



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**

Wednesday November 15, 2023

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, Sara Bahrehmand, Victoria Ireton, Rena Kottcamp, Emma Hornsby, Wendy Filosi, Houda Amoakuh, Paul Fitzgerald, Mark Costello, Lisa Hemmerle

A virtual meeting was held via Zoom.

Motion was proposed to approve the October 2023 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 staffing. John Cronin, who previously took over the role of Deputy Chief Counsel is still settling into that role. Heidi Hennen will be taking over the role of Call Center Director for the Brockton office. Luz Cepeda will be spending some time with Heidi to get her up to speed.

The second update is regarding grants. Wendy Filosi explained how the project plan will be split up. One of the areas the money will be used for is staffing. The grant money will be put toward staffing through the end of performance period through December of 2025. The staff will be tasked with looking at fictitious employers, fraud related to banks, reviewing daily records, and a data analyst will be hired. The data analyst will supervise staff and work with DUA to look at trends and conduct an analysis.

The second element of the plan relates to login.gov/USPS. DUA has been in talks with them to integrate the program into EMT and the initial claims process with UI Online. This program will provide equity and access for those that don't have reliable internet access or access to a computer. They will be able to appear in person at a local participating U.S. post office branch.

The final element of the plan will be to integrate current analytics FIVS and IDH (Integrity Data Hub) to DUA's current system and better process records that are being returned due to potential fraud.

The third update is regarding hacked claims. Katie Dishnica explained that hacked claims continue to be an issue. Some claimants are using the incorrect web address to file a new claim. DUA is working on informing claimants of the correct website to use and other messaging to prevent fraud.

The fourth update is regarding tax intercept notices. Tax intercept notices have been sent out. Claimants can request a review of the overpayment if they disagree. All notices have been sent and should have been received by claimants.

The fifth update is regarding EMT. EMT is in the stabilization period for Phase I, or the revenue side. Tasks that were previously being worked on by program managers are now being handed over to the revenue department. A lot of the current work is day-to-day operations and can be handled by the revenue department. The kickoff for Phase 2 of EMT, or the benefits side, will be in early December.

The sixth update is regarding contingency planning. A contingency planning tabletop exercise was conducted by Houda Amoakuh and DUA has met the requirements. It involves going through the chain of command starting with the director, and if the director is not able to be contacted, contacting the next person within the chain of command, and so on. The plan is very long and includes managing a fake emergency. DUA is scored on how well we identify, respond, and recover from it.

The seventh update is regarding ID proofing with USDOL. DUA has been meeting with the vendors weekly to ensure this program can be implemented correctly. DUA is working on implementing this program within the next month or two.

The eighth update is regarding the new redetermination regulations. David Gold, Chief Counsel, explained that in February the advisory council previously approved new regulations regarding the redetermination of claims. DUA then engaged in a rule making process which is now concluded, a public hearing was held, and public comments received. As a result of those comments minor changes have been made. If the Advisory Council approves those changes today, then the next stage would be to have the Secretary of State's office publish those regulations in the Massachusetts register sometime in December.

Katie Dishnica asked if there were any questions and if the council would like to propose a motion to approve.

- Rich Marlin made a motion to approve.
- John Drinkwater seconded the motion.
- All council members voted yes to approve the motion.

The final update is regarding past due notices sent to employers. DUA has received an influx of calls from employers who were concerned about being assessed non-filer penalties for extremely old debt. DUA has proactively backed out any penalties that were newly posted against employer accounts prior to Quarter 3 in 2019. Employers are only required to keep records for four years. DUA can't assess them a penalty or tell them to file for those periods. DUA also identified accounts that were created in error, and they have been corrected. There are a small number of employer accounts that have the incorrect suspension date, and those will need to be handled on a case-by-case basis. The employers that have an incorrect suspension date will need to reach out to employer customer service to update that information.

#### **UI trust fund**

Lisa Hemmerle, Director of the Department of Economic Research, provided an update on the UI trust fund. This is for information through the end of October.

- The preliminary balance of the trust fund is \$3.1 billion.
- YTD Preliminary employer contributions through October \$825.89 million
- YTD Benefit payments \$1.75 billion for Regular UI for 710,939 initial and continuing claims

[mass.gov/uitrustfund](http://mass.gov/uitrustfund)

#### **Discussion/ Questions:**

##### **Questions**

**Question by Rich Marlin:** Are there any updates regarding filling up the board seats?

**Answer by Katie Dishnica:** I followed up after our last meeting as well as this morning. We are close to filling one of the seats. I will have an update at the next meeting. We are continuing to work on this.

Next meeting is December 21, 2023, at 9:30AM. Please let Sara or Katie know if you are unable to attend the meeting.

Meeting adjourned