

**To:** Vermont Legislature  
**From:** Michael Harrington, Interim Labor Commissioner  
**Date:** May 6, 2020  
**Subject:** Unemployment Insurance Daily Update

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**This report includes both new and continuing efforts.**

### **Current Week Priorities**

1. Issue first round of PUA checks (complete)
2. Reduce unserved population
3. Staff and vendor training for enhanced and expedited claim resolution
4. Begin implementation of the 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 transition unique populations into the PUA system. These populations applied for regular UI, are likely ineligible, but are likely PUA eligible. These populations require specific protocols for integrity purposes before activating them in the PUA application.
- Continue to improve and clarify PUA application, process, and communication.
- Continue a steady pace of messaging. Update FAQs, emails, socials media, press releases, VTAlerts, etc.

### **Previous Accomplishments and Milestones**

- PUA claimants who filed weekly claims last week should begin to receive checks in the mail beginning today.
- Legislative Action Team (LAT) has started to work through the constituent management spreadsheet with VDOL staff.
- The team has identified unserved populations of claimants and are developing plans to determine their eligibility.
- Constituent Management Portal has completed initial testing phases and will be ready for implementation next week.

### **Ongoing Activities**

- Continue to train Maximus Call Center staff to have 200 agents on the lines by Monday and able to answer Tier 1 questions on PUA and regular UI. Reallocating CSR resources so the General Assistance line and PUA line so agents are always fielding calls after data has suggested PUA line call volume has been low.

- Chatbot functionality is being implemented with Maximus. This feature will lead to real-time chat functionality and call-back features.
- Working with the Tax Department on data exchange to use tax data to verify income.
- VDOL program team is determining roles and permissions for Salesforce administrators.
- VDOL is continuing to dive into populations of claimants who are not monetarily eligible to determine if these groups can be made PUA eligible and create process to determine their eligibility and migrate them to PUA while maintaining an acceptable level of program integrity.
- VDOL is beginning to provide daily lists to the Salesforce vendor of claimants who need to be flipped from ineligible to eligible in PUA after determinations are made by the Department.

### **New Activities**

- The Technical Team is developing code requirements to perform a batch function to automatically determine Method 2 eligibility. This should result in another significant group of Vermonter's becoming eligible for traditional UI.
- Preliminary tests have shown positive results for lifting a mainframe solution for both the PEUC and EB extended benefits programs.
- Manual determinations are being made on claims involving overpayments that will allow these individuals to receive FPUC payments, including retroactive payments.

### **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)**

- Logs of claimants are being compiled each day in order to upload their claims into the PUA system. Logs are uploaded each night in batches to streamline the process.
- 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.

### **Communications**

- Additional FAQs are in the final stages of review to address common claimant questions to help reduce number of calls into call centers that can be answered without speaking with a CSR.
- Released information regarding Return to Work requirements ([click here for info](#)).

### **Call Center Functions Update**

- Maximus is on track to have 200 agents in queue by May 8<sup>th</sup> and will expedite onboarding of new staff up to a maximum of 400 agents.
- Load balancing will occur across Maximus call queues and across the entire system, including supplemental line.
- Maximus is exploring extended evening shift to provide more access; however, the agents will be unable to access claim information at 5:30pm, as the mainframe goes offline to run jobs and updates overnight. We are exploring options to best utilize agents after 5:30pm.

### **Unique Populations**

- Monetarily ineligible for regular unemployment. This population includes workers with limited work histories, some non-profits, individuals who have been misclassified by their employer, and others.
- Claimants who are in adjudications for regular unemployment and likely will not be eligible for regular unemployment but likely eligible for PUA.
- Regular unemployment claimants serving penalty weeks because of a fraudulent determination from a past claim.
- Regular unemployment claimants who have an overpayment due to a fraudulent claim.
- Claims that are being processed by the Adjudications Team to determine eligibility.

### **Top Claimant Issues**

- Claimants stuck between regular UI and PUA because their claim needs to be reviewed by the Department to determine PUA eligibility.
- 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 who have not yet received payment in their accounts yet and should be receiving money within the next day or so.
- 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 runs jobs.

## 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 5, 2020

<b>Total Initial Claims</b>	<b>86,677</b>	Total number of initial claims since 3/1/2020.
Initial Claims with no Eligibility Determination	<b>10,362</b>	Initial claims without eligibility determination for UI or PUA. A subset of this population does not, and will not, qualify for UI or PUA.
<b>Unemployment Insurance</b>		
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI	<b>59,688</b>	Number of claimants eligible for UI
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Paid	<b>52,904</b>	Number of claimants who are receiving UI benefits
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Not Paid	<b>6,784</b>	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	<b>\$384,570,108</b>	As of 5/5/2020 (Note: Balance as of 3/1/2020 <b>\$506,157,247</b> )
<b>Pandemic Unemployment Assistance</b>		
Initial Claimants Eligible for PUA	<b>16,627</b>	Total number of claimants that could complete the PUA application and are in the system
Initial Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed	<b>11,422</b>	# of eligible claimants who have completed PUA application
Initial Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed and Paid	<b>8,623</b>	Number of eligible claimants receiving PUA benefit.
Initial Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed and Not Paid	<b>2,799</b>	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	<b>\$33,546,577</b>	Total amount of benefits paid