



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

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GOVERNOR

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SECRETARY

KATIE DISHNICA
DIRECTOR

DUA ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, December 19, 2024
Meeting Minutes

Council Attendees: Richard Marlin, Sam Larson, Chris Carlozzi, Renee Harper
EOLWD/DWD/DUA/Public Attendees: Katie Dishnica, John Saulnier, Jeannie Pena, Jason Salgado, Rena Kottcamp, Emma Hornsby, Houda Amoakuh, Paul Fitzgerald, Mark Costello, Laura Santiago, Lisa Hemmerle, Josh Cutler, David Gold, Mavis Smith, Matthew Kitsos, Wendy Savary, Eric Hansson, Paolo Franzese

A virtual meeting was held via Zoom.

A motion was proposed to approve the November 2024 meeting minutes.

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

Executive Update

Katie Dishnica, Director of DUA, provided the Executive Update.

The first update is regarding identity verification. DUA has seen a recent spike in claims and fraud. As of 12/9, initial claims filed went up to 11,500. As of December 6, 2024, initial claim applications receiving a PASS (0%) or FAIL (100%) risk score based on FIVS analytics results will not require the claimant to go through a secondary verification or provide ID. Any initial claim application receiving an ID ISSUE (1%-99%) risk score based on the FIVS analytics will go through a secondary verification.

There are still many pending appeals of identity verification issues.

- Our average age is 19 days while USDOL performance measure is 30 days
- 30-day Time Lapse is 64.24 %, USDOL performance measure is 60%
- 45-day Time is 88.08%, USDOL performance measure is 80%

There are ongoing efforts to resolve these appeals. Before an appeal hearing is scheduled, a staff member reviews the ID issue for possible redetermination. If the issue can be redetermined, the claimant won't need to attend a hearing. Show cause letters are sent to individuals with incomplete or missing documentation to facilitate resolution prior to hearings.

DUA is also continuing to hold pop-up events where a large number of claimants can attend to have their identity verified. As of December 19, there are a total of 4,733 pending appeals, 3,404 to be scheduled and 1241 scheduled. That is a decrease from last week. Out of the 4,733 pending appeals, 2,635 are identity verification appeals. That is also a decrease from last week. 2,261 are pending triage or scheduling. There have been 568 new IDV appeals filed this week.

DUA has scheduled in-person identity verification hearings at each of the regional offices.

Boston Regional Hearings Office:

- Scheduled 122 in-person hearings for 12/12/2024.

Northeast Regional Hearings Office:

- All in-person hearings scheduled for 1/8/2025.
- Planned: 120 hearings.

Southeast Regional Hearings Office:

- All in-person hearings will be scheduled for 1/14/2025.
- Number of hearings to be determined.

West Central Regional Hearings Office:

- All in-person hearings will be scheduled for 1/22/2025.
- Number of hearings to be determined.

Boston Regional Hearings Office:

- All in-person hearings will be scheduled for 1/30/2025.
- Number of hearings to be determined.

The next update is regarding Employer Account protection. DUA is seeing an increase in attempts to gain access to employer accounts. A new policy was put in place earlier in December to ask the person attempting to gain access security questions.

In regard to staffing, the Task Integrity group has hired a supervisor, and they start December 30th. Offer letters for other staff will be sent out in the coming week. Interviews have been conducted for the accountant position and a recommendation has been made. The next step is background checks. An existing accountant with DUA has shifted into this role and the second accountant that is familiar with the UI Online system will be starting to help with program level work. The accountants will report to Laura Santiago, Director of Revenue at DUA. Interviews for the Deputy Director of Revenue started December 19th. In-person positions at MassHire locations have been posted. If you know of anyone in your network, please have them apply on masscareers.com. DUA will have a representative at each workforce location at least one day a week.

Question by Sam Larson: Do you have any materials we could provide to our members on how to look out for and prevent fraud, as well as how to comply with the new systems that were put in place?

Answer by Laura Santiago: We can put something in writing and send it over. When it comes to employer fraud, there are calls coming in where people are trying to register a new employer account. The new thing is that fraudsters attempting to commit UI fraud are going online and researching companies and trying to gain access to legitimate, existing employer accounts. When employers call DUA, we will be asking more specific questions before they can get help with the account. Many of the calls that come in are to get help logging in to the account, resetting their single sign on or getting their Employer Account Number. Due to these recent attempts DUA will be asking for stringent caller verification questions. In January, DUA will be adding more security and mailing out a secret code to employers who submit user designation forms to add users to their account.

Katie Dishnica: Laura if you wouldn't mind writing this up, we can also add this as a topic to present at our next Advisory Council meeting.

The next update is regarding customer experience work within DUA. A new process has been put in place at the Reemployment Center. The REC center is by appointment only. DUA has started to review claims that already have an appointment scheduled to see if we can resolve the claimant's issue without needing to appear in person. This has been going well and will be continued in the new year. DUA will survey claimants to obtain feedback on the process. DUA has also started to reach out to repeat callers. There are a number of claimants who may call thirty or more times in one day. DUA has started to reach out to these callers to assist them with their issue and relieve the bandwidth of the call center queue. DUA has identified 80 to 200 claimants per day that need a phone call.

During the first week the process was implemented:

- Staff members reached out to 143 claimants
- 72 claimants or 50% were successfully assisted over the phone.
- 34% of claimants could not be reached.
- For 16% of claimants, staff reviewed their claims and provided specific guidance on the documents they need to bring to their appointment to verify their identity.

This initial success demonstrates the potential of this process to improve service delivery and reduce wait times at the reemployment center.

Questions

Question by Chris Carlozzi: Could you have someone give me a call? I had a member with an issue.

Answer by Katie Dishnica: I may give you a call to find out what it is and direct the issue to the appropriate department.

UI Trust Fund Update

Lisa Hemmerle, Director of the Department of Economic Research, provided an update on the UI Trust Fund for November.

- As of November 30, the preliminary UI trust fund ending balance was \$2.3B
- YTD through November 30 preliminary contributions totaled \$1.12B
- YTD DUA paid \$1.92 B benefits for 733,533 initial and continuing claims
- <https://mass.gov/uitrustfund>

Questions/Discussion

Question by Chris Carlozzi: Any projections yet on what the rate schedule will be? We were looking at the last projected report of one schedule increase. Is that still on track or has it not yet been determined?

Answer by Lisa Hemmerle: That has been determined, and it is in line with the October annual report to go to DUA.

Katie Dishnica: We hope to get the rate notices out soon. Laura Santiago and team are currently testing it in the new system. As soon as it passes testing, those notices will go out.

Question by Sam Larson: Could you also just shoot me an email when they do go out?

Answer by Katie Dishnica: Yes, we can do that.

Question by Chris Carlozzi: I have a question regarding the audit from the Federal Government on the \$2.5B. Was that appealed at all what was found?

Answer by Katie Dishnica: I don't think I am in the position to answer that on this call, but I will find out what I am able to share.

Katie Dishnica: I wanted to see if any of the council member would be able to do one to two in person meetings per year? We can send out a survey to find what months' work best.

Next meeting Thursday January 16, 2025, at 9:30am. Please let Katie or Sara know if you are unable to attend.