competencies with job market demands, identify workplaces that align with their values, stability, and financial needs, and help them develop resilience, adaptability, and coping mechanisms (Foley & Lytle, 2015; Hiswåls et al., 2017). The proposed recommendations increase the likelihood of successful implementation by bridging resource gaps and strengthening job placement efforts.

### **Incorporation of Spirituality in Career Counseling for Displaced Workers**

Spirituality can serve as a coping mechanism, provide emotional support, and influence career decision-making (Samuels, 2020). As displaced workers often experience a loss of identity and purpose, integrating spirituality into career counseling can help reframe experiences, find meaning, and navigate their career transitions with resilience. When providing career guidance, it is essential to consider the client's cultural and personal contexts, including spirituality (NCDA Code of Ethics, 2015). Understanding how the client's spiritual beliefs influence their values, career interests, and coping strategies can enhance the effectiveness of career counseling interventions (Hiswåls et al., 2017). Individuals with strong spiritual beliefs often experience lower stress and anxiety when facing unemployment (Hiswåls et al., 2017). Encouraging clients to identify spiritual practices that bring them peace and resilience can be essential to counseling (Samuels, 2020). Depending on their beliefs, displaced workers may benefit from faith-based career counseling or job search programs that align with their spiritual values (Samuels, 2020). Integrating spirituality into career counseling

helps displaced workers find purpose; individuals who feel a sense of calling in their work report higher job satisfaction and well-being (Samuels, 2020). Career counselors can guide displaced workers in exploring how their skills, aspirations, and spiritual beliefs align with meaningful work opportunities. Encouraging clients to explore career paths that align with their values can enhance their motivation and overall career satisfaction (Hiswåls et al., 2017).

### **Conclusion**

Career displacement affects individuals emotionally, financially, and socially. With targeted career counseling interventions, displaced workers can rebuild their professional identities, enhance job-seeking strategies, and find employment opportunities. Addressing barriers, leveraging workforce development programs, implementing retraining initiatives, and fostering professional networking can empower displaced workers and provide tailored support that improves their ability to attain sustainable, satisfying employment. Also, integrating spirituality into career counseling can help displaced workers find purpose, meaning, and resilience.

Career counselors can help displaced workers reintegrate into the workforce by implementing structured career counseling strategies and resources.

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