

To: Vermont Legislature
From: Michael Harrington, Interim Labor Commissioner
Date: May 21, 2020
Subject: Unemployment Insurance Daily Update

This report includes both new and continuing efforts. New information is in **RED**.

Current Week Priorities

1. Finalize last round of PUA system updates related to correct payment methodology
2. Implement Pandemic Extended Unemployment Compensation Program
3. Implementation of a single constituent management solution to reduce duplication
4. Resolve outstanding PUA claimant issues

On-going Priorities

- Continue to resolve claimant issues and get them paid
- Continue to increase training for call-center staff
- Close the gap between calls made and calls answered

Accomplishments and Milestones

- 3,933 UI claims were paid on May 19th for a total payment amount of \$4,085,971
- 893 PUA claims were paid on May 19th for a total payment amount of \$2,058,170
- 10,133 UI claims were paid on May 20th for a total payment amount of \$10,077,302
- 535 PUA claims were paid on May 19th for a total payment amount of \$1,532,578
- PEUC was implemented. Nearly 1500 claimants were automatically enrolled. They will be mailed notification as well as a phone call with more information.

Ongoing Activities

- Automating transactions for claimants with overpayments receiving FPUC. Currently, this is a manual process.
- Creating additional technical assistance and training materials for Maximus Call Center agents and improving call escalation process with Maximus Call Center agents.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)

- VDOL staff continue to work and clear adjudication issues on initial claims and any associated issues, so far, the staff are able to resolve PUA issues within 36-48 hours.
- Created an automated email that PUA claimants will receive when each weekly claim is being processed for payment with a rough timeline for receiving the payment.
- VDOL staff are calling through the 790 ineligible claimants to verify information and correct any issues.

Extended Benefits

- Per federal guidance, individuals who have exhausted their benefits must first utilize Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) before being placed on Extended Benefits (EB). PEUC provides an additional 13 weeks of benefits to claimants who have exhausted their regular UI benefits.
- A red emergency banner will be displayed on the Labor website for claimants to click to find more information on PEUC and what they need to do to receive benefits. PEUC eligible claimants will also receive instructions by mail.
- PEUC implementation was moved from Tuesday night to Wednesday night. We expect ≈1500 claimants to automatically be enrolled overnight and validated on Thursday morning. Each claimant will be mailed a notification and the website will be updated to display additional information on how to file for past benefit weeks. Similar to before, because this is a mainframe program, claimants will be able to file one back week per day. The system will process the filed week overnight and open the next back week the following day.

Communications

- Updating FAQs for PUA and regular UI
- More than 10,000 PUA claimants were emailed 5/19 to remind them they can finish the PUA application. More than 25,000 are in the PUA system but only 15,000 have completed the application. This was the second email they received from VDOL.
- **PEUC communications. Press release, social posts, letters, phone calls and website updates.**

Call Center Functions Update

- Maximus call center is recording each claimant interaction for quality assurance. Load balancing will occur across Maximus call queues and across the entire system, including supplemental line.
- The recording and monitoring of the Maximus Call Center for call quality has already resulted in corrective action being taken by the vendor.
- Call-center volume is decreasing, and call-center staffing is increasing. Friday there were 5,400 call attempts.
- Mondays continue to be the highest call volume day, with call attempts at 8,700. That number tends to decrease over the week. (Monday was considered the high call volume day even prior to COVID-19)
- Tuesday's call attempts were 4,284 - all calls were offered spots in the queue and the average wait time was under 15 minutes. Unanswered calls identified on the graph in the appendix include calls that come in outside of business hours and callers who hang up either before or after they make it into the queue. There were no overflow calls on Tuesday.
- **Wednesday's call attempts were 4,067. All calls were offered spots in the queue and the average wait time was under 15 minutes.**

Unresolved/Unique Populations

- PUA claimants with payment calculation issues remaining. This is a technical issue that requires the vendor MTX to resolve. **Update on the payments: We have resolved the 3 issues remaining that are impacting a group of PUA claimants. Once the file is reconciled, payments will be released.**
- UI claimants serving penalty weeks for having committed UI fraud
- PUA claimants who are ineligible based on their application and/or weekly filings
- PUA claimants with pending adjudication stop-payment issues



- UI claimants in formal UI Adjudication. There are fewer cases in adjudication now than prior to COVID
- Claimants eligible for Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (extended benefits)

Top Claimant Issues

- Regular unemployment claimants unable to file weekly claims because their claim is still being adjudicated.
- Regular unemployment claimants unable to receive weekly benefits because they have a fraudulent code on their UI claim and are serving penalty weeks.
- PUA claimants deemed ineligible because they answered questions incorrectly and would like to update their response. VDOL is assisting these cases and updating as necessary.
- PUA claimants who are eligible but cannot access the PUA application because on their initial application their information was submitted incorrectly (date of birth is most common).

APPENDIX

Popular Links:

- [Click here for PUA general information](#)
- [Click here for PUA FAQs](#)
- [Click here for PUA application video demonstration](#)
- [Click here for unemployment general information](#)
- [Click here for frequently asked questions](#)
- [Click here for Return to Work Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Total Initial Claims	92,000	Total number of initial claims since 3/1/2020.
Initial Claims with no Eligibility Determination	1,682	Initial claims without eligibility determination for UI or PUA. A subset of this population does not, and will not, qualify for UI or PUA.
Unemployment Insurance		
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI	64,501	Number of claimants eligible for UI
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Paid	58,188	Number of claimants who are receiving UI benefits
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Not Paid	6,313	Number of claimants who meet basic eligibility thresholds but have significant issues that require review and resolution prior to payment. This also includes individuals who have since returned to work and are no longer filing. Roughly 4,500 of these individuals have never filed a weekly claim.
UI Trust Fund Balance (as of 5/11)	\$366,231,008	Trust Fund balance can fluctuate due to benefit payments, earned interest, employer contributions, and federal reimbursements. (Note: Balance as of 3/1/2020 \$506,157,247)
Pandemic Unemployment Assistance		
Claimants Potentially PUA Eligible	25,817	Total number of claimants that could complete the PUA application and are in the system
Claimants in PUA - Filed	16,414	# of claimants who have completed the PUA application
Claimants in PUA – Filed & Eligible	15,549	# of eligible claimants
Claimants in PUA – Filed & Ineligible	848	# of ineligible claimants
Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed and Paid	13,660	# of eligible claimants receiving PUA benefit.
Claimants in PUA -Filed and Not Paid	1,889*	# of claimants that have a payment pending, issue on weekly claim to resolve, or have returned to work and are not filing.
Total PUA Benefits Dispersed	\$70,797,415	Total amount of PUA benefits paid

**Includes pending payments due to PUA system update*

