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Unemployment Updates: Pandemic unemployment programs end Sept. 4, fraud and overpayment waiver efforts continue

COLUMBUS, OHIO – Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director Matt Damschroder today provided updates on several topics related to Ohio’s unemployment program.

Pandemic unemployment benefit programs end Sept. 4

Federal stimulus legislation that created Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) benefits expires across the nation in early September. These programs end in Ohio on Sept. 4, although pending benefit applications and appeals for weeks on or before Sept. 4 will continue to be processed and considered after the expiration of the programs. In addition, new PUA and PEUC applications will continue to be accepted through Saturday, Oct. 2, but only for weeks of unemployment prior to Sept. 4. Individuals in this situation will have to call for staff assistance.

Created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, PUA supports self-employed individuals, independent contractors, and others who don’t qualify for traditional unemployment benefits. Likewise, PEUC provides additional weeks of traditional unemployment benefits for those who remain unemployed after exhausting their benefits.

As of July 31, more than 85,000 Ohioans were receiving PEUC, and more than 200,000 were receiving PUA. ODJFS is informing those still receiving benefits of other resources available to them, such as OhioMeansJobs.com and food, medical, and employment assistance available through county departments of job and family services and local OhioMeansJobs centers.

Ohioans with overpayments may apply for waivers

Since July, ODJFS notified approximately 700,000 Ohioans with non-fraud overpayments that they may be eligible for a waiver if the overpayment was not their fault. More than 73,000 traditional unemployment claimants and 630,000 PUA claimants received emails and/or letters through U.S. mail. To date, approximately 18% of those contacted have completed applications for waivers. Review of these applications will begin soon, once system programming is complete.



“This application process will ensure that individuals whose overpayments were not their fault will not be required to pay for mistakes they didn’t make,” Director Damschroder said. “I encourage everyone who received a notice to follow the instructions for completing a waiver request.”

Account takeover repayment process being finalized

Account takeover victims will soon be able to request replacement payments through a formal application process. Account takeovers occur when criminals gain access to an account and change the banking information to divert unemployment payments to themselves.

“The number one thing people can do to protect themselves from becoming victims is to practice good cybersecurity,” Director Damschroder said. “Carefully inspect links in emails or texts before clicking on them, regularly check your account, and know that ODJFS will never contact you asking for your username or password.”

Ohio continues to combat fraud

Ohio continues to combat the widescale unemployment fraud that has been experienced nationally during the pandemic. 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 fraud detection efforts. Some of the fraud prevention measures implemented since then include enhanced identity verification for new and continued claims, multi-factor authentication for those logging into the system, and other cyber-fraud defense system deployments.

“We are fighting a constant battle against foreign and domestic criminals using increasingly sophisticated methods to attempt to defraud Ohio’s unemployment system,” Director Damschroder said. “In addition to stealing millions, their constant attacks clog our system and ensnare legitimate Ohioans, as we attempt to protect the unemployment system.”

Data quantifying both fraud and non-fraud overpayments made since the start of the pandemic can be found at jfs.ohio.gov/ocomm.

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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.

