

Mass Workforce Issuance

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☐ Policy

☒ Information

To: Chief Elected Officials
Workforce Development Board Chairs
Workforce Development Board Directors
Title I Administrators
Career Center Directors
Title I Fiscal Officers
DCS Operations Managers

cc: WIOA State Partners

From: Alice Sweeney, Director
Department of Career Services

Date: October 6, 2017

Subjects: **U.S. Virgin Islands UI Claims Assistance**
Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico Disaster Unemployment Benefits - REVISED

Purpose: To notify One-Stop Career Centers Operators, Local Workforce Development Boards, and other local workforce partners of UI claims assistance available from the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) for individuals who left the U.S. Virgin Islands and who may be temporarily or permanently residing in Massachusetts, as well as information on requests for Disaster Unemployment Benefits from claimants in other areas affected by Hurricanes/Tropical Storms.

Background: **The U.S. Virgin Islands – Dedicated Phone and Internet for UI Claims**

The U.S. Virgin Islands has endured hurricanes Irma and Maria in recent weeks. As a result of these storms, the territory currently lacks both telecommunications and internet services which prevents individuals who are now in the continental United States from filing claims directly with the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Employment and Training (ETA) – Office of Unemployment Insurance is seeking assistance nationally for individuals in need of filing unemployment insurance claims with the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) has set up a special unit and toll-free phone line within the UI Policy and Performance Department to help individuals who left the U.S. Virgin Islands and who may be temporarily or permanently residing in Massachusetts who want to file a claim for UI or Disaster Unemployment Assistance.

UI Call Center and Career Center staff who receive inquiries about UI eligibility from individuals who lived and worked in the U.S. Virgin Islands and have been displaced because of the recent storms should be directed to the UI Policy and Performance Department for assistance in filing their claims.

DUA's dedicated toll-free phone line for these claims is 877-355-1135.

Individuals with internet access should be referred to the U.S Virgin Islands unemployment insurance benefit rights information located at: <http://vidol.gov/bri.php> or http://www.vidol.gov/Units/Unemployment_Insurance/UI_Benefits.htm.

Filing for Disaster Unemployment Benefits – Texas, Florida, US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico

Disaster Unemployment Benefits are available to individuals who have become unemployed as a result of a Presidential disaster declaration and are **ineligible for regular state unemployment insurance (UI)**.

Staff should advise individuals from the areas of Texas, Florida, US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico inquiring about Disaster Unemployment Benefits that they must file for the benefits in their home state.

Attachment A: claims filing information for **Disaster UI benefits** for Texas, Florida, US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

Attachment B: Disaster Unemployment Assistance Fact Sheet.

For Puerto Rico - Effective October 2, 2017

For the next few days, when calls are received from claimants inquiring about filing a claim against Puerto Rico, please advise them that due to lack of electricity, the web site for the Puerto Rico Department of Labor is not operational and no claims are being taken at the present time.

Individuals should be advised to continue to monitor the Puerto Rico web site at <http://www.trabajo.pr.gov> and when it becomes operational, they will be able to file a claim through the internet. Filing a claim through the Internet will be faster than other methods so it is advisable to wait to file online. In the event Puerto Rico's system for taking claims is not available in the near future, USDOL will issue additional instructions.

Action

Requested: Please ensure that all staff and partners are aware of this information.

Effective: Immediately

Attachment: A. UI Claims Filing Information for Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico
B. FEMA Fact Sheet: Disaster Unemployment Assistance