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ODJFS Details Recent Improvements in the Unemployment Program

COLUMBUS, OHIO – Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director Matt Damschroder and former U.S. Attorney David DeVillers, the agency’s Cyber Fraud Law Enforcement Working Group Lead, provided updates today on continuous improvements in the unemployment program.

In January, ODJFS enlisted the help of a Public-Private Partnership team, which is made up of insurance, banking, and other industry experts, to help improve the unemployment call center, claims processing, and fraud detection efforts. Significant improvements have been made in each of those areas. ODJFS has hired and trained more call center employees. The average call wait time is less than 10 minutes now. Significant and aggressive anti-fraud measures have greatly reduced the number of fraudulent applications. And more than 880 employees are now processing claims, the highest number since the pandemic started.

“Ohio has been extremely proactive in our efforts to stop the widescale unemployment fraud that has been experienced nationwide during this global pandemic,” Damschroder said. “We were one of the first states to proactively enlist the help of both public- and private-sector experts, and we continue to work aggressively each and every day to ensure that Ohioans in need receive the benefits and the job-search support they deserve and need.”

Former U.S. Attorney David DeVillers is the agency’s law enforcement subject matter expert and the ODJFS liaison with the law enforcement community. He leads the Cyber Fraud Law Enforcement Working Group, which is working every day to recover funds and hold scammers accountable under the law.

“Unemployment benefits are intended for the Ohioans who truly need them and qualify for them. During the pandemic, scammers went after those benefits. And now we are going after them,” DeVillers said. “The Cyber Fraud Law Enforcement Working Group that I’m leading with ODJFS and the Public-Private Partnership Team is unique. In fact, I don’t know of any other state that has such a public-private partnership to push aggressively on the law enforcement side.”





**Department of
Job and Family Services**

Mike DeWine, Governor
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor
Matt Damschroder, Director

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The Cyber Fraud Law Enforcement Working Group began work in March. Since then, the team has established partnerships with seven federal agencies and more than 50 financial institutions to recover fraudulent funds. The group is conducting data analysis to identify groups of claims that share suspicious commonalities and created a protocol to share data and information quickly, efficiently, and securely so that the federal partners can investigate.

Director Damschroder also provided updates on the department's efforts to address non-fraud overpayments, as well as efforts to assist Ohioans defrauded by criminals taking control of claimants' accounts. Federal changes in unemployment rules, criteria, and claims volume resulted in widespread overpayments of benefits across the nation. Damschroder noted that Ohio is finalizing a process that will allow legitimate claimants with non-fraud overpayments due to no fault of their own to request a waiver. If a waiver is approved, claimants will not have to pay back funds previously labelled as an overpayment and could receive benefits that were previously withheld due to an overpayment status. Director Damschroder noted that customers will soon be notified about how to apply for a waiver. Processing of waivers could begin later this summer.



**Cyber Fraud Law Enforcement Working Group
Federal Partners**



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**Cyber Fraud Law Enforcement Working Group
Data-Driven Fraud Indicators**

- Multiple claims filed from:
 - One mailing address
 - One IP address
 - One email address
 - One telephone number
 - One bank account

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ODJFS continues to assist claimants who indicate that their bank account information was changed by someone else. Referred to as “account takeovers,” this type of crime is typically the result of phishing schemes, having personal information compromised by using public Wi-Fi, or using the same password for multiple sites.

Anyone whose weekly unemployment benefits appear in their accounts as being paid, but who have not received these funds, should take two actions:

1. Call ODJFS at 1-877-644-6562 (1-877-OHIO-JOB) to change their PIN number and re-verify their identity so that they will receive future payments, and
2. Notify the FBI by making a report at [IC3.gov](https://ic3.gov). This will help the Bureau investigators triage these phishing schemes to the appropriate federal, state or local law enforcement officials.

Recording of ODJFS Press Conference, July 8, 2021: https://youtu.be/kTAW_bcuMYI

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