

Federal Stimulus Money Helps Massachusetts Unemployed

In April Governor Patrick announced that Massachusetts has qualified for an initial \$54.2 million in federal stimulus funds to help boost the state's \$900 million unemployment insurance fund. These funds have been made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Job seekers may now be eligible for up to 72 weeks of unemployment benefits through the Federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation and Federal-State Extended Benefits programs. The federal stimulus program has funded an additional \$67 million for job training for unemployed workers throughout the Commonwealth. Eligible unemployed workers may also qualify for assistance with their health insurance premiums.

To address the surge in unemployment claims this past year, the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development Division of Unemployment Assistance has doubled its staffing hours and increased hours of service for its claims centers, WebCert (unemployment insurance online services), and TeleCert (telephone filing system for claiming weekly unemployment insurance benefits).

For information about filing an unemployment claim, general eligibility, benefit checks, claim issues/adjudication, or extended benefits, contact the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development Division of Unemployment Assistance via their website at www.mass.gov/dua or by phone at (617) 626-6800. For information about new extended unemployment insurance benefits, call (888) 998-8418.



Stimulus Funds Will Help the Unemployed By:

- Increasing unemployment checks by \$25 per week.
- Excluding the first \$2,400 of unemployment benefits from federal tax.
- Allowing more individuals to qualify for extended unemployment benefits by extending the deadlines for application payments. The application deadline has been extended to December 31, 2009. Extended benefits will be payable through May 31, 2010.
- Providing a government subsidy to help eligible unemployed workers (and eligible dependents) pay 65 percent of their health insurance (COBRA) premiums for up to nine months. Workers eligible for the stimulus COBRA subsidy must have been involuntarily terminated between September 1, 2008 and December 31, 2009. More information relating to this benefit is available at online at new federal subsidy for COBRA premiums.