MODERATOR: Hello and thanks for tuning into today’s tutorial: National Dislocated Worker Grants. Our speaker is Greg Hitchcock from the Employment and Training Administration at the United States Department of Labor.

GREG HITCHCOCK: Hello. I’m Greg Hitchcock with the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration. I will be discussing the National Dislocated Worker Grants that are authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, or WIOA, and the major changes that were made by WIOA to the National Emergency Grants that were authorized by the Workforce Investment Act, or WIA.

The first change made by WIOA is to the name of the grants themselves. The grants were called National Emergency Grants, or NEGs, under WIA. When WIOA goes into effect on July 1st, 2014, these grants will be known as National Dislocated Worker Grants. However, just like WIA, WIOA continues to provide for two basic types of grants -- disaster and regular.

Let’s start with a further discussion of disaster grants, as a majority of the changes that were made by WIOA apply to disaster grants. WIOA provides for two additional situations that qualify eligible entities to apply for disaster grant in addition to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, declarations that trigger eligibility under WIA. First, emergency or disaster situations of national significance are now eligible to qualify for disaster grant funding. Second, situations where a substantial number of individuals relocate to another area from a disaster area are now eligible. The former is intended to address situations similar to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill where a FEMA declaration was not issued but services were needed, while the latter is intended to address situations where a large number of individuals evacuate from the disaster area for a significant period of time, as occurred in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina and Rita and workforce development services were needed.

Further, WIOA also extends participant eligibility under disaster grants to self-employed individuals who become unemployed or significantly underemployed as a result of the emergency or disaster. This is also intended to address situations similar to those that occurred in the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, where self-employed fishermen and other tourism-based businesses that depended on the Gulf for their livelihood suffered a significant loss of income and earning potential, but were not totally unemployed.

WIOA also increases the maximum duration of disaster relief employment provided under disaster grants from six months under WIA to 12 months. Further, WIOA provides the secretary the authority to extend the duration of disaster relief employment for up to an additional 12 months upon the request of the grantee with sufficient justification.

For regular grants, WIOA also provides for an additional situation beyond those provided for in WIA which qualifies eligible entities to apply for funding. That situation is when there is a higher than average demand for dislocated worker services from certain members of the armed forces and military spouses which exceeds the capacity the state and local resources. This additional authority is intended to address a significant number of individuals returning from
overseas that are leaving military service and require services to successfully integrate into the civilian workforce and find gainful employment.

I hope this brief overview of the National Dislocated Worker Grant provisions contained in WIOA has been helpful to increase stakeholders’ understanding of the upcoming changes. More information will be coming about National Dislocated Worker Grants through the rulemaking process, as well as through the Employment and Training Administration’s technical assistance efforts over the coming months.

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