ODJFS Flags Thousands of Potentially Fraudulent New Unemployment Claims

COLUMBUS, OHIO – The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) today announced that an increase in initial traditional unemployment claims for the week ending February 6, 2021 is suspected to be the result of fraudulent activity. The 140,444 new unemployment claims filed between January 31, 2021, through February 6, 2021, represents an increase of 194% from the prior week. To date, 44,000 claims have been flagged under suspicion of fraud and are under review. Even more of the 140,444 new claims are anticipated to be fraudulent. All of the claims will be reviewed, which will create delays in processing some legitimate claims.

ODJFS is investigating all claims that were flagged for potential fraud and taking steps to implement more robust identity verification in the traditional unemployment program. Identity theft and fraudulent unemployment claims are a widespread national challenge. Many Ohioans have become victims, and their identities used to file fraudulent unemployment claims in both the traditional unemployment and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance programs.

Last month, ODJFS issued 1.7 million 1099-G tax forms to individuals in whose names unemployment benefits were paid in 2020. Many of those individuals were never paid unemployment benefits and did not know their identity had been compromised until they received a 1099-G form.

Earlier this month, ODJFS established a new toll-free number for individuals to notify the agency if they believe their personal information was compromised and used to file a fraudulent unemployment claim: (833) 658-0394. This phone number complements a secure online portal ODJFS established last month to provide a direct way for victims to report identity theft. Individuals who believe their identity was stolen and used to file a fraudulent unemployment claim can visit unemployment.ohio.gov, click on the "Report Identity Theft" button and follow the guidance for individuals. This includes three steps: 1. Complete the reporting form, 2. File your taxes using IRS guidance, and 3. Protect your identity.

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