



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

MAURA HEALEY
GOVERNOR

KIM DRISCOLL
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

LAUREN E. JONES
SECRETARY

KATIE DISHNICA
DIRECTOR

DUA ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, May 16, 2024

Meeting Minutes

Council Attendees: Richard Marlin, John Drinkwater, Christopher Carlozzi, Sam Larson
EOLWD/DWD/DUA/Public Attendees: Katie Dishnica, David Gold, John Saulnier, Jeannie Pena, Mavis Smith, Jason Salgado, Rena Kottcamp, Emma Hornsby, Wendy Filosi, Houda Amoakuh, Paul Fitzgerald, Mark Costello, Laura Santiago, Lisa Hemmerle, Josh Cutler

A virtual meeting was held via Zoom.

A motion was proposed to approve the April 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 the migration of the Call Center platform to Five9. The organization Five9 is an industry leader and is used by many other agencies. DUA has successfully migrated the Program Integrity Department as well as Revenue during Phase I of the migration. The new platform is going well, and reporting is outstanding. DUA can now track the various reasons why claimants are calling. Previously this could only be tracked by surveying staff members. Phase II is scheduled for May 23rd. The Adjudication and Special Programs Departments will be migrated to the platform during this phase. DUA is migrating only a few specific departments at a time to ensure the migration goes smoothly and there are no disruptions in service. Phase III is when the rest of the agency will be migrated, including the main call center at (617) 626-6800. This will be on June 11th. The new platform will allow agents to offer better service to claimants and will be fully in place by the end of this fiscal year. Once DUA is fully migrated, Katie will be able to share any data and reports received.

The second update is regarding teachers' unions. DUA has been made aware through news articles and various sources of information about possible cuts in staffing within school systems. To stay ahead of any layoffs and be proactive, DUA is meeting with the teachers' unions and other unions to see how we can be of assistance.

The third update is regarding recession readiness and fraud claims. Around last October through December, there was an increase of claimants who needed to file a new claim but were unable to since their Social Security Number was tied to a fraud claim. DUA is working to remove claimants' Social Security Numbers from previously determined fraud claims. This allows the claimant to have a seamless process and not get caught up in the process of working with the Program Integrity Department first. On May 7th, 110,000 Social Security Numbers were removed from fraud claims so that they are free for the

legitimate claimant to file a new claim. DUA is continuing to review this population. One of the issues is if the claimant's information is still out there and the Social Security Number has been removed from the claim, the fraudster still may be able to try to file another claim. This is an ongoing process since fraud claims continue to be filed. DUA has seen an increase in hacked claims and phishing websites. One of the measures DUA has taken is to lock the payment method. Locking the payment method was tested last month and will be effective May 19th. The claimant will see a message that they have five hours after they have filed their claim to update their payment method. After five hours has passed, the payment method will be locked. The claimant will need to contact DUA to make any changes. Reporting from Five9 shows that the two top call drivers in the Program Integrity Department are that the claimant's contact information has been changed or concerns that their account may have been changed. Locking the payment method will resolve these concerns.

The fourth update is regarding the Q1 filing. This is the first Q1 filing since the new EMT system has been in place. DUA had over ninety one percent of wage reports entered by employers by the due date. Enforcement is turned on so any employer that hasn't filed their reports will receive messages from DUA reminding them to complete their reports. Katie explained that there has been an update regarding the issue of an employer not having an ITIN for an employee. Previously if an employer did not have a Social Security Number for an employee, they would not be able to file any wage reports. A fix for this was implemented prior to the close of the filing period. The system will now assign a temporary Social Security Number and DUA will remind the employer to enter the Social Security number when they receive it. Three hundred employers were able to use this new method and report \$3.4 million in gross wages. If the employer does not have the correct Social Security number before the next filing, they may be at risk of being taxed twice. DUA will continue to message the employer to advise them to update the Social Security number. A banner will also be placed in the EMT system on the employer page to remind them.

Question by Sam Larson: Could you send that to me so I could send it out to our members?

Question/Answer by Katie Dishnica: Do you want something now or at the time it is implemented?

Answer by Sam Larson: At the time would be great so I could let our members know.

Answer by Katie Dishnica: Ok great. We will do that.

The last update is regarding the DUA Advisory Council meetings. The council previously discussed the structure of the meetings and any suggestions for topics to be discussed. Katie Dishnica advised the council to let her know if there is any information or data, they would like her to provide in her executive update. Katie also proposed the idea of a council member giving a presentation. If you would like to volunteer, please let her know. Otherwise, she may be calling members to see if they have something to discuss with the group.

UI Trust Fund Update

Lisa Hemmerle, Director of the Department of Economic Research, provided an update on the UI Trust Fund for the month of April 2024.

- The ending trust fund balance was \$2.28B. The YTD preliminary employer contributions through the end of April 2024 were \$775.47M.
- YTD through April benefit payments were \$865.14 M for Regular UI for 337,000 initial and continuing claims.

Discussion/Questions

Question by Chris Carlozzi: I was looking at the numbers the other day and I was wondering – looking at April of this year and April 2023, there were fewer claimants, but I think \$30M higher in benefit payments.

Answer by Lisa Hemmerle: That's a really good question. Thank you. It is a combination of factors. Higher total wages, higher average weekly wage, and higher weekly benefit amount due to claimants who had a higher salary. DUA is also seeing more claimants who are on UI for longer periods of time and exhausting all benefits on the claim.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday June 18th at 9:30am due to conflicts. Please let Katie or Sara know if you are unable to attend.

Meeting adjourned.