



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

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DUA ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, November 21, 2024
Meeting Minutes

Council Attendees: Richard Marlin, John Drinkwater, 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, Beth Goguen, Wendy Savary, Eric Hansson

A virtual meeting was held via Zoom.

A motion was proposed to approve the October 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 and pop-ups DUA has been hosting. An Identity Verification pop-up was held on November 19th. Over one hundred claimants attended to resolve their identity verification issue. DUA will hold another pop-up event on December 4th. Over two hundred people have been invited to attend and can have their identities verified at that time instead of needing to participate in a hearing.

Questions

Question by John Drinkwater: Do you have any more details on the December 4 pop-up?

Answer by Katie Dishnica: The event is for claimants who have pending hearings. A notice will be sent to them in UI Online to invite them to the event. It is not a walk-in event. The last event was in Brockton and this one is in Boston. DUA will try to hold an event in each office that is available.

DUA is continuing to work with login.gov on adjudication level identity verification issues to make changes and improve the user experience. Weekly meetings are held with USDOL and login.gov to provide feedback from constituents. Some changes have been made, and we are seeing improvements.

The second update is regarding locking the payment method on all new claims. In the last meeting we discussed locking the payment method on all claims immediately after it is filed. This was approved. Previously, claimants had five hours after the claim was filed to change their payment method. DUA still noticed payment methods being changed by fraudsters. Claimants must now have their banking information available at the time of filing otherwise they must call DUA to update it.

The third update is in regard to Revenue. DUA is testing 2025 private rates and expects to issue them before the end of year. Governmental rates have gone into production and will publish overnight if they pass validation.

The Revenue Unit is in the process of interviewing candidates. Interviews for the Fraud Unit have been completed. The next step is to check references and write justifications for those candidates. The Fraud Unit will handle fictitious employer accounts. DUA has a panel ready for the Accountant V position and interviews will be held the first week in December. Human Resources has sent resumes for the Deputy Director of Revenue, and they are under review. DUA hopes to have recommendations in by the end of the year and positions filled by early 2025. DUA has open positions in the Program Integrity Unit and others that will be posted. If you know of anyone interested in working at DUA, you can direct them to check out the Mass Careers website.

The fourth update is regarding EMT. Development and testing are going according to plan. A supervisor and manager spotlight session were held to provide progress updates on EMT. DUA will host specialized training sessions for adjusters who work on non-monetary issues. OCM work continues to prepare everyone for the new system.

RESEA presentation

Beth Goguen and John Saulnier were invited to give a presentation on RESEA to the council.

John Saulnier introduced himself to council members. Mr. Saulnier is the Director of Benefit Performance at DUA. He acts as a gateway between Unemployment Insurance and the MassHire Department of Career Services.

Beth Goguen introduced herself to council members. Ms. Goguen is the Director of Central Programs at the MassHire Department of Career Services. One of the programs she oversees is RESEA in partnership with DUA.

John Saulnier gave a presentation on RESEA. RESEA stands for Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Program. It is a partnership between Massachusetts Department of Career Services and DUA. The RESEA program analyzes employment data of claimants who are most likely to exhaust all of their unemployment benefits. This includes UCX claimants, or claimants that are new, ex-service members. RESEA is a national program funded by USDOL though each state manages their own program.

Two Priorities of the RESEA Program are to provide individual re-employment services to each job seeker and determine continued eligibility for UI payments to detect and prevent improper UI payments. All eligible UI claimants are job seekers and must be able, available and actively seeking work.

After receiving their first benefit payment, selected claimants are sent a RESEA enrollment letter. Only two thousand claimants are selected per week. The selected claimants must attend a Career

Center Seminar and complete an initial RESEA by week three after enrollment. The seminar may be rescheduled up to week four with good cause if requested prior to must attend by date (in week 3). At the MassHire Career Center Seminar, an orientation of MassHire Career Center Services is provided to claimants. Claimants also complete an Individual Needs Assessment (INA), begin to develop a Career Action Plan (CAP), are introduced LMI and LMI tools, and Register on MassHire JobQuest. The claimant signs-off to Acknowledge Section 30 and Trade Requirements and completes the RESEA UI Eligibility Assessment Questionnaire.

RESEA is funded via the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). Historically, funding was based on a per participant basis. Recently, USDOL has been working state RESEA programs to introduce a funding stream which includes evidence-based criteria. Evidence based criteria needs to show the services inside the RESEA program have a moderate to high casual impact on a person's reemployment. ABT Associates was contracted to evaluate our RESEA program so we can demonstrate the evidenced based results of the program.

The presentation will be discussed again at next month's meeting to give council members the opportunity to review the power point presentation and ask any questions.

UI Trust Fund Update

Lisa Hemmerle, Director of the Department of Economic Research, provided an update on the UI Trust Fund for November related to information through October 31, 2024.

- As of October 31, 2024, the preliminary Massachusetts UI Trust fund ending balance was \$2.34B
- YTD through October 31st preliminary employer contributions totaled \$1.12B
- YTD through October 31st DUA paid \$1.78B in benefits for Regular UI for 681,122 initial and continuing claims

<https://mass.gov/uitrustfund>

Questions

Question by Chris Carlozzi: I noticed the number of claimants went down from month to month, but the benefit paid went up. Is there an explanation for that?

Answer by Lisa Hemmerle: It might be the mix of claimants that are being paid at this time. There may be more claimant from professional services that are being paid the maximum benefit amount. We can look into it more and report back on it next month.

Chris Carlozzi: Thank you that would be helpful.

Question by Chris Carlozzi: Any updates on \$2.5 billion in Federal Money? I noticed the Boston Globe did a story on it, and they contacted me about it. Are there any updates or information that can be shared?

Answer by Katie Dishnica: I don't have any information that I can share at this time.

The next meeting will be scheduled for Thursday December 19, 2024. Please let Katie or Sara know if you are unable to attend. Meeting adjourned.