Ohio | Department of Job and Family Services

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News Release

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ODJFS to Offer Free Credit Monitoring to Victims of Unemployment-Related ID Theft

COLUMBUS, OHIO – Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Director Matt Damschroder today announced that individuals who contacted the department to report that they had been victims of unemployment-related identify theft would be provided with one year of free credit monitoring.

"The unprecedented amount of claims filed and benefits distributed as a result of the pandemic unfortunately resulted in equally unprecedented fraud across the nation," said Damschroder. "While we have no evidence any ODJFS system was breached, we are in a unique position to help those who were victimized by providing them with credit-monitoring tools."

A common scheme across the country was for criminals to use personal information obtained through large-scale data breaches, often dating back years, to file claims using unsuspecting victims' personal information such as name, address, and Social Security number.

Under today's announcement, ODJFS is notifying approximately 410,000 individuals who reported being the victim of such identity theft that they will be eligible for one year of credit monitoring at no charge. Those who believe they were victims, but have not yet reported it, can do so at unemployment.ohio.gov or by calling (833) 658-0394. The services include identity theft monitoring, restoration, and insurance.

ODJFS is utilizing an existing state contract with IDX, a nationally recognized provider of credit monitoring services. The cost is estimated to be between $588,000 and $748,000, with the final amount depending on how many individuals enroll. The cost includes various elements of starting up and maintaining the service, including notifying individuals of their eligibility, maintaining an enrollment website, and providing contact center support.

Since the start of the pandemic, ODJFS has paid approximately $24 billion in claims to 2.4 million claimants. These include those eligible for traditional employment, as well as individuals such as gig-workers, who were eligible for the federal government's Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program. To date, ODJFS has identified $496 million in fraudulent overpayments.

With the help of a public-private sector partnership established by Governor Mike DeWine, ODJFS has put a number of enhancements in place related to security and fraud detection, including:

- A robust suite of cybersecurity fraud prevention solutions across programs, including industry leading solutions from LexisNexis, Experian, and F5 Shape.

- New investigative tools to detect fraud, such as a fraud dashboard developed in conjunction with the Innovate Ohio Platform (IOP), and crossmatches with the National Association of State Workforce Agencies' Identity Verification Tool and Integrity Data Hub.

- Utilizing new verification and fraud-scoring methods from IOP and Google to provide critical data on many aspects related to verifying information provided by claimants.

- Implementing a rigorous process of cyber fraud defense reviews, investigatory protocols, and front-end defenses, and deploying multi-factor authentication that includes one-time passwords, challenge questions, reCAPTCHA images, and document scanning.

- Continued development of a new unemployment system that will enhance claims processing and better support businesses.

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The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services manages vital programs that strengthen Ohio families. These include job training and employment services, unemployment insurance, cash and food assistance, child care, child and adult protective services, adoption, and child support services.