



# Proactive Approaches to Prevent Long Term Unemployment in Employment Programs

RECORDED SESSION

*Building Early Intervention Systems for Higher Risk Clients*

Fri, Jun 26, 2026 | 10 AM PDT (1 hour session)

Presenter:

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# Session Agenda

RECORDED SESSION

- Understanding the Human and Service Impact of Long-Term Unemployment
- Identifying Earlier Indicators and Prevention Actions
- Practice Lab: Applying Prevention Thinking to Client Scenarios
- Question & Answer Session



**Slides and a Session  
Recording link will be  
available after the session  
via email**

# Understanding the Human and Service Impact of Long-Term Unemployment



# Human and Service Impact of Long-Term Unemployment

Long-term unemployment is becoming a persistent reality for many jobseekers in Canada.

We are increasingly seeing:

- Job searches taking longer than 6 months - especially in competitive markets and higher-skilled roles.
- Larger practitioner caseloads, longer client service periods and repeated support cycles for returning jobseekers.



# Human and Service Impact of Long-Term Unemployment

- Employment services evolving - funders placing emphasis on job retention and sustainable employment outcomes.
- Many employment services contracts requiring clients to remain employed for extended periods before performance outcomes are considered achieved.



# What Is Long-Term Unemployment?

Generally defined by the Canadian government, this refers to individuals - or in this case clients - who *have been unemployed and actively seeking work for 6 months or longer.*

*So why is helping clients who have been unemployed for a long period, different?*

Research suggests prolonged unemployment may affect clients **psychologically, behaviorally and practically** - which in turn may increase support demands for Career Practitioners and also create additional demands on employment programs over time.



# How LTU May Affect Clients - Psychological

## Psychological

→ **Paul & Moser (2009)** found that unemployed individuals experienced greater psychological distress (mental health) than employed individuals and also identified that their *unemployment duration may influence this over time.*

Clients may begin changing how they view themselves and their future opportunities.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0001879109000037?via%3Dihub>

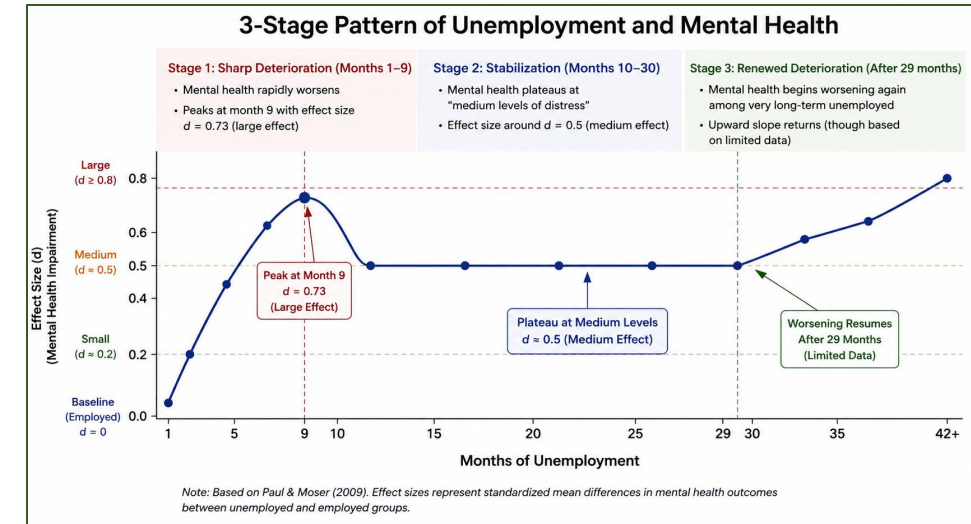


# How LTU May Affect Clients - Psychological

## According to Paul & Moser (2009), there is a 3-Stage Pattern of Unemployment & Mental Health

- Sharp (distress) increase during the first year, peaking at month 9
- Stabilization at elevated, but stable levels, during the second year
- Renewed worsening after 29 months of unemployment

*This pattern represents an adaptation process where individuals adjust to their unemployment situation.*



### 3-Stage Pattern of Unemployment and Mental Health

#### Stage 1: Sharp Deterioration (Months 1–9)

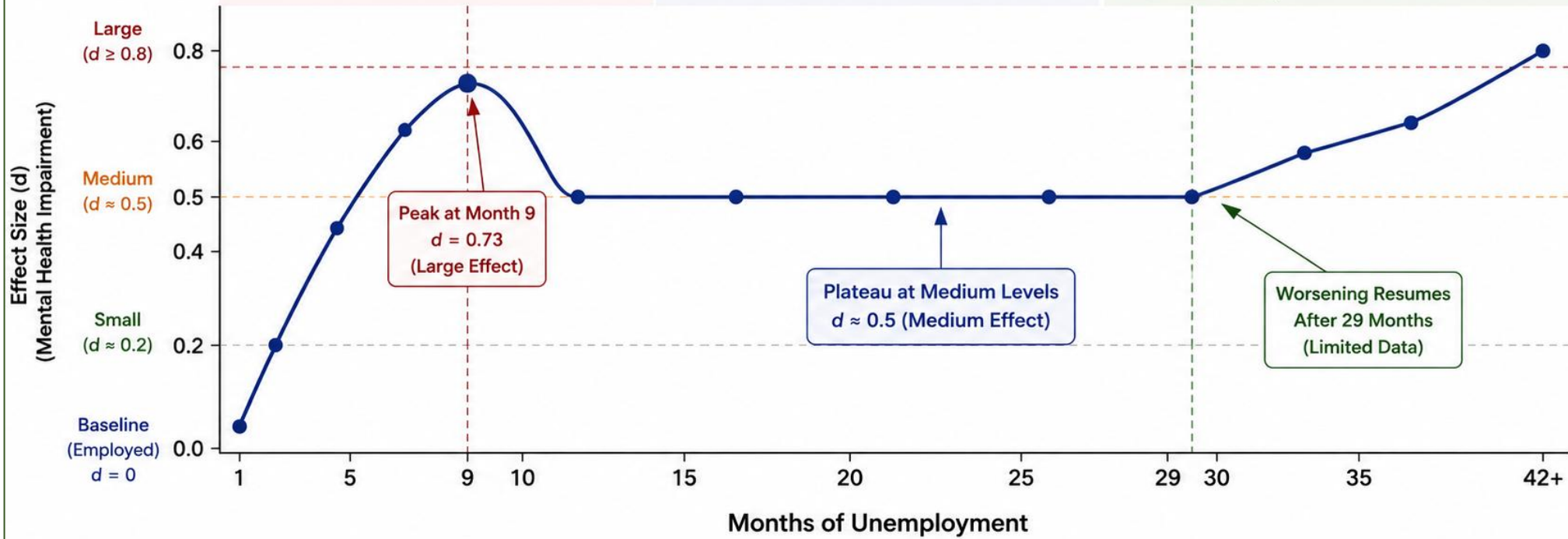
- Mental health rapidly worsens
- Peaks at month 9 with effect size  $d = 0.73$  (large effect)

#### Stage 2: Stabilization (Months 10–30)

- Mental health plateaus at “medium levels of distress”
- Effect size around  $d = 0.5$  (medium effect)

#### Stage 3: Renewed Deterioration (After 29 months)

- Mental health begins worsening again among very long-term unemployed
- Upward slope returns (though based on limited data)



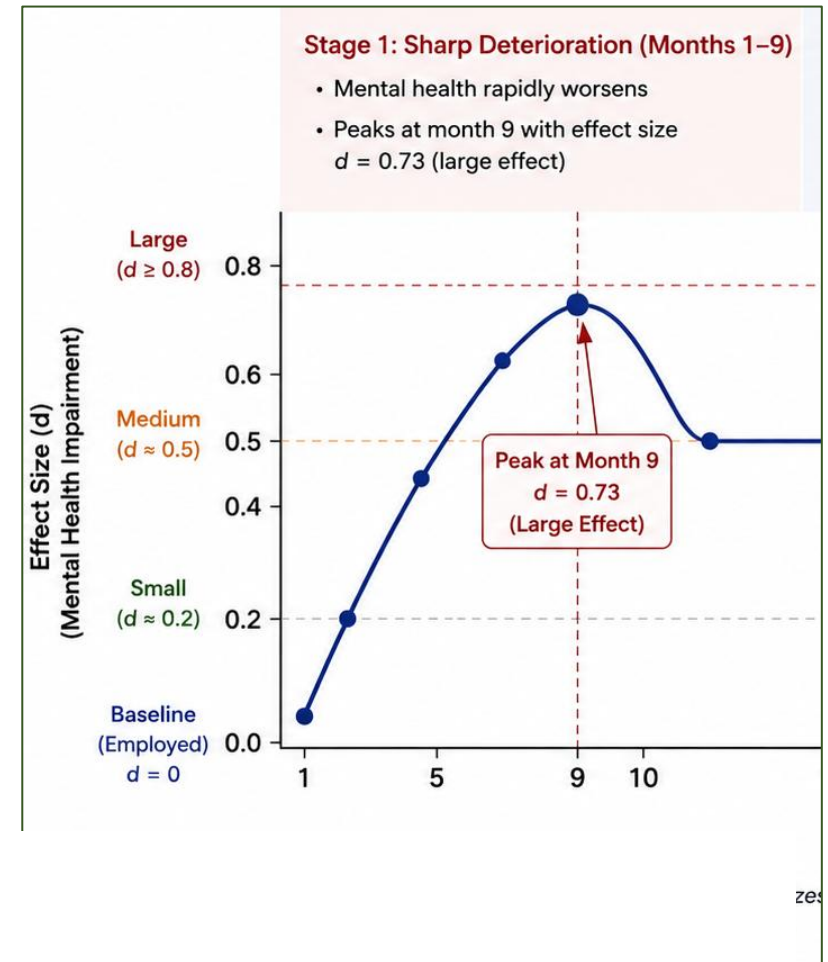
Note: Based on Paul & Moser (2009). Effect sizes represent standardized mean differences in mental health outcomes between unemployed and employed groups.

*If unemployment affects people differently as time goes on,  
then the question for Career Practitioners  
is not only what happens psychologically,  
but what signs of that change can we notice  
early enough to respond?*

# 3-Stage Pattern of Unemployment & Mental Health

## Stage 1 – Initial shock and crisis

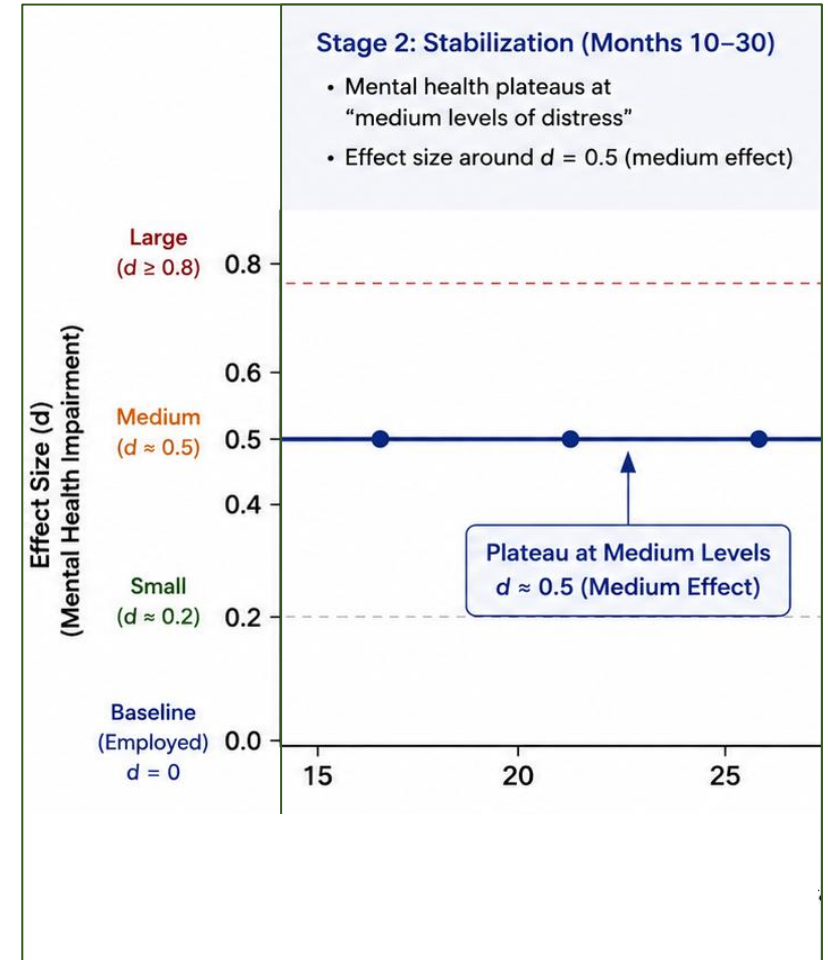
- Early weeks and months are a high-risk window for mental health problems and for coping.
- Early indicator clue: acute distress, shame, money panic, sleep disruption, or a sudden drop in confidence may signal that the client needs earlier stabilizing support.
- Rapid outreach and support (information, normalizing reactions, practical guidance) is likely to be especially valuable here.



# 3-Stage Pattern of Unemployment & Mental Health

## Stage 2 – Adaptation / Plateau

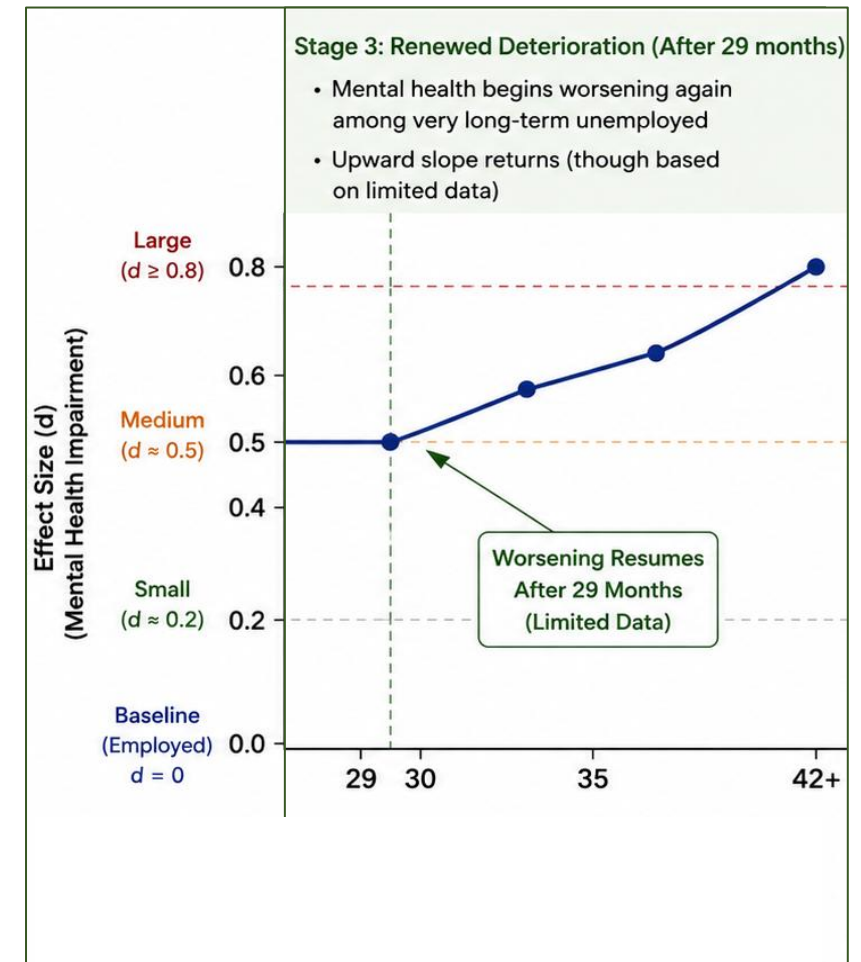
- As unemployment continues, some individuals partially adapt; routines are rebuilt, expectations adjust, and distress may stabilize rather than climbing. Some people cope reasonably well for a while, others gradually deteriorate.
- Early indicator clue: partial adaptation can mask risk; watch for reduced persistence, lower self-efficacy or more passive job-search behavior even when the client still appears “okay.”



# 3-Stage Pattern of Unemployment & Mental Health

## Stage 3 – Prolonged unemployment and erosion

- The risk of poor mental health generally rises again: skills stale, stigma increases and networks thin out
- Early indicator clue: withdrawal, hopelessness, and collapsing routine may signal that support now needs to shift from standard job-search help to more structured, multi-layered intervention. (mental health support, structured activity, skills development)
- These clients are at elevated risk for chronic distress, demoralization, and withdrawal from job search.



# How LTU May Affect Clients - Psychological

## Psychological – continued

→ **Bandura (1997)** defined self-efficacy as people's belief in their ability to control their functioning and events that affect their lives.

In Bandura's Self-Efficacy of Motivation, he proposed that people who believe their actions can influence outcomes (self-efficacy) are more likely to continue effort and persist through setbacks

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/self-efficacy.html>



# How LTU May Affect Clients - Behavioral

## Behavioral

→ **Wanberg et al. (1999)** found that unemployed individuals with low levels of job-search self-efficacy are less likely to look for work as intensely and ***are more likely to use ineffective search techniques*** than individuals with high levels of job search self-efficacy.

Clients who understand what to do may not always continue doing it over time. Career Practitioners may begin noticing behavioral changes before clients openly express being discouraged.

[https://carlsonschool.umn.edu/sites/carlsonschool.umn.edu/files/2018-10/wanberg\\_kanfer\\_rotundo\\_1999\\_0.pdf?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://carlsonschool.umn.edu/sites/carlsonschool.umn.edu/files/2018-10/wanberg_kanfer_rotundo_1999_0.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com)



# How LTU May Affect Clients - Practical

## Practical

→ **McKee-Ryan et al. (2005)** identified relationships between unemployment and reduced wellbeing, *including practical and financial stressors.*

As unemployment continues, practical pressures may increase. Clients may begin adjusting goals, accepting work outside their original plan, reducing participation in services, or prioritizing immediate needs over longer-term job search activities



# How LTU May Affect Clients - Practical

## Practical – continued

→ **Jahoda (1982)** proposed that employment provides more than income - including time structure, social contact, collective purpose and regular activity.

Longer periods without employment may reduce external structure and routine. Without regular expectations, some clients may find it harder to maintain job-search habits, momentum and engagement over time.



# How This May Affect Career Practitioners

**Career Practitioners** who are trying to help these clients may:

- spend more time rebuilding momentum
- increase re-engagement efforts
- require more intensive follow-up and support strategies



# How This May Affect Affect Service Delivery & Program Outcomes

**Employment programs may:**

- experience greater pressure to achieve program and service outcomes / targets
- increase outreach and re-engagement activities
- allocate additional time and funding toward hiring events, employer engagement and job search activities to rebuild client momentum

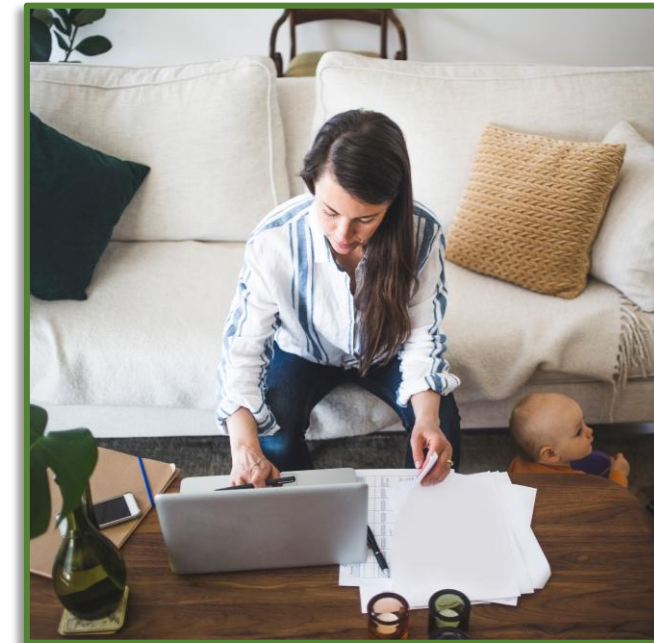


# Identifying Indicators Earlier & Prevention Actions



# Why Informal Identification Can Create Inconsistency

- Career Practitioners are often already able to identify clients at risk intuitively.
- However, informal approaches may make this difficult to do consistently across appointments, particularly when Career Practitioners are balancing:
  - tight appointment timelines
  - intake and administrative requirements (forms, consents)
  - immediate or urgent service and documentation needs



# What Is a Structured Risk Profile?

A structured risk profile is a simple way to capture information that may suggest a client could benefit from additional support if their job search becomes longer than expected.

It does not predict outcomes or replace professional judgement. Instead, it helps Career Practitioners:

- identify patterns that may influence sustained engagement over time
- adjust support earlier rather than waiting for disengagement
- document observations consistently across appointments



# What Is a Structured Risk Profile?

A practice reality: clients do not all seek help at the same point in the job search.

A structured risk profile is only useful if we know when we are most likely to see people and when risk may still be preventable.

In my experience, the timing of service entry often reflects how the search is unfolding psychologically, behaviorally and practically.



# When Clients Tend to Access Support

While clients may access employment services at different stages of unemployment, in practice I often observe three broad patterns (Practitioner Observation – not formal data):

- *0–2 months: clients may remain optimistic and continue independently (self-directed)*
- *2–5 months: clients may begin seeking external support after repeated setbacks or slower-than-expected progress*
- *6+ months: client support may broaden beyond technical job search - into sustaining engagement over time*



# When Do EI Claimants Access Services?

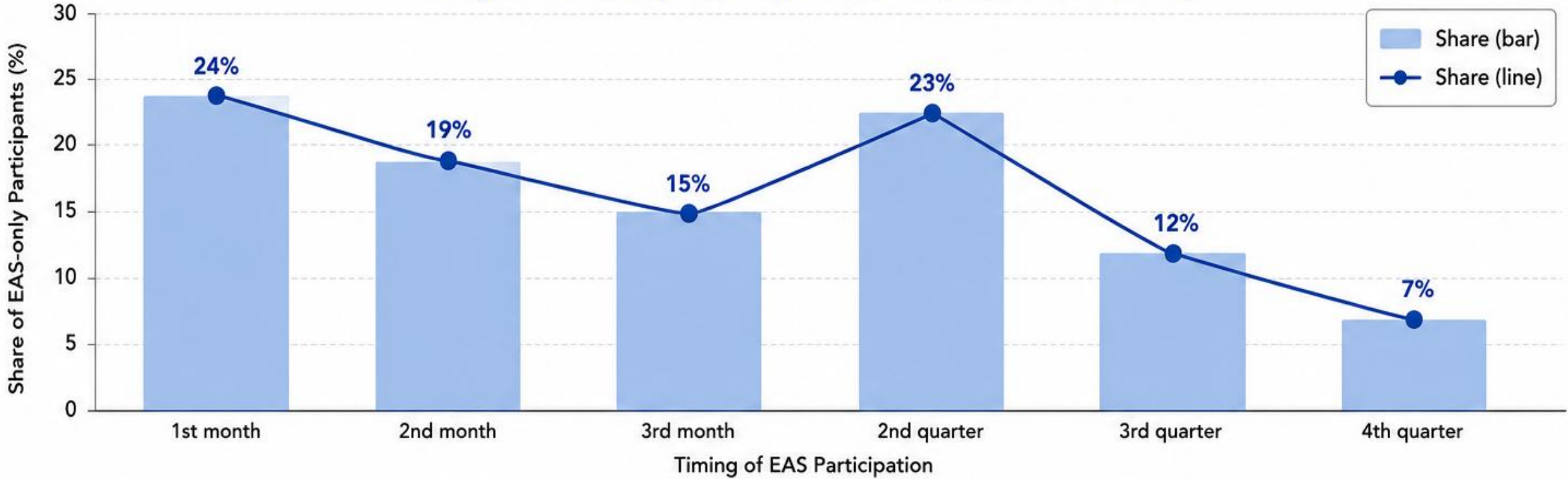
According to ESDC's evaluation of Employment Assistance Services, the largest share of participants entered services in the first month after starting EI (24%), followed by the second quarter (23%).

Fewer participants started later in the process, especially in the third and fourth quarters, suggesting that help-seeking is most common early but still continues for some claimants after several months of unemployment.

[https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2017/edsc-esdc/Em20-65-2017-eng.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/edsc-esdc/Em20-65-2017-eng.pdf)



Timing of EAS Participation After EI Claim Start (Bar + Line Chart)



Source: ESDC (2017), *Effects of the Timing of Participation in Employment Assistance Services*.

# Early Indicators & Preventive Actions

As we discussed earlier, long-term unemployment can affect clients psychologically, behaviorally and practically over time.

Before clients become disengaged, what early indicators might we notice in a first meeting that can help us respond more proactively if the job search goes longer than expected? And what actions can we implement?



# Psychological Early Indicators

## Acute loss reactions

Shock, numbness, strong shame or self-blame (“I’ve failed”), intrusive worry about money, sleep disruption, or visible agitation.

*Early action:* Normalize the reaction, provide brief stabilizing support, and schedule a short check-in periodically.



# Psychological Early Indicators

## Threatened identity and self-efficacy

Clients talking as if *they* are the job loss (“I’m unemployable now”, “Nobody will want me at my age”). Paul & Moser emphasize that unemployment affects self-evaluation and well-being, not just income.

*Early action:* Use strengths language, set very small achievable steps, and track wins (milestones) to rebuild confidence.



# Psychological Early Indicators

## Feeling alone or unsupported in the job search

Limited encouragement, reassurance, or accountability from family, friends, or others, which may weaken confidence and make setbacks harder to recover from.

*Early action:* Explore supportive people or groups, and plan one concrete connection (peer group, workshop, mentor or friend).



# Behavioral Early Indicators

## Service engagement patterns

Communication preferences, previous experiences with programs, follow-up patterns, or likelihood of re-engagement that may affect how consistently the client participates in support over time.

*Early action:* Trigger a re-contact attempt (email + call) and adjust appointment style or channel to fit the client better.



# Behavioral Early Indicators

## Narrow or un-adaptive job-search approach

Client is focusing on a very limited type of role or pathway or is reluctant to consider realistic alternatives or adjacent options, which may make setbacks harder to absorb if progress is slower than expected.

*Early action:* Explore the client's flexibility and labor-market options together, and co-design a broader or more realistic search plan before setbacks accumulate.



# Behavioral Early Indicators

## Unclear or unrealistic job-search expectations at intake

Client has either no clear idea of what they are aiming for or very narrow/idealized expectations about roles, timeline or conditions (for example, expecting very fast results in a tight labor market, or refusing to consider any adjacent roles).

*Early action:* Explore how the client is defining success, expected timeline, and target roles, then work together to set a more realistic and flexible short-term job-search plan before repeated setbacks build.



# Practical Early Indicators

## Rising financial strain that starts to shape decisions

Growing worry about paying rent, food or utilities; beginning to use credit for basics. Talking about taking “anything” out of desperation but not actually able to pursue options, leading to a stuck state. Skipping networking or training because of transit, childcare or small costs.

*Early action:* Screen for urgent needs, connect to financial or basic-needs supports, and adjust job-search expectations temporarily.



# Practical Early Indicators

## Loss of structure and routine (Jahoda's time structure)

No consistent wake/sleep times, no regular job-search blocks in the week. Days shaped around avoidance (scrolling, gaming, TV) rather than purposeful activity. Difficulty even remembering what they did for job search since the last appointment.

*Early action:* Co-create a simple daily template and plan to revisit it at the next appointment.



# Practical Early Indicators

## Emerging risk factors

Pre-existing mental health challenges, caregiving demands or language barriers that may make early job-loss distress harder to cope with and increase the likelihood of later “erosion” if the search becomes prolonged.

*Early action:* Identify one practical support or referral and set a reminder to check whether it was accessed.



# Tool: Structured Risk Profile Worksheet

## Structured Risk Profile Worksheet

- *Created an editable Word document which includes the indicators discussed during the session.*
- *Will attach to the post-session email.*

**Structured Risk Profile Worksheet**

**Purpose:** To consistently identify early indicators that may suggest a client could benefit from earlier or enhanced support if their job search becomes longer than expected. This worksheet supports professional judgement and prevention planning rather than predicting long-term unemployment.

**Client Information**

Client Name	
Date	
Practitioner	
Program / Organization	

**Structured Risk Profile**

Consider the indicators below. Check those observed, record brief evidence, and determine whether a reminder, check-in or re-contact should be scheduled.

Category	Observed Indicator(s)	Evidence / Notes
Psychological	<input type="checkbox"/> Acute loss reactions (shock, shame, self-blame, money worry, sleep disruption) <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced confidence / self-efficacy <input type="checkbox"/> Hopelessness about future opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawal or discouragement	
Behavioral	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduced job-search intensity <input type="checkbox"/> Narrow or ineffective job-search strategies <input type="checkbox"/> Missed appointments / reduced engagement <input type="checkbox"/> Less persistence after setbacks	
Practical	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial pressure increasing <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of daily structure or routine <input type="checkbox"/> Transport / childcare / housing barriers <input type="checkbox"/> Immediate needs taking priority over job search	

## Structured Risk Profile Worksheet

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# Simple Prevention Systems

## Basic Intervention Task List

- *Created an editable Excel document which includes the indicators and actions (Reminders, Check-Ins & Re-Contacts) discussed during the session.*
- *Can be discussed with team during case conferencing meetings – adding on new ideas*
- *Will attach to the post-session email.*

	B	C	D	E
1	Indicator	Reminder	Check-in	Re-Contact
2	Acute loss reactions	Review emotional adjustment in 1-2 weeks.	Assess emotional stabilization and immediate needs.	Reach out if early appointments are missed or contact is
3	Threatened identity and self-efficacy	Review confidence and celebrate small wins.	Ask how confidence has changed since the previous appointment.	Reconnect if client stops applying or expresses hopelessness
4	Feeling alone or unsupported in the job search	Follow up on planned support connection.	Review use of peer, mentor, workshop, family or friend supports.	Reconnect if isolation or disengagement increases.
5	Low job-search self-efficacy	Reminder to review confidence and celebrate progress at next appointment.	Ask about confidence completing applications or interviews independent	Re-contact if job-search activity stops or confidence appears
6	Unrealistic job-search expectations	Reminder to revisit labour market expectations after several weeks.	Ask whether expectations have changed as the search progresses.	Re-contact if frustration or discouragement begins affecting
7	Rising financial strain that starts to shape decisions	Confirm referrals/supports were accessed.	Review financial pressures affecting the job search.	Reconnect if urgent needs interrupt participation.
8	Loss of structure and routine (Jahoda's time structure)	Review daily routine template.	Review consistency of routine and job-search schedule.	Reconnect if routines break down or appointments are repeatedly
9	Emerging risk factors	Follow up on referrals and practical supports.	Check whether supports have been accessed.	Reconnect if barriers increase or new risks emerge.
10	Transportation barriers	Reminder to review transportation options if interviews increase.	Ask whether transportation has affected applications or appointments.	Reach out if transportation issues result in missed appointments
11	Limited support system	Reminder to revisit available supports.	Ask who is encouraging or helping during the job search.	Re-contact if isolation appears to be affecting engagement
12	Childcare/Caregiving responsibilities	Reminder to review changes in availability.	Discuss whether responsibilities are affecting job-search consistency.	Reach out if caregiving responsibilities interrupt participation
13	Service engagement patterns	Reminder using preferred communication method.	Review attendance, responsiveness and preferred contact channel.	Email + phone re-contact after missed appointments.
14	Narrow or un-adaptive job-search approach	Revisit job-search strategy in 2-3 weeks.	Review flexibility, labour-market options and strategies tried.	Reconnect if progress stalls.
15	Unclear or unrealistic job-search expectations at intake	Revisit expectations after initial search period.	Review expectations, timeline and target roles.	Reconnect if repeated setbacks reduce engagement.
16	Limited daily routine	Reminder to review weekly routine and goals.	Discuss how consistently the client has been able to follow their job-search	Reach out if appointments or agreed activities are repeatedly
17	Inconsistent job-search planning	Reminder to review the job-search plan and adjust milestones.	Ask what has worked well and where momentum has slowed.	Re-contact if there has been little progress or no recent activity
18	Limited follow-through	Reminder to review agreed action items.	Check completion of previous commitments and identify barriers.	Reach out after repeated cancellations or extended gaps in
19				
20				

# Practice Lab: Applying Prevention Thinking to Client Scenario



# Client Scenario - Zoom Poll

- Maya, 39, is married with two school-aged children and attends her first appointment about eight weeks after being laid off from a six-year administrative coordinator role. She applied for EI right away and expected to find work before her severance ended, but after a few rejections she is starting to doubt whether she is still what employers are looking for.
- She says she spends a lot of time “looking at jobs,” but this mostly means late-night scrolling and saving postings rather than applying. She has not reached out to former colleagues because she feels embarrassed about being laid off, and she says her days have become irregular and hard to manage.

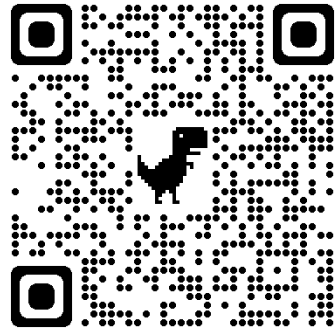


# Please provide feedback - Zoom Survey Link:





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