



Actus Policy Research



Evaluation of the Iowa RCM/RESEA Program

Interim Report

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About Actus

Actus Policy Research (Actus) is an independent research organization dedicated to delivering high-quality research and program evaluation services to U.S. Federal and state government agencies, non-profit and community-based organizations, educational institutions, and Federal grantees. At Actus, we specialize in developing state-of-the-art research designs to conduct randomized controlled trial (RCT) and quasi-experimental impact evaluations, cost-benefit analyses, implementation studies, evaluability assessments, and outcome studies. Our team of experts possesses subject matter expertise in an array of policy areas, including labor market, education, food security, welfare, youth, and criminal justice.

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Background	4
2.1. The RESEA Program	4
2.2. The Iowa RCM/RESEA Program.....	5
2.3. Evaluation Questions.....	9
3. RCT Impact Study	10
3.1. Research Design	10
3.2. Data Sources.....	12
3.3. Operational Context and Sample Description	14
3.4. Interim Impact Estimates	24
4. Implementation Study.....	34
4.1. Data Sources.....	34
4.2. Analysis and Findings.....	35
5. Conclusion.....	42
References.....	45

1. Introduction

Unemployed workers who collect Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits are obligated to actively seek employment and be available for suitable job opportunities to maintain their eligibility for benefits. To support UI claimants in meeting these requirements and achieving better reemployment outcomes, Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) used Federal funding from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to implement the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program.

This program required each services-eligible UI claimant to attend a meeting with program staff in the initial stages of their UI claim. During this meeting, the claimant: 1) underwent an eligibility review to verify compliance with UI job search requirements, and 2) received reemployment services to assist them in connecting with suitable employment opportunities. The Iowa RESEA program was designed to meet Federal requirements outlined in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, which authorized the permanent and nationwide implementation of the program ([U.S. Department of Labor, 2019](#)).

Starting in 2022, IWD leveraged state funds to enhance the Federally funded RESEA program by adding a case-management component, called Reemployment Case Management (RCM). The objective of this enhanced program, dubbed RCM/RESEA, is to provide UI claimants with intensive case management and reemployment services throughout their UI spells. The program requires participants to have regular meetings with case managers, called RCM Career Planners, to review their job search efforts and receive referrals to job search workshops and related services. Additionally, the program requires participants to attend regular RESEA meetings with job counselors at local IowaWORKS offices, called RESEA Career Planners, to undergo an eligibility review and receive reemployment services.

The Iowa RCM/RESEA program diverges from RESEA interventions studied to date, representing a unique approach within the U.S. context. In many states, RESEA programs require UI claimants to receive services once, at the beginning of their UI spells, with no requirements thereafter. In a few other states, claimants may be referred to a single follow-up RESEA session after they complete their initial session, but often, the follow-up session may not be required of all participants. To the best of our knowledge, the Iowa program is the only intervention that claimants are required to attend sessions throughout their UI spells.

In January 2022, IWD commissioned Actus Policy Research (Actus) to conduct a

third-party evaluation of the Iowa RCM/RESEA program. The primary objective of the evaluation is to assess the program's effectiveness in improving the reemployment outcomes of UI claimants and reducing the duration of time they spend receiving UI benefits. The evaluation comprises two components:

- 1) **Randomized controlled trial (RCT) impact study.** This study aims to estimate the program's impacts on participants' UI receipt and employment outcomes.
- 2) **Implementation study.** This study aims to assess program implementation and provide essential context for interpreting the RCT impact study findings.

To conduct the RCT impact study, Actus developed a research design that randomly assigned services-eligible UI claimants to the *RCM/RESEA group* or the *control group*. Claimants assigned to the RCM/RESEA group were required to participate in the RCM/RESEA program and were expected to fulfill the usual program requirements. In contrast, claimants assigned to the control group had no obligation to participate in the RCM/RESEA program and were not subject to any related requirements.

Sample intake for the RCT impact study was done over a 15-month period, spanning from the first week of October 2022 through the last week of December 2023. During this timeframe, a total of 12,599 UI claimants were randomly assigned to either the RCM/RESEA group (89.8%) or the control group (10.2%). Random assignment ensures that claimants assigned to the two groups are similar in terms of observed and unobserved factors so that any differences in outcomes that occur after assignment can be attributed to the program.

Statistical tests presented in this Interim Report confirm that the RCM/RESEA and control groups are observationally equivalent in their observed characteristics, benefit entitlements, and prior earnings. This validates the RCT impact study design, enabling us to generate reliable estimates of program impacts by comparing outcomes between the two study groups.

The current report serves to provide interim evaluation findings based on data collected through December 2023. Below are highlights of key findings based on currently available data, focusing on claimants assigned in the two study groups from October 2022 to June 2023:

- Approximately 82% of RCM/RESEA group claimants completed at least one required program meeting. On average, participants attended 2.4 meetings before exiting UI, indicating the program's effectiveness in facilitating frequent interactions of participants with workforce staff.

- The program was very successful in increasing service uptake among participants. About 82% of claimants assigned to the RCM/RESEA program received job counseling services, compared to only about 13% of control group claimants.¹ On average, RCM/RESEA group claimants received 4.8 counseling services, while control group claimants averaged only 0.4 services. RCM/RESEA claimants were also significantly more likely than control claimants to receive direct referrals to suitable job opportunities, complete basic services, and attend workshops.²
- Interim impact results, based on UI payments data observed through December 2023, indicate that the program was effective in reducing UI duration and producing significant benefit savings for the UI program. Specifically, the program reduced average UI duration by 0.63 weeks, resulting in \$204 benefit savings per participant. Additionally, the program reduced the likelihood of exhausting benefit entitlements by 19%.
- Interim analysis of program impacts on reemployment outcomes, using UI wage records observed through Q4, 2023, did not produce statistically significant estimates of the program's impact on participants' employment rates or earnings in the first two quarters after UI entry. However, estimates are imprecise and results do not allow us to reject the possibility of moderate effects.

These interim findings illustrate the intensity of the Iowa RCM/RESEA program requirements and provide promising evidence about its impacts on claimants' UI receipt. It is important to note, however, that these findings are based on an analysis of interim data available through the end of 2023. Additionally, the estimation sample includes claimants assigned to the program only through June 2023, who make up only about three-fifths of the evaluation sample. The final evaluation findings, focusing on the entire evaluation sample and using complete outcomes data through June 2025, are expected in October 2025.

¹ Job counseling encompasses services offered during individual meetings between claimants and job counselors, such as skills assessments, resume development assistance, and development of a reemployment plan. Importantly, during counseling, claimants may receive direct referrals to suitable job opportunities.

² Basic services primarily include group orientations to American Job Centers and information on available services and resources, including training and supportive services available through Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), VETS, and other programs. Workshops may cover a range of topics related to the job search process, including assistance in using the labor exchange system, resume development, interview preparation, and job search skills training.

The remainder of this report is organized as follows. Section 2 provides the background of the Federal RESEA program and describes the Iowa RCM/RESEA program and the objectives of the evaluation. Section 3 presents the research design and interim findings of the RCT study based on data collected to date. Section 4 presents the findings of the implementation study. Section 5 summarizes the interim findings and outlines future evaluation activities.

2. Background

2.1. The RESEA Program

In 2005, DOL established the REA program to address concerns that UI systems automation had reduced the ability of state workforce agencies to monitor UI claimants. The REA program required services-eligible UI claimants to visit a local employment office to undergo an eligibility review to confirm that they were actively searching for work and to obtain information about available reemployment services to aid their job search ([Benus et al., 2008](#)). The main program objective was to enforce UI work search requirements and yield UI savings by eliminating benefit payments to claimants who were not compliant with requirements. The program was initially operated by nine states and expanded to 42 states by 2011 ([U.S. Department of Labor, 2012](#)).

To evaluate the impacts of the REA program, DOL sponsored an RCT impact study of the Nevada, Florida, Idaho, and Illinois programs, conducted during the Great Recession. The findings revealed that all four programs were effective in reducing UI spells and generating UI savings that exceeded program costs ([Poe-Yamagata et al., 2012](#)). Notably, the Nevada REA program stood out as particularly effective in reducing UI payments compared with programs in the other states and was the only program that increased participants' employment and earnings. The higher effects of the Nevada REA program were attributed to the compulsory job counseling services offered after the eligibility review. In contrast, programs in the remaining three states only required the eligibility review and did not mandate participation in job counseling.

A number of academic papers provided additional evidence regarding the effects of the Nevada REA program. [Michaelides and Mueser \(2018\)](#) found that program effects were partly influenced by early claimant exits to avoid participation or because of disqualifications of non-compliant participants. The majority of the

program's impact was attributed to job counseling, which helped claimants find employment quickly, leading to UI exits after they received services. [Michaelides and Mueser \(2020\)](#) corroborated these findings and demonstrated that job-search assistance programs in other states that did not mandate job counseling did not yield similar service effects. Additional research showed that the Nevada REA program had long-term effects on participants' employment and earnings, helping participants to maintain their homeownership and avoid transitioning to disability insurance, while leading to savings for the UI program and increasing Federal tax receipts ([Manoli et al., 2018](#)). Other work found that the Nevada program was effective during both periods of recession and moderate unemployment ([Michaelides and Mueser, 2022](#)) and that it was successful in helping youth UI claimants achieve improved reemployment outcomes ([Michaelides et al., 2020](#)).

In 2015, based on the promising evidence from the Nevada program, DOL encouraged states to replace their REA programs with interventions that required claimants to receive reemployment services after completing their eligibility reviews ([U.S. Department of Labor, 2015](#)). To highlight the addition of the services requirement, DOL renamed the program RESEA (Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment). The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 permanently authorized the nationwide implementation of RESEA by allocating over \$150 million to support it across the 50 states and the District of Columbia ([U.S. Department of Labor, 2019](#)). In FY 2023, DOL reinforced its commitment to the RESEA program by allocating \$375 million to support its operations ([U.S. Department of Labor, 2023](#)).

2.2. The Iowa RCM/RESEA Program

Since 2016, in line with DOL's recommendations, Iowa has operated an RESEA program that required services-eligible UI claimants to attend a meeting with program staff for an eligibility review and reemployment services. At the start of 2022, IWD utilized state funds to enhance the RESEA program by introducing a case-management component, called RCM. The objective of the enhanced RESEA program, which we will reference as the RCM/RESEA program, is to perform eligibility reviews and offer claimants intensive case management and reemployment services throughout their UI spells.

To operate the program, each week, IWD identifies new UI claimants who are eligible for services, which includes all claimants except those who are job-attached and subject to recall (i.e., on temporary layoff) and those who conduct their job search through union hiring halls. IWD compiles the RCM/RESEA selection pool,

which is uploaded to the IowaWORKS system. IWD staff make telephone contact with all claimants on the selection list to review their UI claim, discuss job-search requirements, and ensure that claimants are enrolled in the IowaWORKS job exchange system.³ During this phone call, claimants are also informed about the requirement to participate in the RCM/RESEA program.

After receiving their first UI benefit payment, claimants become subject to program requirements. First, they must participate in regular meetings with a Career Planner, funded by the RCM component of the program. During these sessions, RCM Career Planners review claimants' job search efforts and UI eligibility. Additionally, they refer claimants to mandatory workshops, which cover a wide range of topics related to the job search process.⁴ RCM Career Planners also keep claimants informed about upcoming job fairs, training programs, and various available resources. These RCM meetings are conducted over the phone and typically have a duration of approximately 15 minutes.

Second, claimants are required to participate in the Federally funded RESEA component of the program, focused on assessing claimant needs and delivering job counseling, while also reviewing UI eligibility to ensure compliance with work search requirements. Counseling includes a review of local labor market information and available job openings, a skills assessment, assistance with resume development, formulation of an individualized job-search plan, and direct job referrals. Moreover, participants are referred to mandatory workshops. The initial RESEA meeting takes place two weeks after claimants receive their first UI payment and lasts up to 60 minutes.⁵ This meeting is usually conducted in person at local IowaWORKS offices. Subsequently, claimants are expected to attend regular follow-up meetings, termed sub-RESEA, for the duration of their benefit collection. The duration of sub-RESEA meetings is typically shorter, averaging about 30 minutes.

The program is designed to necessitate weekly meetings between claimants and RCM or RESEA Career Planners. Between meetings, claimants are expected to participate in the job-search workshops they were referred to in prior sessions. It should be noted, however, that the frequency of RCM and RESEA sessions is limited by staff availability and depends on individual claimant needs. To uphold program requirements, IWD may suspend benefit payments for claimants who fail to attend required meetings or for those who do not provide convincing evidence of an active

³ Sometimes, the initial call may occur before the claim is approved for benefits.

⁴ For more details on the workshop topics, visit: <https://workforce.iowa.gov/jobs/skills/workshops>.

⁵ Note that when there are delays in processing UI claims to resolve claimant eligibility or other issues, the initial RESEA meeting occurs later in their claims.

job search. Before the start of the current RCT impact study, the Iowa RCM/RESEA program had the capacity to serve all services-eligible UI claimants.

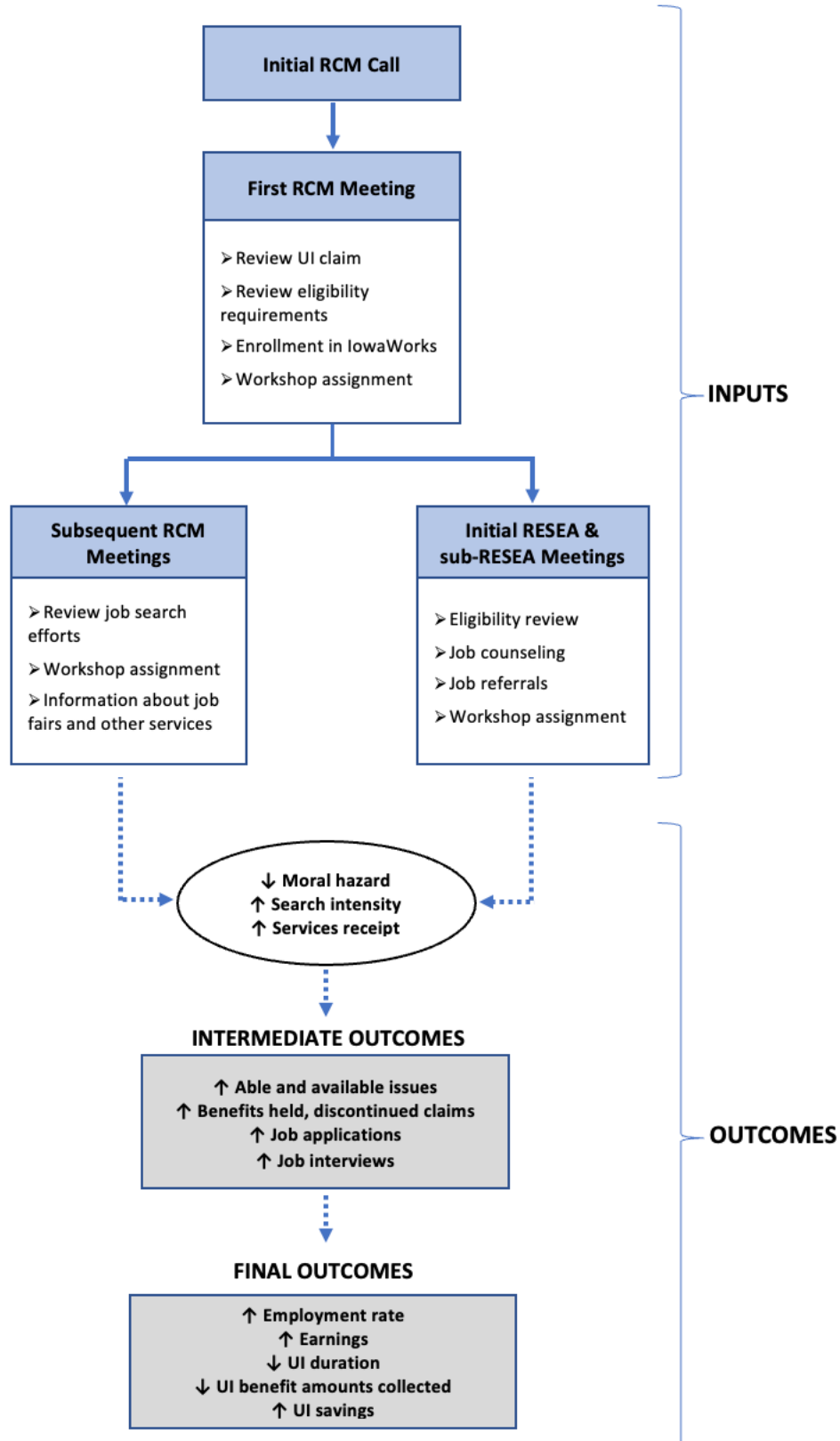
The Theory of Change (TOC) for the Iowa RCM/RESEA program, depicted in Figure 1, outlines two main program mechanisms. First, the program is expected to mitigate moral hazard by suspending benefits for claimants identified with eligibility issues during the review, including those not actively engaged in job search and those unavailable to accept suitable employment.

Second, the program is expected to increase participation in job counseling services and workshops, directly assisting claimants in their search efforts. Notably, the provision of direct job referrals is expected to help claimants connect to suitable employment opportunities. Furthermore, the ongoing interaction with RCM and RESEA Career Planners could motivate claimants to increase the intensity of their job search or persist in seeking employment after their initial efforts are unsuccessful. In summary, through these service mechanisms, the program is expected to expedite participants' job placement and lead to higher earnings than they might have achieved in the absence of the intervention. This, in turn, is expected to reduce the duration of their UI spells, resulting in cost savings for the UI program.

However, it is worth noting two factors that could potentially mitigate program impacts. First, as discussed in Section 3.3 below, the RCT impact study was conducted in a period characterized by a robust labor market. In this market, it is very likely that, conditional on conducting an active job search, many UI claimants would be able to connect to suitable employment opportunities. As a result, in the absence of the RCM/RESEA program, many claimants would be expected to have relatively short unemployment durations.

Second, the majority of UI claimants in Iowa are entitled to a maximum of 16 weeks of benefits, with a few entitled to 26 weeks (conditional on losing their jobs because their employer went out of business). If the RCM/RESEA program is effective in helping participants connect to available jobs, such effects would likely manifest after participants had received services. Because claimants are eligible for a maximum of 16 weeks of benefits, there would not be many available weeks of benefits between the time when claimants receive services and the end of their benefit duration entitlement. Thus, we would expect program effects on UI duration and benefit amount collected to be smaller than if claimants had been eligible for 26 weeks of benefits, which is the typical maximum in other states.

Figure 1: Theory of Change: Iowa RCM/RESEA Programs



Similarly, the strong economy may mitigate effects on employment and earnings. If the program is effective in helping participants connect to suitable employment opportunities, we would still expect the program to have positive impacts on employment and earnings. However, relatively more claimants are expected to be able to connect to suitable jobs without any program assistance because of the strong labor market. As a result, the relative impact of the RCM/RESEA program on employment and earnings may be lower when the labor market is strong relative to an operational context where finding a job is more challenging.

2.3. Evaluation Questions

The main objective of this evaluation is to estimate the impacts of the Iowa RCM/RESEA program on claimants' UI receipt and employment outcomes. Specifically, the RCT impact study addresses the following questions:

- 1) ***Does the program increase services participation?*** Anticipated program outcomes include an increase in the receipt of reemployment services and other related services that directly aid participants in their job search efforts. If the program induces participants to receive services that they would not have received in the absence of the program, this suggests a mechanism by which the program may affect employment, earnings, and UI outcomes.
- 2) ***Does the program reduce UI duration, benefit amounts collected, and benefit exhaustion?*** The increased utilization of services and the enforcement of work-search requirements are expected to boost employment, subsequently reducing the duration of participants' UI spells. The study examines the impacts of the program on UI duration, benefit amounts collected, and the likelihood of exhausting benefit entitlements. An approximate measure of the program's cost-effectiveness will be derived by comparing the average UI savings caused by the program with the average program cost per participant.
- 3) ***Does the program increase participants' employment and earnings?*** The program may improve the job-search outcomes of participants by enforcing UI work search requirements and offering services to aid their search efforts. A primary goal of the RCT impact study is to examine if the program increased the employment rates and earnings of participants following program assignment.

The evaluation also includes an implementation study to examine the execution of

the program during the study period and offer additional context for interpreting the results of the RCT impact study. Additionally, this study will be instrumental in assessing the adherence of the implementation to the program model, a crucial aspect for ensuring the replicability of findings.

3. RCT Impact Study

3.1. Research Design

Actus has developed an RCT impact study to estimate the impacts of the Iowa RCM/RESEA program and address the research questions outlined above. The design was successfully executed, causing minimal disruption to the regular administration of the program and without affecting the program's typical service delivery model. In this design, random assignment procedures were used to allocate services-eligible UI claimants into one of two groups:

- *RESEA group* – Claimants in this group were required to participate in the RCM/RESEA program. These claimants were contacted by IWD and were instructed to fulfill the usual RCM/RESEA requirements.
- *Control group* – Claimants in this group had no obligation to participate in the RCM/RESEA program and were not subject to any program requirements. These individuals were not contacted by IWD and received no RCM/RESEA program notifications.

The RCT sample intake period began in the first week of October 2022 and concluded in the last week of December 2023. During this period, the program had the capacity to serve all services-eligible UI claimants. To accommodate the RCT impact study, random assignment was used to allocate about 10% of services-eligible claimants to the control group, while the remaining 90% were allocated to the RCM/RESEA group.

By randomly assigning claimants to either the RCM/RESEA group or the control group, we create two groups that are similar in terms of observed and unobserved factors. Consequently, any disparities in outcomes between the RCM/RESEA group and the control group can be attributed to the effects of the program. This enables us to estimate the program's impacts by comparing the outcomes between the two groups during the period following random assignment.

Figure 2 illustrates the random assignment procedure, which comprised the following steps:

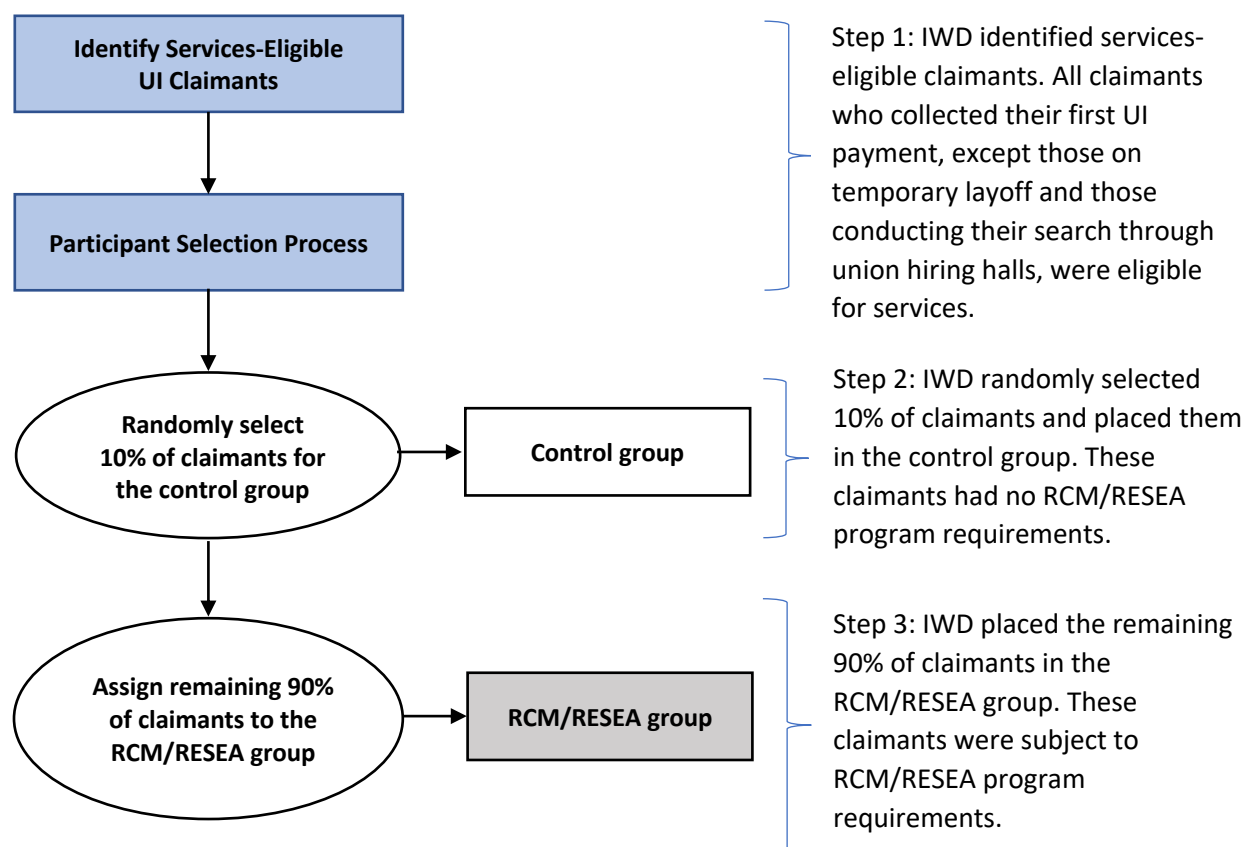
Step 1: Each week, IWD used its usual process to compile the list of new UI claimants who were eligible for the RCM/RESEA program. All claimants who collected their first UI payment were eligible, except those who were job-attached (on temporary layoff) and those who conducted their search through union hiring halls.

Step 2: IWD randomly selected 10% of services-eligible UI claimants to be excluded from the RCM/RESEA program; these claimants were assigned to the control group. These individuals did not receive a call from IWD, were not required to participate in RCM/RESEA program activities, and received no program communications for the duration of their UI claims.

Step 3: The remaining services-eligible claimants (about 90%) were assigned to the RCM/RESEA group and were required to complete the usual program activities.

During the RCT sample intake period, 12,599 services-eligible UI claimants were randomly assigned to the two study groups – 1,280 (10.2%) were allocated to the control group and 11,319 (89.8%) were allocated to the RCM/RESEA group.

Figure 2: Random Assignment Procedure



3.2. Data Sources

The study sample includes all 12,599 claimants who were randomly assigned to the RCM/RESEA and control groups during the sample intake period. To estimate the program’s impacts, we use Iowa administrative data that provide information for each claimant in the study sample. Below is a description of these data sources.

UI claims data. These data provide baseline UI claim information for all claimants in the state, including: 1) claimant characteristics as reported in UI claim applications, such as gender, race/ethnicity, education, and age; and 2) claimant benefit entitlements (weekly benefit amount, weeks of eligibility, and maximum benefit amount). The data also provide information on benefit payments and the corresponding benefit amounts collected by claimants for each of their claims.

The RCT impact study will use UI claims data for each claimant in the study sample, providing both baseline and payment information for the claims associated with random assignment. At this interim stage, Actus has obtained baseline UI claim

information for the entire study sample and information on benefit payments collected by each claimant in the sample through December 2023. This report uses baseline information to test if random assignment has resulted in RCM/RESEA and control groups that are equivalent in terms of observed characteristics and benefit entitlements. Additionally, the report uses available benefit payment data to produce preliminary estimates of program impacts on UI receipt outcomes.

UI wage records. These data provide quarterly employment records from UI-covered jobs within the state of Iowa. This study will use UI wage records for all claimants in the study sample from quarter 4 (Q4), 2020 through Q2, 2025. Specifically, data from Q4, 2020 through Q3, 2023 will be used to describe the employment history of claimants in the eight quarters before random assignment and test if RCM/RESEA and control group claimants had equivalent histories. Data from Q1, 2023 through Q2, 2025 will be used to measure program impacts on employment and earnings for at least six quarters after random assignment.⁶

As of the writing of this report, we have obtained UI wage records from Q4, 2020 through Q4, 2023. We use these data to examine the employment history of all claimants in the study sample and test study group equivalency over the eight quarters before random assignment. Furthermore, we use available wage records to produce preliminary estimates of program impacts on employment and earnings in quarters 1 and 2 after random assignment.

RCM/RESEA program data. These data provide information on program-related activities for claimants assigned to the RCM/RESEA program. This includes information on meeting scheduling, meeting completion, disqualifications, and reasons for disqualification. The study will use this information to examine the compliance of RCM/RESEA claimants with program requirements, investigate the frequency of their meetings, and determine if they had their UI payments suspended for failure to comply with requirements.

At this interim stage, we have obtained RCM/RESEA program data through December 2023. Using the available data, we investigate if RCM/RESEA group claimants complied with program requirements and explore the number and types of sessions attended by these claimants before exiting UI.

⁶ Based on the study timeline, UI wage records will cover the following periods: 1) quarters 1-6 after random assignment for the entire study sample; 2) quarters 1-7 after random assignment for claimants assigned from October 2022 through September 2023; 3) quarters 1-8 for claimants assigned from October 2022 through June 2023; 4) quarters 1-9 for claimants assigned from October 2022 through March 2023; and 5) quarters 1-10 for claimants assigned from October 2022 through December 2022.

Employment service data. These data provide information on the employment services received by all jobseekers from the Iowa public workforce system. This study will use employment service data to examine the services received by claimants in each study group and assess if the RCM/RESEA program resulted in increased service participation.

As of the writing of this report, Actus has obtained employment service data through December 2023 for all claimants in the study sample, enabling us to present preliminary evidence on the impact of the program on service receipt.

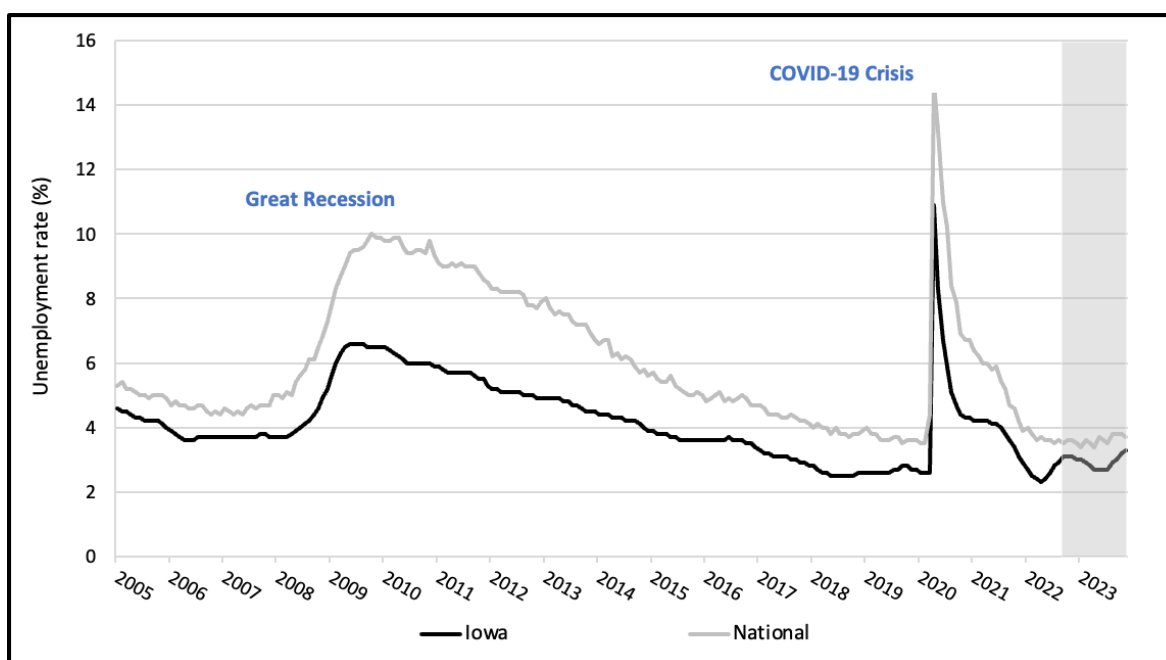
3.3. Operational Context and Sample Description

3.3.1. The Iowa Labor Market

During the RCT sample intake period, from October 2022 through December 2023, Iowa experienced a historically strong labor market. Figure 3 compares the Iowa monthly unemployment rate with the national rate from January 2005 through December 2023, encompassing the RCT intake period. This comparison shows that, over the past two decades, the Iowa unemployment rate has been lower and exhibited less volatility during economic downturns than the national rate. During the Great Recession, the Iowa unemployment rate increased from an average of 4.2% in 2008 to a 6.6% peak in 2010, a 2.4 percentage-point increase. By comparison, the national unemployment rate increased by 4.2 percentage points, from 5.8% in 2008 to a 10% peak in 2010. Both the Iowa and national rates declined from their 2010 peaks; by 2019, they reached historically low levels of 2.7% and 3.7%, respectively.

During the pandemic, the Iowa rate peaked at 10.9% in April 2020, as compared with 14.7% nationally. Economic recovery after the pandemic was rapid both in Iowa and nationally. During the RCT sample intake period – from October 2022 through December 2023 – the Iowa unemployment rate was 2.9%, marginally higher than the state’s pre-pandemic rate but still lower than the national rate over the same period.

Figure 3: Iowa Unemployment Rate

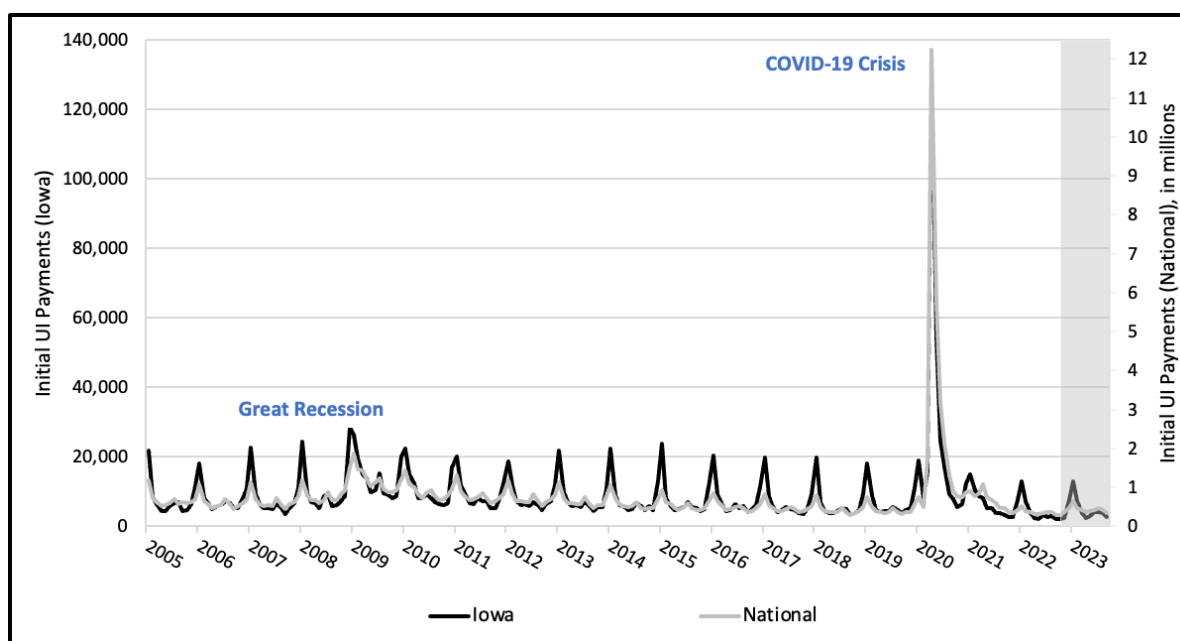


Note: Seasonally adjusted monthly unemployment rate. Sources: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (Iowa) and Current Population Survey (national), retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/data/>. Shaded area marks the RCT sample intake period.

A similar story emerges when we examine the number of new UI claims with a first payment over the same period. As indicated in Figure 4, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Iowa experienced a historic spike in the number of new UI claims. In 2019, Iowa had a monthly average of 6,558 new UI claims with a first payment. This figure reached a historic high during the pandemic, with 126,040 claims in March 2021 and 157,324 claims in April 2021. Nationally, the spike in new UI claims with a first payment during the pandemic was even more pronounced. The rapid recovery following the pandemic led to a sharp decline in the number of new claims both in Iowa and nationally. During the RCT sample intake period, the monthly average number of new UI claims with a first payment was 4,451, which is lower than the pre-pandemic figures.

In summary, during the study period, the Iowa labor market was perhaps at its healthiest level since at least 2005. The state experienced historically low unemployment and UI program participation. Thus, the results of this evaluation will provide evidence of the effectiveness of the RCM/RESEA program in the context of a very strong labor market.

Figure 4: Iowa New UI Claims with a First Payment



Note: Number of initial UI payments. Source: US Department of Labor, retrieved from: <https://oui.doleta.gov/unemploy/claimssum.asp>. Shaded area marks the RCT intake period.

3.3.2. Sample Description

During the RCT sample intake period, a total of 12,599 UI claimants started collecting benefits and were eligible for RCM/RESEA. Random assignment was used to assign 11,319 (89.8%) of these claimants to the RCM/RESEA group and 1,280 (10.2%) to the control group.

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the claimants in the study sample, as reported in their UI applications. Approximately 46% of claimants reported being male and 51% of claimants reported being female. The majority of claimants identified as white (69%) and black (11%), whereas 7.4% reported multiple races. Race and ethnicity information was missing for 8.1% of the sample. The age and education distributions are as expected, with approximately half the claimants being 25-45 years old and about half completing no more than a high school education. Approximately 5% of claimants reported being veterans and a similar proportion reported a physical disability.

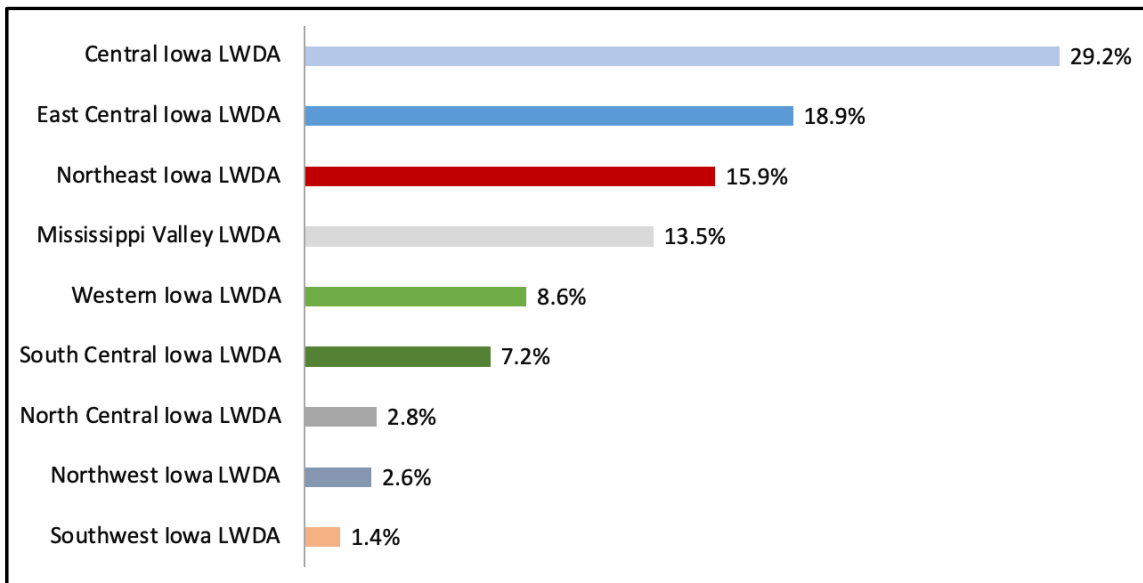
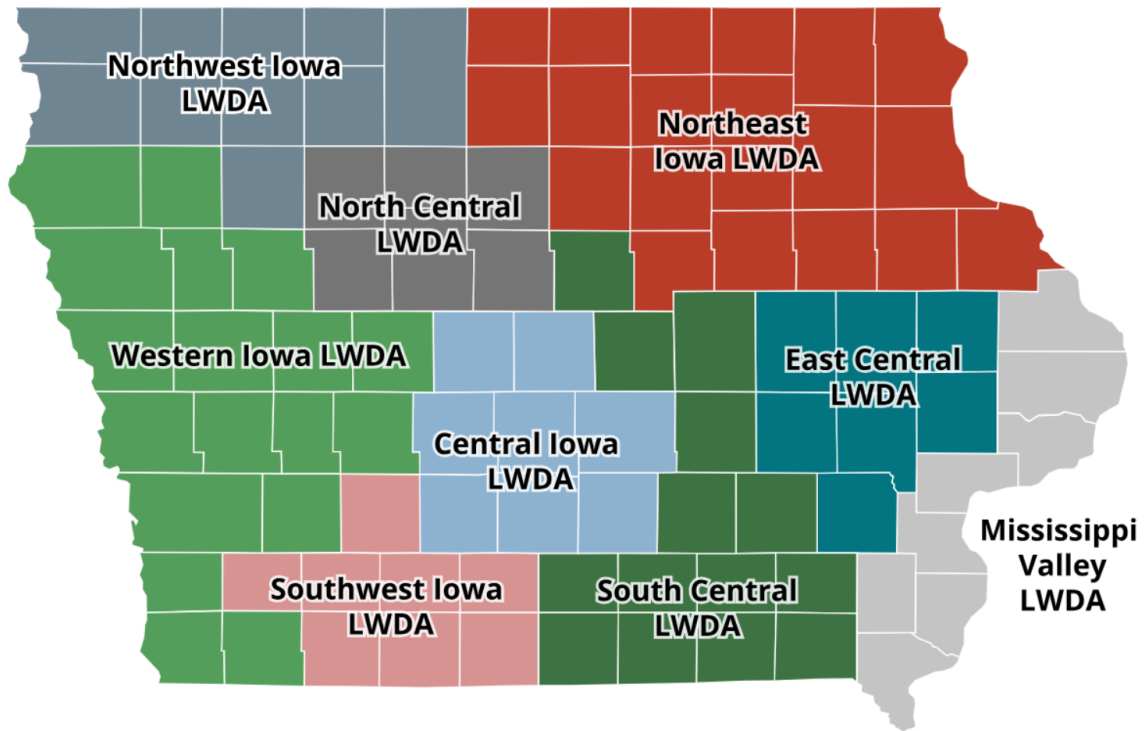
Table 1: Characteristics of Claimants in the Study Sample

	Sample Proportion
Total	12,599
Gender	
Male	46.0%
Female	50.7%
Other/missing	3.2%
Race/Ethnicity	
White	68.7%
Black	10.6%
Hispanic	3.1%
Asian	1.5%
Native American	0.4%
Multiple races	7.4%
Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	0.3%
Missing	8.1%
Age	
<25 years old	6.3%
25-34 years old	22.9%
35-44 years old	27.3%
45-54 years old	22.5%
55+ years old	21.0%
Education	
No High School Diploma	4.3%
High School Diploma	46.1%
Associate Degree / Some College	24.4%
College Degree	18.7%
Post-Graduate Degree	5.8%
Missing	0.6%
Veteran	4.8%
Disabled	5.1%

Note: Reported are sample proportions.

Source: Iowa UI claims data.

Figure 5: Geographic Distribution of Claimants in the Study Sample



Note: Reported are sample proportions.
 Source: Iowa UI claims data.

Figure 5 presents the geographic distribution of claimants based on their Iowa Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) of residence.⁷ About 29% of claimants were residing in the Central Iowa LWDA, encompassing the Des Moines metropolitan area. Approximately 19% were residing in the East Central Iowa LWDA, encompassing the Cedar Rapids metropolitan area. Other large areas include the Northeast Iowa LWDA (16% of claimants), covering counties in the northeastern part of the state, and the Mississippi Valley LWDA (14% of claimants), covering counties in the southeast. The remaining LWDAs encompass mostly rural counties in the rest of the state, serving from 1% to 9% of claimants in the state.

All workers in Iowa who lost their jobs through no fault of their own may become eligible for UI benefits subject to the following conditions: 1) received earnings from UI-covered employment in at least two calendar quarters in the base period (defined as the first four quarters of the five quarters prior to the UI application); 2) earned at least \$2,840 during the base period; and 3) earned at least \$1,890 during the base period quarter with the highest earnings. Claimants who meet these requirements are entitled to collect 9-16 weeks of benefits as long as they are unemployed, with a weekly benefit amount (WBA) ranging from a \$82 minimum to a \$676 maximum.⁸ In cases where claimants lost their jobs because of a permanent business closure, they may become eligible for up to 26 weeks of benefits.

Table 2 summarizes the benefit entitlements for claimants in the study sample. The majority of claimants (85%) were eligible for the maximum 16 weeks of benefits, with 8% being eligible for 9-15 weeks. Nearly 6% of claimants qualified for 17-26 weeks of benefits because their employer went out of business. Information on benefit entitlements is not available at this point for approximately 1% of claimants. On average, claimants were entitled to a \$490 WBA and a \$8,013 total maximum benefit amount.⁹

⁷ For more information about the Iowa LWDAs, refer to: <https://workforce.iowa.gov/labor-market-information/resources/area-profiles>.

⁸ The WBA ranges from 1/19th of earnings in the quarter with the highest earnings during the base period if the claimant has four or more dependents to 1/23rd of earnings in the highest earnings quarter for claimants with no dependents, subject to \$82-99 minimums and \$551-676 maximums. Weeks of eligibility are equal to 20% of the base period earnings divided by the WBA, subject to a 9-week minimum and a 16-week maximum.

⁹ The maximum benefit amount equals the WBA times weeks of eligibility.

Table 2: Benefit Entitlements of Claimants in the Study Sample

	Benefit Entitlements
Total[†]	12,500
Weeks of Eligibility	
9-15 weeks	8.2%
16 weeks	85.2%
17-26 weeks	5.8%
Missing	0.8%
Weekly benefit amount (\$)	490 (133)
Maximum benefit amount (\$)	8,013 (2,552)

Note: Reported are sample proportions or means with standard deviations in parentheses. [†] = Benefit entitlements are missing for 99 of the 12,599 claimants in the study sample.

Source: Iowa UI claims data.

Table 3 presents the earnings of RESEA-eligible UI claimants in the eight quarters prior to UI entry based on available UI wage records. On average, claimant earnings gradually increased from \$10,207 in quarter 8 prior to UI entry to \$13,442 in quarter 2 prior to UI entry. This increasing trend in earnings is most likely due to the recovery of the labor market following the COVID-19 pandemic. In the quarter immediately prior to UI entry, average earnings declined to \$13,179.

Table 3: Prior Earnings of RESEA-Eligible UI Claimants

	Average Earnings
Earnings amount (\$)	
In quarter 1 prior to entry	13,179 (13,232)
In quarter 2 prior to entry	13,442 (10,650)
In quarter 3 prior to entry	13,198 (11,850)
In quarter 4 prior to entry	12,520 (12,035)
In quarter 5 prior to entry	11,617 (11,847)
In quarter 6 prior to entry	10,975 (12,190)
In quarter 7 prior to entry	10,317 (11,440)
In quarter 8 prior to entry	10,027 (12,237)

Note: Reported are sample means with standard deviations in parentheses.

Source: Iowa UI wage records.

3.3.3. Statistical Tests of Random Assignment

To affirm the validity of the study, it is important to examine if random assignment yielded study groups that are equivalent in terms of factors observed at the time of assignment. To formally test for RCM/RESEA-control group equivalency, we use a regression model to estimate the likelihood of assignment to the RCM/RESEA group. This model takes the following form:

$$T_i = X_i \cdot b + Earn_i \cdot c + LWDA_i \cdot d + Week_i \cdot e + v_i \quad [1]$$

The dependent variable (T_i) is an indicator that equals 1 if claimant i was assigned to the RCM/RESEA group and 0 otherwise. Control variables include:

- X_i – claimant characteristics and UI entitlements;
- $Earn_i$ – earnings in quarters 1-8 prior to UI entry;
- $LWDA_i$ – indicator for the LWDA where the claimant resided; and
- $Week_i$ – week of random assignment.

Additionally, the right-hand side of the equation includes v_i , a zero-mean error term. Random assignment was conducted using an algorithm where 10% of claimants each week were allocated to the control group and 90% were allocated to the RCM/RESEA group. Since the structure of random assignment remained consistent throughout the RCT intake period, we expect that the estimated parameters associated with characteristics (b), prior earnings (c), LWDA (d), and week (e) would not be statistically significant, indicating that assignment into the RCM/RESEA program is not influenced by these factors.

Table 4 presents the regression results for this model. Out of the 40 estimated parameters presented in the table, only four are statistically significant at the 5% level or lower and an additional three are significant at the 10% level. These results indicate that assignment to either the RCM/RESEA or the control group cannot be attributed to observed factors beyond chance. Given that the two study groups are observationally equivalent, any RCM/RESEA-control group differences in outcomes observed after random assignment can be attributed solely to the program.

Table 4: Regression Results: Likelihood of RCM/RESEA Group Assignment

	Likelihood of RCM/RESEA Assignment
Gender	
Male	--
Female	-0.002 (0.006)
Other/Missing	0.057 (0.016)***
Race	
White	--
Black	-0.009 (0.009)
Hispanic	0.031 (0.016)**
Asian	-0.043 (0.023)*
Native American	0.046 (0.043)
Multiple races	-0.005 (0.011)
Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	-0.040 (0.051)
Missing	-0.012 (0.010)
Age	
<25 years old	-0.021 (0.012)*
25–34 years old	-0.002 (0.008)
35–44 years old	--
45–54 years old	0.008 (0.008)
55+ years old	-0.009 (0.008)
Education	
No High School Diploma	--
High School Diploma	0.017 (0.014)
Ass. Degree / Some College	0.020 (0.014)
College Degree	0.023 (0.015)
Advanced Degree	0.027 (0.018)
Missing	-0.011 (0.037)
Veteran	-0.000 (0.013)
Disabled	0.002 (0.012)

(Table 4 continues on next page)

(Table 4, continued from previous page)

	Likelihood of RCM/RESEA Assignment
WBA (in \$000s)	0.002 (0.027)
Weeks of Eligibility	
8-15 weeks	0.006 (0.011)
16 weeks	--
17-26 weeks	0.010 (0.012)
Missing	-0.010 (0.012)
Earnings (in \$00s)	
In quarter 1 prior to entry	-0.033 (0.028)
In quarter 2 prior to entry	0.088 (0.046)*
In quarter 3 prior to entry	0.008 (0.039)
In quarter 4 prior to entry	-0.082 (0.039)**
In quarter 5 prior to entry	0.050 (0.040)
In quarter 6 prior to entry	0.003 (0.038)
In quarter 7 prior to entry	0.022 (0.040)
In quarter 8 prior to entry	-0.014 (0.035)
Workforce region	
Central Iowa	--
East Central Iowa	0.019 (0.008)**
Mississippi Valley	0.014 (0.009)
Northeast Iowa	0.010 (0.009)
Northwest Iowa	0.015 (0.017)
South Central Iowa	0.007 (0.011)
Southwest Iowa	-0.018 (0.024)
Western Iowa	0.009 (0.011)
North Central Iowa	0.008 (0.017)
Week controls	Yes
Observations	12,599
R-Squared	0.0130

Note: Reported are estimated parameters with standard errors in parentheses. "--" Denotes the omitted category for categorical variables. *** p-value<0.01, ** p-value<0.05, * p-value<0.10.

3.4. Interim Impact Estimates

This section presents interim results of the impacts of the program using available data collected through December 31, 2023. The interim analysis focuses on the 7,137 claimants assigned to either the RCM/RESEA or the control group during the first 9 months of the RCT intake period, from October 2022 to June 2023. Within this sample, outcomes can be measured for at least six months following claimant entry into the UI program. The remaining 5,462 claimants in the study sample, assigned from July through December 2023, are excluded from the interim analysis because their outcomes are either not available or observed for less than six months.

First, we present program participation outcomes for RCM/RESEA group claimants and service receipt for both RCM/RESEA and control group claimants. Second, we present interim estimates of program impacts on UI receipt using data on benefit payments made through December 2023. Finally, using available UI wage records through Q4, 2023, we present interim impact estimates on employment and earnings in the first two quarters after UI entry.

3.4.1. Program Participation and Services Received

The Iowa RCM/RESEA program stands out as one of the most intensive job-search assistance interventions ever evaluated within the U.S. UI context. Designed to provide each participant with ongoing support throughout their UI claim period, the program requires regular meetings with workforce staff for eligibility reviews and the provision of services to enhance job search success. Frequent participation in the required meetings is expected to significantly boost take-up of job counseling, as well as workshop attendance and receipt of other related services, while also mitigating moral hazard. These mechanisms are expected to manifest in reduced UI receipt and improved reemployment outcomes, leading to benefit savings for the UI program and positive labor market returns for participants.

Table 5 presents program participation outcomes for the 6,417 claimants assigned to the RCM/RESEA group from October 2022 through June 2023, based on available program data. Approximately 72% of RCM/RESEA claimants completed at least one RCM meeting and 55% completed at least one RESEA meeting. Overall, 82% of RCM/RESEA claimants completed at least one program meeting.¹⁰ On average,

¹⁰ Separate analysis indicate that among control group claimants, 3.2% were scheduled for and completed one RCM meeting. None of the control group claimants were scheduled for or completed an RESEA meeting. These figures indicate that direct sample contamination, due to control cases

claimants in the RCM/RESEA group completed 2.34 meetings. Dividing the average number of meetings completed (2.34) by the proportion of claimants who completed at least one meeting (81.6%) indicates that claimants with at least one meeting completed an average of 2.87 meetings.

Table 5: Program Participation, RCM/RESEA Group

	RCM/RESEA Group
Number of Claimants†	6,417
RCM meetings	
Completed RCM meeting	71.9%
Number of RCM meetings completed	1.15 (1.00)
RESEA meetings	
Completed RESEA meeting	55.2%
Number of RESEA meetings completed	1.19 (1.42)
RCM and/or RESEA meetings	
Completed RCM and/or RESEA meeting	81.6%
Number of total meetings completed	2.34 (1.96)

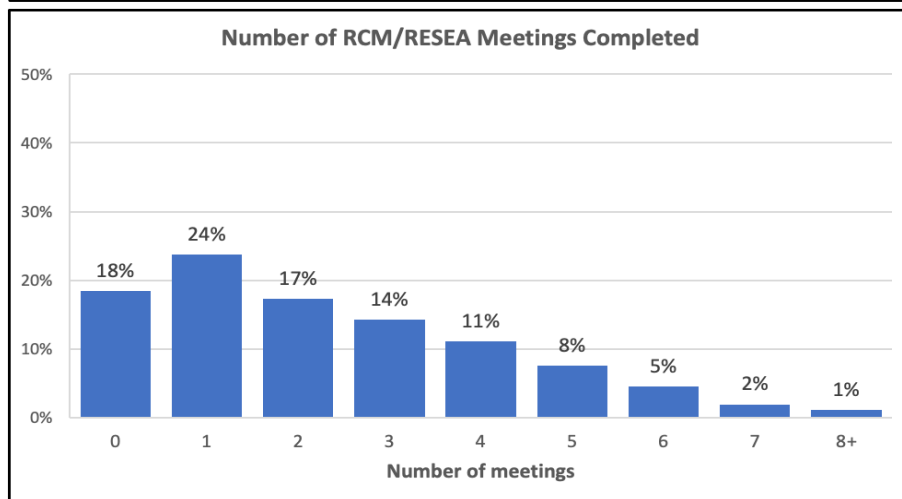
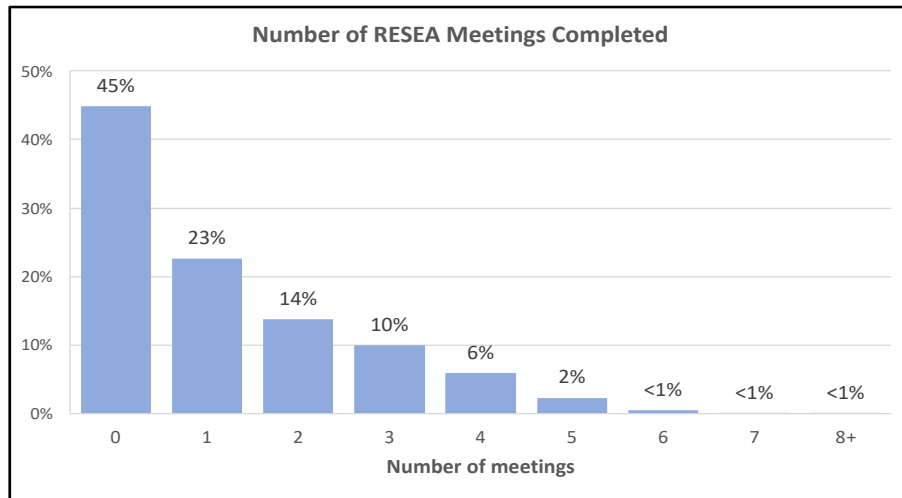
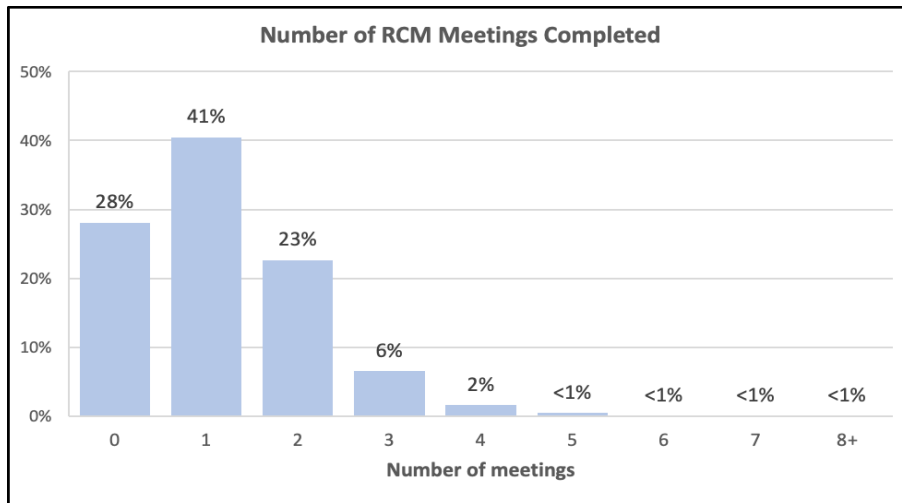
Note: Reported are sample proportions or sample means with standard deviations in parentheses. †= Sample includes claimants assigned to the RCM/RESEA group from October 2022 to June 2023. Outcomes are measured using available data through December 31, 2023. Source: Iowa RCM/RESEA program data.

Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of completed program meetings. The top graph indicates that 41% of RCM/RESEA claimants participated in one RCM meeting with a Career Planner and 23% participated in both an initial and a follow-up RCM meeting. Approximately 8% of claimants participated in three or more case management meetings during their UI claims.

The middle panel shows that nearly a quarter of RCM/RESEA claimants completed the initial RESEA meeting but did not attend any follow-up RESEA meetings. About 14% of participants completed both an initial and a follow-up RESEA meeting, while about 18% completed at least three RESEA meetings before exiting UI.

participating in the RCM/RESEA program in violation of study protocols, is limited and does not significantly affect the analysis of program impacts.

Figure 6: Number of Completed Meetings, RCM/RESEA Group



Note: Reported are sample proportions. Sample includes claimants assigned from October 2022 to June 2023. Outcomes are measured using available data through December 31, 2023.

Source: Iowa RCM/RESEA program data.

The intensity of the intervention is highlighted in the bottom graph, which presents the distribution of completed meetings, including both RCM and RESEA meetings. Approximately 18% of RCM/RESEA claimants completed no meetings and 24% completed exactly one meeting. The majority – accounting for 58% of participants – completed multiple meetings. Specifically, 17% completed two meetings and 41% attended at least three meetings, with 16% completing five or more meetings.

These results indicate that the majority of RESEA/RCM claimants had frequent interactions with RCM and RESEA Career Planners throughout their UI spells. Consequently, it is anticipated that mandatory participation in the RCM/RESEA program would lead to increased job counseling and related services for claimants assigned to the program group compared to those assigned to the control group.

Table 6 uses available employment service data to examine service uptake for the two study groups. We define three categories of services:

- 1) Job counseling – Includes individualized services provided during meetings with program staff, including the skills assessment, reemployment plan development, resume development assistance, and career guidance services.
- 2) Basic services, which include services that are not customized to individual needs and can be often accessed directly by claimants, such as group orientations of IowaWORKS offices and information on available services and resources, such as training and supportive services available through WIOA, VETS, and other programs.
- 3) Workshops, which are available both virtually and in person, covering a wide range of topics related to the job search process, including assistance in using the labor exchange system, resume development, interview preparation, and job search skills training.

The results in Table 6 demonstrate the program's significant success in increasing service receipt among participants. Nearly 80% of RCM/RESEA claimants received job counseling services for an average of 4.8 services per participant. By comparison, only 13% of control group claimants received job counseling for an average of 0.4 services per claimant.

Workshop attendance was also notably higher among RCM/RESEA claimants, with about 70% attending at least one workshop for an average of 3 workshops per claimant. Additionally, RCM/RESEA group claimants were significantly more likely than their control group peers to receive basic job-search services. Importantly,

about one in every six RCM/RESEA group claimants received a direct job referral, as compared to only 2% of control group claimants.

Overall, these findings underscore the intensity of the Iowa RCM/RESEA program. The program’s requirements led to frequent participant meetings with RCM and/or RESEA Career Planners throughout the duration of their UI claims. Consequently, RCM/RESEA participants were much more likely than those in the control group, who were not subject to program requirements, to receive individualized job counseling, participate in job-search workshops, and receive direct job referrals.

Table 6: Service Take-up Rates by Study Group

	RCM/RESEA Group	Control Group
Number of Claimants†	6,417	720
Job counseling services††		
Received job counseling services	79.4%	12.9%
Number of job counseling services received	4.8 (5.3)	0.4 (1.6)
Job-search workshops		
Attended job-search workshops	69.7%	26.5%
Number of job-search workshops attended	3.0 (3.4)	0.7 (1.7)
Basic services†††		
Received basic services	43.2%	6.7%
Number of basic services received	0.5 (0.7)	0.1 (0.4)
Job referrals		
Received direct job referral	16.7%	1.7%
Number of direct job referrals received	0.31 (0.99)	0.02 (0.19)

Note: Reported are sample proportions or means with standard deviations in parentheses.
 †=Sample includes claimants assigned from October 2022 to June 2023. Outcomes are measured using available data through December 31, 2023. ††= Includes skills assessment, reemployment plan development, resume development assistance, and career guidance services. †††= Includes orientation services and information on available services and resources.

Source: Iowa employment service data.

Notably, approximately 13% of control group claimants received job counseling and about 27% participated in workshops. While the factors causing this indirect sample contamination cannot be identified, we assume that it is partly attributed to control group claimants seeking out services independently. While the analysis plan for estimating program impacts is not affected by this indirect sample contamination,

the results may slightly understate true program impacts for participants who would not have accessed services in the absence of the intervention.

3.4.2. Interim Results: Effects on UI Receipt Outcomes

By virtue of random assignment, we estimate the program impacts on UI receipt by comparing the outcomes between the RCM/RESEA group and the control group. Our analysis focuses on three UI outcome measures:

- *Benefit weeks collected* – Equals the number of weekly UI payments collected by the claimant before exiting UI.
- *Benefit amount collected* – Equals the total benefit amount collected by the claimant, which is the sum of all weekly UI benefit amounts collected before exiting UI.
- *Exhausted benefits* – Indicates if the claimant collected their entire maximum benefit amount entitlement.

These outcomes are measured for claimants assigned in the first 9 months of the sample intake period, from October 2022 to June 2023, using UI payment data covering payments collected through December 31, 2023. It is important to note that, for the majority of the estimation sample, we do not fully observe the UI payments claimants may collect by the end of their claim's benefit year. As a result, the UI receipt measures reported here may underestimate the number of weeks and benefit amounts claimants may receive during their entire UI claim.

Table 7 presents interim UI receipt measures for the two study groups. Claimants assigned to the RCM/RESEA group collected an average of 9.34 weeks of benefits, amounting to \$4,563 in total benefits. In comparison, control group claimants collected a higher average number of benefit weeks and amounts. Additionally, control cases were more likely to exhaust their entitlements.

Notably, random assignment was conducted at the state level and the proportion of claimants assigned to the RCM/RESEA group remained roughly consistent across weeks. As a result, we can estimate the impacts of the program by directly comparing mean outcomes between the RCM/RESEA and the control group. However, to enhance the precision of the estimated effects and increase the statistical power of the estimation, we use ordinary least squares regression models that control for individual characteristics, benefit entitlements, prior earnings, Center indicators, and week indicators.

Table 7: Interim Results: UI Receipt Outcomes by Study Group

	RCM/RESEA Group	Control Group
Number of Claimants	6,417	720
Benefit Weeks Collected	9.35 (6.09)	9.97 (6.69)
Benefit Amount Collected (\$)	4,572 (3,334)	4,750 (3,399)
Exhausted Benefits	0.267	0.329

Note: Reported are sample means with standard deviations in parentheses; for exhausted benefits, reported is the sample proportion. Outcomes are measured using available data through December 31, 2023.

Source: Iowa UI data.

Formally, the regression models we use can be expressed as follows:

$$Y_i = T_i \cdot \alpha + X_i \cdot \beta + EARN_i \cdot \gamma + LWDA_i \cdot \delta + Week_i \cdot \varepsilon + \omega_i \quad [2]$$

The dependent variable (Y_i) is the outcome of interest (number of weeks collected, benefit amount collected, and exhausted benefits). Control variables on the right-hand side of the model include:

- T_i – a treatment indicator that equals 1 if the claimant was assigned to the RCM/RESEA group and 0 otherwise.
- X_i – claimant characteristics and UI entitlements.
- $Earn_i$ – earnings in quarters 1-8 prior to UI entry.
- $LWDA_i$ – indicator for the LWDA where the claimant resided.
- $Week_i$ – week of random assignment.

The right-hand side of the equation also includes ω_i , a zero-mean error term. The parameter of interest in this model, α , estimates the program’s average treatment effect (ATE) or intent-to-treat (ITT) effect on the outcome of interest.¹¹ The remaining Greek letters represent parameters to be estimated for individual characteristics and benefit entitlements (β), prior earnings (γ), LWDA (δ), and week (ε).

Table 8 presents the results. The first column reports the average treatment effects with heteroskedasticity robust standard errors in parentheses. The second column

¹¹ The ATE or ITT effect estimates the impact of the program for claimants assigned to receive program services, regardless of whether these claimants complied with program requirements.

reports the effects expressed as percentages of the control group means, representing the percentage impact of the program relative to the average outcome values in the absence of the intervention.

The estimation results provide promising evidence about the effectiveness of the program. They show that the RCM/RESEA program reduced average UI duration by 0.63 weeks, a 6% reduction relative to the control group mean UI duration. The reduction in UI duration is accompanied by a \$204 reduction in the average total benefit amount collected, representing 4% in benefit savings compared to the mean amount collected by control group claimants. The program also had a substantial effect on the likelihood of exhausting benefits, reducing the probability that claimants would collect their entire entitlement before exiting UI by 19%.

Table 8: Average Treatment Effects on UI Outcomes, Interim Results

	Average Treatment Effect	Effect as a percentage of the control group mean
Benefit Weeks Collected	-0.63 (0.26)**	-6%
Benefit Amount Collected (\$)	-204 (125)*	-4%
Exhausted Benefits	-0.063 (0.017)***	-19%

Note: Reported are estimated average treatment effects with heteroskedasticity robust standard errors in parentheses. Right column reports the average treatment effect as a percentage of the control group mean. *, **, *** = statistically significant at the 10%, 5%, 1% level. Outcomes are measured using available data through December 31, 2023.

3.4.3. Interim Results: Effects on Employment and Earnings

The above results indicate that the Iowa RCM/RESEA program caused significant reductions in UI receipt. To examine the program’s impacts on participant employment and earnings, we use Iowa UI wage record data, providing quarterly earnings information from UI-covered jobs within the state of Iowa. At this interim stage of the evaluation, we have UI wage records through Q4, 2023 for all individuals in the study sample.

For the interim analysis presented here, we estimate the impacts of the program on employment and earnings in the first two quarters after UI entry for claimants assigned to the two study groups from October 2022 to June 2023. In particular, we construct the following outcomes:

- *Employed* – Equals 1 if the claimant had earnings in the quarter and 0 otherwise.
- *Earnings* – Equals the earnings amount earned by the claimant in the quarter (zero earnings included).

Each of these two outcomes is constructed for quarter 1 and for quarter 2 after claimants entered the UI program.¹²

Table 9 shows that RCM/RESEA claimants had 69.5% and 73.1% employment rates in quarters 1 and 2 after UI entry, respectively. On average, RCM/RESEA claimants had \$6,429 and \$7,887 quarterly earnings in the first two quarters after UI entry. Comparing the RCM/RESEA and control group outcomes indicates that employment rates and earnings were quite similar across the two groups.

Table 9: Employment and Earnings after UI Entry

	RCM/RESEA	Control
Number of Claimants†	6,417	720
Employed		
In quarter 1 after UI entry	0.695	0.682
In quarter 2 after UI entry	0.731	0.733
Earnings (\$)		
In quarter 1 after UI entry	6,429 (8,371)	6,612 (8,221)
In quarter 2 after UI entry	7,887 (8,228)	7,872 (8,218)

Note: Reported are sample proportions for employment and means with standard deviations in parentheses for earnings. †=Sample includes all claimants assigned from October 2022 to June 2023. Outcomes are measured using available UI wage records through Q4, 2024.

Source: Iowa UI wage records.

To estimate program impacts on employment and earnings, we use regression models with a similar structure to the structure of model 2. These models estimate the impacts of the RCM/RESEA program, controlling for individual characteristics, benefit entitlements, prior earnings, week of assignment, and LWDA.

¹² For claimants assigned in Q4, 2022 (October to December 2022), quarter 1 and quarter 2 outcomes are measured using Q1, 2023 and Q2, 2023 UI wage records, respectively; for claimants assigned in Q1, 2023 (January to March 2023), quarter 1 and quarter 2 outcomes are measured using Q2, 2023 and Q3, 2023 UI wage records; and for claimants assigned in Q2, 2023 (April to June 2023), quarter 1 and quarter 2 outcomes are measured using Q3, 2023 and Q4, 2023 UI wage records

Results, presented in Table 10 indicate that the program did not have statistically significant impacts on employment and earnings in the two quarters after entry. In particular, the estimated effect for quarter 1 employment is 0.020, indicating that RCM/RESEA claimants were 2 percentage points (3%) more likely than control cases to be employed in quarter 1 after UI entry. The estimated effect on quarter 1 earnings was -225, indicating that participants earned 3% lower wages in quarter 1 after entry compared to control group claimants. The two parameters are not statistically significant.

We find positive effects on quarter 2 employment and quarter 2 earnings, but estimates are small in size and are not statistically different from zero. However, standard errors are large enough that 95% confidence intervals for program effects on employment for quarter 1 extend from -0.160 to 0.056 for quarter 1 and from -0.034 to 0.050 for quarter 2. Similarly, confidence intervals for the program effects on earnings are large enough to suggest that substantial effects could exist. The larger sample size that will be available for the final analysis is critical to our ability to infer actual program effects on employment and earnings.

Table 10: Average Treatment Effects on Employment and Earnings, Interim Results

	Average Treatment Effect†	Effect as a percentage of control group mean
Employed		
In quarter 1 after UI entry	0.020 (0.018)	+3%
In quarter 2 after UI entry	0.008 (0.021)	+1%
Earnings (\$)		
In quarter 1 after UI entry	-225 (309)	-3%
In quarter 2 after UI entry	95 (368)	+1%

Note: Reported are estimated average treatment effects with heteroskedasticity robust standard errors in parentheses. Right column reports the average treatment effect as a percentage of the control group mean. *, **, *** = statistically significant at the 10%, 5%, 1% level. †=Sample includes all claimants assigned from October 2022 to June 2023. Outcomes are measured using available UI wage records through Q4, 2024.

4. Implementation Study

The Implementation Study utilizes a combination of program observations, document reviews, and interviews with program staff to investigate the implementation of Iowa's RCM/RESEA program over the study period. Emphasizing the methods and procedures employed in conducting RCM and RESEA sessions and delivering associated services, the study aims to shed light on the consistency of services and their delivery across different regions and throughout the study duration. Additionally, the study identifies and examines implementation challenges while also highlighting best practices and lessons learned that emerge during the implementation process.

4.1. Data Sources

To evaluate the implementation of the RCM/RESEA program, we employed a comprehensive approach involving the collection and analysis of three types of qualitative data:

- **Interviews.** We conducted interviews with various stakeholders involved in program implementation, including Workforce Services program administrators, Career Planners responsible for conducting RCM and RESEA meetings, partner program staff, and UI staff. Throughout the study period, interviews were conducted with staff from a selection of IowaWORKS offices, chosen to represent diversity across key factors such as location, demographics of the served population, and office size. These interviews utilized semi-structured guides to ensure comprehensive coverage of research questions while allowing flexibility for interviewees' responses.
- **Program Observations.** We observed selected RCM/RESEA sessions and subsequent activities, with participant permission. These observations followed a checklist protocol aligned with research questions, aiming to identify variations in the implementation of RCM/RESEA activities.
- **Document Review.** Additional insights were gathered through a review of existing program materials related to the implementation of both programs at both statewide and regional levels. This encompassed documentation on data systems, templates for individual employment plans, labor market information, outreach and training materials, guidance documents, and the letter prompting claimants to complete the assessment.

The study included three rounds of data collection during the evaluation period. The first round occurred prior to random assignment and focused on interviews with administrative and managerial staff involved in RCM/RESEA, UI, and program partnerships. These initial interviews informed the development of the TOC and the Evaluation Design Plan. The second round took place during the RCT intake period, gathering insights on RCM/RESEA implementation from Career Planners conducting interviews in a sample of IowaWORKS offices statewide. The third round of data collection, conducted towards the end of the RCT intake period, involved interviews with RCM/RESEA program partners.

4.2. Analysis and Findings

In this section, we present the findings derived from the analysis of qualitative data. Our approach to organizing and analyzing these findings facilitates the emergence of key themes, offering insights into the processes, best practices, and challenges associated with both programs. In the discussion of the findings below, we highlight various aspects of program implementation that we deem significant, particularly in providing context for interpreting quantitative findings and, ultimately, the results of the impact study.

4.2.1. Overview of the RCM/RESEA Program

Unemployed individuals who have access to a computer can file their UI claim through the IWD website. For those without computer access, alternative options are available, such as utilizing computers at an IowaWORKS center or a local library. Typically, claimants can expect to receive their first week of benefits approximately three weeks after submitting their claim.

Claimants who meet specific criteria, including having received their first benefit payment, not being job-attached or subject to recall, and not seeking employment through a union hiring hall, are eligible for selection to participate in the RCM/RESEA program. Before the implementation of random assignment procedures for the current evaluation, IWD had the capacity to serve all services-eligible UI claimants under the RCM/RESEA program.

4.2.2. Program Administration and Staff Resources

Program Administration. Within IWD, the UI division is tasked with managing the UI system, while the Workforce Services division oversees the state's workforce

programs and is responsible for implementing the RCM/RESEA program.

The implementation of RCM and RESEA is supported by Operations Managers, who ensure its efficient operation. Responsible for IowaWORKS centers within their assigned state region, Operation Managers not only oversee the day-to-day activities but also offer recommendations for program enhancements. Additionally, they provide ongoing training and conduct reviews of procedures, addressing any issues raised by Career Planners assigned to conduct the RCM and RESEA meetings.

Communication. Communication plays a pivotal role in the RCM/RESEA program, with regular meetings serving as a platform to disseminate new directives and procedures while addressing any arising queries. Additionally, team chats and email communication with supervisors are utilized to resolve issues encountered by RCM and RESEA Career Planners during meetings, such as inquiries regarding UI benefits or data entry. Interviewees also highlighted the availability of UI experts among Career Planners within IowaWORKS centers, offering support in answering UI-related questions. Moreover, the close proximity of staff from partner programs like Vocational Rehabilitation, VETS, and WIOA Title 1 facilitates seamless referrals to these services.

Still, some interviewees expressed frustration about their ability to feel fully informed regarding RESEA processes. Factors such as the time required to absorb new material or delays in receiving timely responses to queries were cited as challenges. This frustration was particularly evident during periods of program changes necessitating the implementation of new procedures. Additionally, given the overlap in claimants served by both the RCM and RESEA Career Planners, some Career Planners suggested the need for improved communication between the two programs, especially in centers lacking dedicated RCM Career Planners.

Program implementation relies on two distinct computer systems. IowaWORKS functions as a case management tool, capturing all relevant information related to RCM/RESEA meetings, services provided, and scheduled workshops. However, individuals selected for RCM/RESEA participation are identified through the UI legacy mainframe system, which houses UI claim information. As the two systems are currently not integrated, accessing and sharing information depends on staff permissions and direct communication. It is anticipated that once the ongoing system modernization process is completed, several functions like case note sharing will become less cumbersome.

Staff Training. Five Career Planners, each from a different region within the state (Central Iowa, East Central Iowa, Mississippi Valley, Northeast Iowa, and Western

Iowa), were asked about the training they received prior to conducting interviews. While there is a degree of consistency in the training experiences reported by RCM and RESEA Career Planners interviewed for the study, there are also variations noted. Some staff members described their training as informal, providing only the basics and lacking consistency in its implementation. Conversely, others mentioned a more comprehensive training process spanning over four weeks. Given that the interviewed staff were in different areas and underwent training at different times, these differences likely reflect the natural evolution of training practices or procedural adjustments, such as those necessitated by the pandemic.

Overall, however, training seemed to equip new Career Planners with the necessary skills to effectively conduct RCM and RESEA meetings and accurately document meeting information. Common elements of the training reported by RCM and RESEA Career Planners included:

- Observational and experiential learning, followed by hands-on practice.
- Job shadowing and practical training with experienced Career Planners.
- Utilization of resources such as the RESEA Manual and RESEA Resulting Desk Aid.
- Review of program-related information in the IowaWORKS data system, including case notes, virtual recruiter tools, labor market information, RESEA agreements, resume guides, and tip sheets.
- Familiarization with UI compliance and eligibility criteria.
- Attendance at workshops aimed at enhancing referral processes for claimants.
- Informal maintenance training facilitated through daily emails containing program updates from the Operations Manager and monthly RESEA meetings coordinated by the RESEA coordinator.
- Provision of ongoing training and on-demand training to address specific issues or challenges as they arise.

Nevertheless, some Career Planners expressed a desire for a deeper understanding of UI-related issues to better assist claimants with general questions regarding benefits. Similarly, UI staff, involved in the investigation and adjudication of disputed claims, indicated a lack of information about RCM/RESEA participation, exacerbated by their inability to access claimants' data related to program involvement due to the bifurcated data systems described earlier.

4.2.3. Participant Identification and Notification

Claimants selected to participate in the RCM/RESEA program are contacted early in the UI claim process, sometimes as early as the week when the claim started, by an RCM Career Planner. Upon successful contact, the Career Planner assesses the claimant's needs for Wagner-Peyser reemployment services and schedules a first RCM appointment for the following week. If initial contact is unsuccessful, a scheduled time for a phone meeting is mailed to the claimant via the United States Postal Service (USPS).

Around the third week of their UI claim, RCM/RESEA participants receive an RESEA notification letter via USPS. The notification letter informs the claimant about the requirement to attend an RESEA meeting, typically occurring in the fourth week of the claim, at a local IowaWORKS center. Additionally, RESEA Career Planners may also inform claimants about the meeting via email and/or phone one week prior to the meeting. The notification outlines the selection, participation requirement, meeting purpose, expectations, and consequences for non-participation (such as potential benefit suspension). It also includes meeting details and instructions on requesting changes, completing required forms beforehand, bringing necessary documents (e.g., resume, work search documentation, photo ID), rescheduling procedures, and notifying the IowaWORKS office if the claimant returns to work. Similar letters are sent for sub-RESEA meetings and rescheduled meetings, with the latter indicating that rescheduling is permitted only once.

In preparation for the RESEA meeting, Career Planners must utilize both IowaWORKS and the UI mainframe system to gather comprehensive information on scheduled claimants. While IowaWORKS provides some basic claimant data, details about the claim and its status are obtained from the UI mainframe. Despite being described as “cumbersome,” this process is necessary to verify the current claim status. RESEA Career Planners refrain from meeting with claimants if there is a lock on their claim.¹³

4.2.4. Administration of the RCM/RESEA Meetings

The RCM and RESEA components of the programs were developed to complement each other, offering distinct yet complementary services throughout the duration of a UI claim. Although RCM and RESEA meetings have different objectives, there are

¹³ Prior to the RESEA meeting, a claim could be locked due to the discovery of an eligibility issue resulting from an RCM meeting or a discovery of non-compliance associated with weekly claim certifications (e.g., not completing work search requirements).

notable similarities as well.

RCM meetings are initiated early in the UI claim process to expedite reemployment efforts. Conversely, RESEA meetings typically occur later in the claim period and are often more comprehensive than RCM meetings, addressing more persistent barriers to reemployment.

Mandatory participation in both initial and subsequent RCM and RESEA meetings, along with assigned workshops, provides claimants with frequent and continuous opportunities for interaction with Career Planners. While both programs offer services throughout the claim period,¹⁴ RCM/RESEA participants are no longer scheduled or required to attend RCM meetings once they begin their RESEA process. This ensures a streamlined approach to service delivery tailored to the evolving needs of claimants as they progress through their UI claims.

Initial Meeting. As illustrated in Table 11, the RCM and RESEA meetings differ in format, duration, and focus. All RCM meetings (initial and subsequent) are conducted over the phone and last approximately 15 minutes. RCM Career Planners may conduct meetings with claimants statewide. During a typical RCM meeting, RCM Career Planners review the claimants' job search efforts and provide information about UI eligibility requirements. They also provide claimants with information about available services and resources, such as job fairs, training programs, and IowaWORKS office resources. Although claimants are not offered any job counseling services during an RCM meeting, Career Planners assign claimants to participate in workshops.

In contrast, RESEA meetings are conducted in person at local IowaWORKS offices, unless a virtual meeting is requested, and last approximately 45-60 minutes. Generally, RESEA Career Planners conduct RESEA meetings with claimants covered by their local IowaWORKS office. Upon arrival for their appointment, RESEA Career Planners conduct the UI eligibility review, reviewing claimants' work search efforts and employer contacts, to confirm compliance with UI work search requirements. Typically, RESEA Career Planners require job search verification, calling potential employers, as necessary.

¹⁴ In some areas, the number of subsequent meetings could be driven by the volume of claims and staff availability. Typically, subsequent meetings are not scheduled if there is no availability in the following three weeks.

Table 11: RCM and RESEA Meeting Logistics and Content

	RCM Meeting	RESEA Meeting
Meeting Logistics		
Initial contact	Week 1	Week 3-4
Initial meeting mode	Phone	In-person*
Subsequent meeting mode	Phone	Phone/virtual
Statewide/Local	Statewide	Local
Length of meetings	15 minutes	45-60 minutes
Meeting Content		
Review job search efforts and employer contacts	Moderate focus	Strong focus
Review of UI requirements	Strong focus	Less focus
UI eligibility review	Less focus	Strong focus
Information about available services and resources	Strong focus	Moderate focus
Reemployment plan and needs assessment	Less focus	Strong focus
Job counseling	Less focus	Strong focus
Assignments to workshops	Strong focus	Strong focus

Note: *= Meeting can be conducted remotely (by phone or virtually) at claimant's request.

Following the eligibility review, claimants are offered job counseling services. First, claimants complete an “eligibility explorer” to assess eligibility for partner services and are asked to think about what types of workshops they are interested in. RESEA Career Planners explore a claimant's goals for reemployment, any barriers that may exist, and complete a dislocated worker's survey. They also provide labor market information, review O*Net resources, and provide reemployment services – e.g., resume development assistance, enrollment in virtual recruiter, employment referrals, and make referrals to additional partner programs, such as training available through WIOA Title 1, Vocational Rehabilitation and Veteran's services.

Connecting participants to Wagner Peyser reemployment services and WIOA Title 1 and other types of workforce training is reported to be the main priority for RESEA Career Planners. One RESEA Career Planner noted that sometimes they would physically walk claimants to IowaWORKS staff at the end of the RESEA meeting to facilitate this connection. A workforce training coordinator – responsible for recruiting workers into an IT training program for dislocated workers during much of the period of random assignment – proactively followed up with claimants

expressing interest in training during their RESEA meeting. During our interview, the coordinator expressed the belief that many of these claimants were referred to WIOA training.

At the conclusion of both RCM and RESEA meetings, Career Planners schedule claimants for required workshops to be completed before the next meeting. In addition, claimants often volunteer to attend additional workshops. Workshop attendance can be easily tracked by RCM/RESEA Career Planners in the IowaWORKS system. If a claimant fails to comply with workshop requirements without contacting the Career Planner who made the referral, immediate disqualification is enforced, and the claimant is notified by mail. A hold is placed on the claim until compliance is met.

Subsequent Meetings. If the claimant is still unemployed three weeks after the initial RESEA meeting, a subsequent RESEA meeting is scheduled, lasting anywhere from 20-60 minutes. These meetings typically involve:

- Reviewing UI eligibility and job search efforts.
- Providing resume review assistance, if needed.
- Referring the claimant to potential job opportunities or assisting with job searches.
- Referring the claimant to relevant workshops.

If the claimant continues to remain unemployed and claim benefits, subsequent RESEA meetings continue to be scheduled at intervals of approximately three weeks between meetings, to address more persistent barriers to employment. These meetings are designed to continue throughout the duration of the claim and become more frequent, occurring approximately once per week, the longer the claimant remains unemployed.

Claimants are required to attend online workshops agreed upon during meetings. Most commonly this includes Essential Tools (IowaWORKS office orientation), Virtual Job Club, A-Game soft skills workshops, resume development, and mock interviews. However, IWD encourages claimants to attend job fairs and offers a comprehensive selection of online workshops that claimants may self-select into based on their individual needs, such as financial literacy, unemployment information, digital literacy, and personal growth. This flexibility ensures that claimants receive tailored support to enhance their reemployment prospects.

Attendance Issues. For both RCM and RESEA meetings, claimants are granted one

opportunity to reschedule their appointment without facing consequences. If a claimant contacts the Career Planner to reschedule before the scheduled meeting, a new meeting will be arranged. However, if the claimant fails to attend the rescheduled meeting or does not make contact before the originally scheduled meeting, benefit payments are suspended and the missed meeting is documented in case notes. If the claimant later contacts the center and provides an acceptable reason or justifiable cause for missing the meeting, the benefit suspension is removed. Once they are in compliance, claimants receive back payments for benefits not paid during the suspension. However, if no explanation is provided, claimants are rescheduled for RESEA, and benefits resume only after the appointment is completed, with no back payments released. In all instances, claimants receive a letter notifying them if their claim is locked, ensuring transparency and communication regarding their benefit status.

UI Eligibility Issues. If eligibility issues are identified during the initial or subsequent RESEA meetings, Career Planners will document them in the case notes. These issues may include unreported earnings, availability for work, failure to provide verifiable work search documentation, and inadequate documentation of job contacts or efforts to find suitable work. While Career Planners do not issue decisions for failing to meet the minimum number of job contacts (as this is addressed by UI through online communication), they do address failures to adequately document job contacts or make a reasonable effort to find work. Additionally, claimants may be disqualified if they repeatedly fail to upload a resume on IowaWORKS or attend scheduled workshops.

Career Planners have the authority to issue decisions regarding the claim, potentially disqualifying the claimant and placing a hold on the claim. While UI is not usually directly involved, if the issue remains unresolved, Career Planners can request that the claimant schedule a meeting with UI for further investigation. This is especially true in cases of unverifiable work search documentation or other disputes regarding eligibility.

5. Conclusion

In its effort to assist UI claimants to meet UI work search requirements and improve the effectiveness of their job search, IWD enhanced the RESEA program by adding a case management component, called RCM. The objective of the Iowa RCM/RESEA program is to offer participants intensive case management and counseling services throughout their UI claims. This approach represents one of the

most intensive job-search assistance interventions ever studied within the U.S. UI context.

The current evaluation uses an experimental design to examine the effects of the Iowa RCM/RESEA program on service take-up, UI receipt, and reemployment outcomes. In particular, from October 2022 through December 2023, services-eligible UI claimants were randomly selected to either participate in the RCM/RESEA program (RCM/RESEA group) or to be exempted from program participation (control group). This design enables us to estimate the impacts of the program on the outcomes of interest by leveraging Iowa administrative data provided by IWD for both RCM/RESEA and control group claimants.

This Interim Report presents the preliminary evaluation findings based on data collected through December 2023. During the RCT sample intake period, from October 2022 to December 2023, 12,599 UI claimants were randomly assigned to the RCM/RESEA group (89.8%) or the control group (10.2%). Statistical comparisons indicate that the random assignment process was successful in producing two study groups that are equivalent in terms of their observed characteristics, benefit entitlements, and prior earnings. As a result, program impacts can be estimated by comparing the post-UI entry outcomes between claimants in the RCM/RESEA group and claimants in the control group. Any differences in outcomes between these two groups can be attributed solely to the effectiveness of the program.

At the time of the writing of the current interim report, IWD has provided Actus with UI claims and RCM/RESEA program data through December 31, 2023, as well as UI wage records through Q4, 2023. Using these data, this report presents interim impact results for claimants assigned in the first nine months of the 15-month RCT intake period, from October 2022 to June 2023.

First, analysis of RCM/RESEA program data indicates that the program was very successful in facilitating frequent meetings between participants and workforce staff. In particular, approximately 82% of claimants assigned to the RCM/RESEA group completed at least one required program meeting. On average, participants attended 2.34 meetings with RCM and/or RESEA Career Planners before exiting UI. Further analysis indicates that at least 31% of participants completed two or more RCM meetings and 32% attended two or more RESEA meetings. Overall, 17% of participants attended two program meetings (RCM and/or RESEA) and an additional 41% attended three or more meetings.

Second, analysis of employment service data shows that the program substantially increased the uptake of reemployment services. In particular, 80% of RCM/RESEA

group claimants received job counseling, compared to only 13% of control group claimants. On average, RCM/RESEA claimants received 4.8 counseling services, as compared to 0.4 for control cases. In addition, program assignment increased participation in workshops – 70% of RCM/RESEA claimants attended at least one workshop for an average of 3 workshops per participant. In contrast, only 27% of control cases participated in workshops for an average of 0.7 workshops. Importantly, 17% of RCM/RESEA claimants received a direct job referral during their interactions with workforce staff, as compared to 2% of control group members.

Third, interim impact analysis using available UI data, shows that the program was effective in reducing UI receipt among participants. In particular, interim results show that the program reduced participants' average UI spells by 0.63 weeks, thereby yielding \$204 in UI benefit savings per participant. Compared to the control group claimants, these effects represent a 6% reduction in UI spells and a 4% reduction in the benefit amount collected. The program also reduced the likelihood of exhausting benefits by 6.3 percentage points, a 19% reduction relative to the control group.

Finally, interim impact analysis did not show statistically significant effects of the program on participants' employment rates and earnings in the first two quarters after UI entry. However, at this interim stage of the evaluation, we cannot reject the possibility of at least moderate program effects on employment and earnings. Estimates in the final report will be based on a larger sample and will provide more meaningful estimates of program impacts on labor market outcomes.

Notably, these interim findings focus on about three-fifths of the full study sample and use data that provide partial measures of key outcomes, before the UI claims of most claimants are completed. Therefore, the interim results presented here do not represent the final results of the evaluation. Over the next several months, Actus will obtain additional data from IWD, which will be used to update the results. The final findings of the evaluation will be presented in the Final Report, due in October 2025.

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