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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

To:	**Vermont Legislature**
From:	**Michael Harrington, Interim Labor Commissioner**
Date:	**May 8, 2020**
Subject:	**Unemployment Insurance Daily Update**

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

Current Week Priorities
1. Update, implement, and test PUA payment changes
2. Finalized plan to move non-monetarily eligible population to UI or PUA by Monday
3. Staff and vendor training for enhanced customer service 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 improve and clarify PUA application, process, and communication
- Continue a steady pace of messaging and communications

Previous Accomplishments and Milestones
- First round of PUA payments issued to Vermonters
- Legislative Action Team (LAT) working through the constituent management spreadsheet with support from VDOL staff
- Constituent Management tool has completed initial testing phases and will proceed to production. The tool will be ready for implementation next week
- The coding in VABS ran successfully to make additional claimants eligible for regular unemployment using monetary determination method 2. The Department will push the remaining claimants to PUA by Monday.

Ongoing Activities
- VDOL adjudications is providing daily lists of claimants to the SalesForce vendor who need to be flipped from ineligible to eligible in PUA
- VDOL is verifying payment process information to resume accurate PUA payments. This verification is required to maintain program integrity and validate accurate payments to claimants.

New Activities
- Language changes to the SalesForce application were finalized.

- Chatbot Version 1 provided by Maximus was posted on the VDOL website today. The content is pulled from the FAQs posted on the website. A second, more robust chatbot, is currently in production.
- Payments were processed for the first round of claimants in overpayment. They will begin to receive the FPUC benefit going forward. This is completely manual process.

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.

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).
- Claimants impacted by PUA payment processing issue were notified of the issue via email.
- Translated VOSHA workplace safety training into 11 languages.

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.
- After various complaints over the last day, we have asked for all MCC calls to be recorded for quality control.
- 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 after 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
- 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.

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Top Claimant Issues

- Claimants stuck between regular UI and PUA because their claim needs to be reviewed by the Department to determine PUA eligibility. This population will be determined by Sunday and undetermined claims will be pushed to PUA on Monday.
- 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.
- Claimants who have overpayment balances and are not receiving FPUC benefits. Releasing FPUC benefits requires each claim to be updated individually.
- 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.

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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 7, 2020

Total Initial Claims	87,677	Total number of initial claims since 3/1/2020.
Initial Claims with no Eligibility Determination	8,808	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	61,835	Number of claimants eligible for UI
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Paid	54,277	Number of claimants who are receiving UI benefits
Initial Claimants Eligible for UI - Not Paid	7,576	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	$384,480,577	As of 5/5/2020 (Note: Balance as of 3/1/2020 **$506,157,247**)
Pandemic Unemployment Assistance		
Initial Claimants Eligible for PUA	17,016	Total number of claimants that could complete the PUA application and are in the system
Initial Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed	11,957	# of eligible claimants who have completed PUA application
Initial Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed and Paid	8,623	Number of eligible claimants receiving PUA benefit.
Initial Claimants Eligible for PUA - Filed and Not Paid	3,334	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	$33,558,023	Total amount of benefits paid