



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT OF UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

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DUA ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, August 21, 2025
Meeting Minutes

Council Attendees: Richard Marlin, John Drinkwater, Chris Carlozzi, Renee Harper, Sam Larson
EOLWD/DWD/DUA/Public Attendees: Katie Dishnica, Josh Cutler, Lisa Hemmerle, Jeannie Pena, Corey Mescon, Ashley Thompson, John Saulnier, Jason Salgado, Laura Santiago, Rena Kottcamp, Rory MacAneny, Ella Paul, Wendy Filosi, Hannah Tanabe, John Cronin

A virtual meeting was held via Zoom.

A motion was proposed to approve the June 2025 meeting minutes.

- Motion was seconded.
- Vote on Motion – all in favor to approve.

Executive Update

Katie Dishnica, Director of DUA, provided an executive update.

The first update is regarding Board of Review positions. Paul Fitzgerald, Chair of the Board of Review, will retire at the end of this month. We thank him for his service. We are still accepting applications. The subcommittee kick off meeting is scheduled for next week on August 28th.

The next update is on the Tax Integrity Unit. This is a dedicated unit to investigate fraud on the employer side. The unit was fully staffed in March 2025. Since then, the team has stopped over six hundred attempts to register fictitious employer accounts. Two hundred existing accounts have also been flagged and prevented any fraud from occurring. The Tax Integrity Unit has begun referring cases to the Attorney General's office.

The next update is on Program Integration Unit. DUA staff have been placed in MassHire locations as of 7/28. The unit was established by state law.

There are seven regions in the state. Each region has at least two Career Centers. Seven DUA staff positions were created. For example, Region 3 is a combination of the Lowell, Lawrence, and Salem MassHire Career Centers. One staff member will rotate each week

at each of these Career Centers to provide in-person services. On the other two days of the week, the staff members will work remotely. The Career Center will adjust the schedule based on business needs.

This program has been in place for four weeks now. Out of the seven positions that have been created, four have been hired. Two will be filled by September 22, and the third will be reposted since the candidate did not accept the position.

From August 4 to August 20, 276 transactions were performed, or about 69 transactions per employee for the week, and 21 transactions per employee per day. Out of the 276 transactions, 170 were requests for claim status, 11 initial claims filed, and 18 interactions to file appeal or scan documents to assist with the Identity Verification process.

Questions/Discussion

Question by Rich Marlin: The schedule will be changing every week? I would be hesitant to put anything out since by the time someone sees it, it will have changed. Last year people had to go to the Post Office to do their Identity Verification. Is that still in place?

Answer by John Saulnier: Yes, the ID proofing is still in place. I mentioned the 18 people we assisted at the Career Center in the Identity Verification Process. Two of them needed to go to the Post Office.

Question by Rich Marlin: We still have members who don't know how to use a computer. Can I have them go to their local Post Office to submit their documents?

Answer by John Saulnier: It depends on where they are at in the Identity Verification Process. If they have a letter instructing them to go to the Post Office, it is very explicit. In regard to the scheduling of staff at the Career Centers, we are giving the Career Centers an opportunity to weigh in on what days of the week are best. This was a soft opening. In the future there will be more grand opening events.

Katie Dishnica: I want to clarify that claimants can't just walk into the Post Office to do their Identity Verification. They have to receive a notice to do that. To ensure the order is clear, the claimant files their claim, they are told to go to the Post Office, and they have a letter from DUA to bring with them. Some claimants may complete an Identity Verification quiz and don't need to go to the Post Office.

Wendy Filosi: Claimants should only go to the Post Office if the system has generated a notification for them to go there.

Question by Rich Marlin: What if someone is told they need to upload documents and they are having trouble doing it?

Answer by Wendy Filosi: They do not go to the Post Office. If the claimant is being told to upload documents to DUA's system that is not through the Post Office.

Question by Rich Marlin: If those people are having technical difficulties they should go to the Career Center?

Answer by Wendy Filosi: Yes, as John Saulnier said, staff will be available at the Career Center to assist with that.

Katie Dishnica: Claimants have the Reemployment Center as well. I want to stress that the Program Integration Unit is not in place of the services that MassHire provides, but in addition to it. MassHire has staff that are trained to assist claimants, as well as a direct line to DUA, a phone queue as well as a problem resolution email where MassHire employees will be able to get support from DUA.

The next update is regarding service levels. DUA has a three-month pilot in effect as of August 1. The call center will be closed on Fridays so staff can focus on processing claims and completing administrative tasks. Claimants will still be able to use the online system or Telecert. There has been a 22% reduction in issues since the pilot began. DUA has received positive feedback from both staff and external stakeholders.

Please continue to provide feedback. It helps DUA make changes. For example, employers are protesting but are not seeing the reason. DUA needs the specific reason they are protesting. It would be helpful for employers to know what categories are missing. Laura Santiago, Director of Employer Revenue, is working on this.

Questions/Discussion

Chris Carlozzi: Weeks collected, benefit amount, or total liability being added might be helpful for that dropdown.

Katie Dishnica: There was an issue with employer protests being denied. This was corrected on August 6. If you notice anything after that date, please reach out to us.

UI Trust Fund Update

Lisa Hemmerle Director of Economic Research provided the UI Trust Fund Update. The following information relates to the reporting on the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund ("UI Trust Fund") for the quarter ending June 30th.

- Second quarter employer contributions through June 30 are estimated to be \$922M, and the 2025 year-end total estimated to be \$1.68B
- Second quarter benefit payments through June 30, 2025, DUA paid approximately \$522M with a 2025 year-end total estimated to be \$2.49B
- The balance of the UI Trust Fund on June 30 was \$2.24B on a cash basis

- The model projections are still at Schedule D for 2025, but Schedule E, F, G, and G for 2026-2029 respectively. The year-end balance is \$1.4B. The change from August to April is that we are now seeing a negative balance in 2027. It has changed from Quarter 1 in 2028 to Quarter 4 in 2027.

Questions/Discussion

Question by Chris Carlozzi: What triggered the change from Quarter 1 in 2028 to Quarter 4 in 2027? Was that due to the 30-week duration or is it a combination of many things?

Answer by Lisa Hemmerle: I don't think it was the 30-week duration. The biggest change was the difference in the total unemployment rate. When we ran the April report we used Moody's data from March 2025. The economy is very dynamic right now and the total unemployment rate went from 3.77% in 2025 to 4.65%. As the unemployment rate increases over the years, the benefit payments go up. Wages also continue to increase before they stabilize, which drives unemployment benefit payments up as well.

Question by Rich Marlin: Do we track the number of claimants who are receiving the maximum benefits? I wonder if we are seeing an increase in that given all we are hearing about Harvard and MIT losing their grants.

Answer by Lisa Hemmerle: We have seen that it has come down a little. Last year it was driving up the benefits a little. This year we have not seen that the percentage of people receiving the maximum benefits is not a driving factor right now.

Question by Sam Larson: Let's say we reach a negative balance at the Schedule projected. Does that create any operational problems for the Department? Does that change anything day to day? I know there will be borrowing and taxes associated with it. Does that have an impact on delivery of services?

Answer by Katie Dishnica: We're not prepared to speak to that today.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/unemployment-insurance-trust-fund-uitf>

Next meeting - September 25, 2025, 9:30AM due to scheduling conflicts. Please let Katie or Sara know if you are unable to attend.