

To: Vermont Legislature
From: Michael Harrington, Interim Labor Commissioner
Date: May 12, 2020
Subject: Unemployment Insurance Daily Update

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

Current Week Priorities

1. **Finalized payment process system update for PUA.**
2. Identify and prioritize enhancements for the PUA system.
3. Finalize program requirements for Pandemic Extended Unemployment Compensation Program and the existing federal Extended Benefits Program.

On-going Priorities

- Continue to mass-resolve low-level code issues that created stop-payments (move more Vermonters through the system and get them paid) Code 06, 64, 66, 81 are being cleared daily for claimants that have a weekly benefit amount (WBA) > 0; much fewer issues are needing to be cleared daily
- Continue to improve and clarify PUA application, process, and communication
- Continue public messaging and overall communications
- Legislative Action Team (LAT) working through the constituent management spreadsheet with support from VDOL staff
- VDOL adjudications is providing daily lists of claimants to the Salesforce vendor who need to be flipped from ineligible to eligible in PUA

Previous Accomplishments and Milestones

- Constituent Management tool has completed initial testing phases and will proceed to production. The tool will be ready for implementation this week
- First round of payments were processed for claimants in overpayment. They will begin to receive FPUC benefits going forward, with their weekly benefit amount continuing to offset their overpayment balance.

Ongoing Activities

- Continuing to improve the chatbot provided by Maximus on the VDOL website to be more robust and regularly updating with additional information.
- **Population of approximately 9,000 claimants not monetarily eligible for regular UI were pushed to the PUA system on Monday, May 11th. Claimants will be notified tonight they can finish the PUA application.**

New Activities

- Finalizing program requirements for PEUC program.
- Creating additional technical assistance and training materials for Maximus Call Center agents.
- Completing requirements sessions on enhancements to the PUA backend to increase the usability for PUA staff.

- Weekly benefits issued to roughly 1200 PUA claimants who were eligible for PUA between 3/15 and 3/28 who had not yet received a weekly benefit. All claimants in this population received an email from the Department explaining what the payment amount represents. These payments were able to be processed outside of the PUA payment calculation update because they did not include FPUC payments.

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.
- PUA support for staff and training on issues, VDOL is in final stages of creating a training and is creating an onboarding plan for PUA (and general UI). These individuals will be PUA Program Super Users and will assist both internal and vendor resources as an escalation resource.
- The technical corrections made to the system as part of the update, will go into production Tuesday evening, May 12th and barring any issues, will result in payments being processed on May 13th. Included in this payment process will be the additional 9,000 claimants that were moved over on May 11th.

Communications

- Claimants impacted by PUA payment processing issue were notified of the issue via email. Claimants will be emailed again once final testing is complete and timeline for payments are clear.
- Updating FAQs for PUA and regular UI to answer some of the new claimant questions. This will help reduce the number of calls into the call centers.
- 1200 PUA claimants emailed to explain the payment they received this week.

Call Center Functions Update

- Maximus is on track to have 200 agents in queue by May 13th and 300 agents in queue by May 21st.
- 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.
- Contract amendment is being circulated to address expanded capacity identified above.
- The recording and monitoring of the Maximus Call Center for call quality has already resulted in corrective action being taken by the vendor.

Unique Populations

- Regular unemployment claimants serving penalty weeks because of a fraudulent determination from a past claim.
- Regular unemployment claimants with overpayment balances whose benefit amount is currently being used to offset their balance. This is currently being corrected by VDOL staff manually because there is no way to mass clear the stop payment.

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.



- Regular UI claimants calling back to check status of their claim to make sure issues have been resolved on their claim the day after speaking to a representative. This is likely because changes are not in real time but are updated overnight when the system processes.
- PUA claimants deemed ineligible because they answered questions incorrectly and would like to update their response. Claimants unable to complete application (PUA or regular UI) because they do not have an email address. VDOL is working with state agency partners to address this issue.

APPENDIX

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Additional Information

- [Click here for PUA general information](#)
- [Click here for PUA FAQs](#)
- [Click here for PUA application video demonstration](#)

Regular Unemployment Insurance Additional Information

- [Click here for unemployment general information](#)
- [Click here for frequently asked questions](#)

Claims Data as of May 11, 2020

Total Initial Claims	88,922	Total number of initial claims since 3/1/2020.
Initial Claims with no Eligibility Determination	8,913	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	62,616	Number of claimants eligible for UI
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Paid	55,700	Number of claimants who are receiving UI benefits
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Not Paid	6,916	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)	\$399,484,389	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		
Initial Claimants Eligible for PUA	17,393	Total number of claimants that could complete the PUA application and are in the system
Initial Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed	12,396	# of eligible claimants who have completed PUA application
Initial Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed and Paid	9,689	Number of eligible claimants receiving PUA benefit.
Initial Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed and Not Paid	2,707	Number 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	\$34,061,078	Total amount of PUA benefits paid