



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

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DIRECTOR

DUA ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, January 16, 2025
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, Linda Jones, Wendy Filosi, Stephanie Herron Rice, Cory Mescon

A virtual meeting was held via Zoom.

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

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

Executive Update

Katie Dishnica, Director of DUA, gave a recap of DUA's accomplishments in 2024. DUA migrated to a new call center platform that increased our language capacity, allowed more messaging and call back functionality, and is available to all queues within DUA. A new process was implemented in the Reemployment Center to triage claimant appointments in advance, allowing them to resolve their issues without the need to come to an in-person appointment. This practice will continue in the new year. DUA also started the practice of identifying and reaching out to frequent callers to assist them with their issue and free up the call center queue for other claimants trying to contact us. Throughout 2024, there was a lot of targeted assistance such as with Steward Hospital and pop-up events at the REC center. In regard to fraud, an expanded, self-service, online fraud reporting form was implemented to allow claimants to inform DUA of a fraud claim, request a corrected 1099G, or report unauthorized changes to their information. DUA is continuing to work on creative ways to expand claimant self-service. Another initiative was the identity verification issue backlog reduction plan. This was put in place after DUA launched login.gov, and we were able to reduce the backlog by 89%. Currently there is no backlog on the adjudication level for identity verification issues. In March of 2024, DUA started DOL's national offering of login.gov/USPS allowing claimants to verify their identity through login.gov or at retail US Post Offices. A Program Integrity call center dedicated to fraud was developed and twenty-three employees were shifted over to staff the call center. DUA expanded the Integrity Data Hub agreement, allowing us to create a new department focused

on employer fraud and fictitious employer accounts. A solution for NDNH, or National Directory of New Hires, was developed to investigate eligibility fraud. Identity theft as well as eligibility fraud, where there are issues with claimants working, not reporting earnings, and collecting benefits has also been a focus as a result of this expanded agreement. A new payment lock system was put in place as a result of claims being hacked through phishing and payment methods being changed by a fraudster. After the payment lock system was put in place, claims were still hacked, however fraudsters were no longer able to divert payment to a fraud account. In 2024, over 600,000 Social Security numbers were removed from fraudulent claims to allow constituents to file a valid claim in the future if there is ever an economic downturn. In the hearings department, a new Review Examiner handbook was created for training purposes. There has been triage work on identity verification issues such as show cause letters, to dispose of hearings and allow the Review Examiner to hear appeals that are not related to fraud. The Revenue department was reorganized to allow employees to focus on accounting work that couldn't be done previously. Financial tasks are done by LWD, but DUA shifted resources to ensure reports and accounting are looked at by our staff as well. Our team was asked to develop an online training system for a tax performance system with USDOL and NASWA.

One goal for DUA in 2025 is to have a successful go live of EMT in May. On-site testing is currently being done, and we are working closely with the EMT project team. EMT has been invited to give a presentation at a future DUA Advisory Council Meeting. Another focus is customer service and developing creative ways to assist claimants and provide better service levels. DUA will continue to work on accounting and reporting that historically was done outside of the agency. As of the week of 1/19 DUA will be removing login.gov. To verify their identity, claimants will need to go in person to a retail US Post Office location. DUA is relying on data analytics to clear more people. DUA is confident in our fraud scoring to verify claimants. If the result is Pass, no verification is needed, if questionable, the claimant must go to a retail US Post Office location to verify their identity. DUA has been working with USDOL, and we hope to be able to report something soon.

Question by Rich Marlin: Will people be notified if there is an issue with their identity?

Answer by Katie Dishnica: Yes. It will be the same process but login.gov will not be an option. Only USPS will be offered.

Answer by Wendy Filosi: If within seventy-two hours the claimant is determined that they must go to secondary verification, a notice will be sent to the claim inbox in UI Online. The notice will remain in their claim inbox and contains the link and instructions on what they need to do to initiate their USPS verification. A link will also be displayed on the claim home page in UI Online. The claimant can click on this link to initiate the USPS verification process or DUA staff can assist them with this over the phone. A barcode will be emailed to them. The claimant must then bring the barcode to a retail USPS location to complete the in-person verification.

Katie Dishnica: I've asked Wendy Filosi, Director of Program Integrity to present at next month's DUA Advisory Council Meeting. We will have a month of data from the updated identity verification process to share.

Presentation by Laura Santiago, Director of Revenue

Since November, DUA has been working toward implementing the new Employer Fraud unit or Tax Integrity. Jobs were posted in November. A supervisor started December 23rd, 2024, and one Compliance Officer II has been onboarded. In the next few weeks DUA is hoping to onboard another three staff members. DUA's current practices regarding employer fraud have been reviewed to determine if improvements to policies or enhancements to EMT were needed as they pertain to employer accounts.

On December 16, 2024, DUA updated the caller verification policy for employers. Employers who call the employer customer service line are required to correctly answer two customer verification questions. The questions are based on the activity posted to the account. The questions can vary. The questions used for verification are at the discretion of the department manager, since the data their staff can access varies. If the caller cannot correctly answer the verification questions, DUA staff are prohibited from discussing the account. This policy applies to all callers including Third Party Administrator Representatives. The feedback from callers was great. They understand that this is an effort by DUA to safeguard employer accounts.

The next update is regarding enhancements to user designation forms or UDFs. Customers submit UDF's to gain access to their employer or Third-Party Administrator account. Every month DUA receives a high volume of UDFs to review and approve. Since EMT go-live, staff have reviewed over 64,000 UDFs. At the end of January, a new process will be implemented that requires the entry of a code that will be mailed to the customer's legal and mailing address. Emails and web notices will be sent to all existing users notifying them of someone requesting access to the account. If the new user is not recognized by the existing users, the existing users are instructed to notify the Tax Integrity Unit immediately. To avoid delays, customers can and should self-service through their system administrator. This process is expected to be deployed at the end of January 2025.

UI Trust Fund Update

Lisa Hemmerle, Director of the Department of Economic Research, provided an update on the UI Trust Fund. The quarterly report is under review. There were no substantial changes to the long-term trends that were reported in the October report. The report will be distributed when it goes live. Note: The report was distributed January 17, 2025, to Advisory Council Members.

- <https://mass.gov/uitrustfund>

Questions/Discussion

Katie Dishnica: After 23 years of service, Mavis Smith, Director of Constituent Services, is retiring. If you have any issues reach out to me or Ashley Thompson.

Next meeting Thursday, February 20, 2025, at 9:30am. Please let Katie or Sara know if you are unable to attend.