



CT DEPT. OF LABOR PROVIDES UPDATES ON APPLICATIONS NUMBERS AND FEMA SUPPLEMENTAL BENEFIT PROGRAM

September 1, 2020

(Wethersfield, CT) – Today, Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) Commissioner Kurt Westby provided updates on unemployment applications numbers, agency processing timelines, and progress to implement Lost Wages Assistance, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) supplemental benefit program due to begin in mid-September.

Commissioner Westby said, “The Lost Wages Assistance program will help claimants in the short term, but it’s important to remember this program is temporary and expires when the FEMA funding is exhausted. CTDOL joins Governor Lamont and our Congressional delegation in their work to provide permanent relief for residents dealing with the economic impact of COVID-19. We’re still seeing very high application volume—more than six years of applications have come in over the past five and a half months; it’s clear that a lot of residents still need assistance. I thank FEMA and our other federal partners for their help in bringing this program to Connecticut.”

The Lost Wages Assistance program is funded by \$44 billion in Stafford Act disaster relief and will provide an additional \$300 per week for any claimant who has a weekly benefit of at least \$100 (including the dependency allowance) and who has become unemployed or partially unemployed due to COVID-19. Most states have applied; FEMA approved [Connecticut’s application](#) which was submitted on August 21, 2020. Lost Wages Assistance is paid in addition to regular unemployment weekly benefits and will be retroactive to the claim week beginning July 26, 2020. It will also be available for claim weeks beginning August 2, 2020, and August 9, 2020. FEMA will terminate the program once available federal funding is exhausted or if the federal government passes legislation that replaces the program.

New unemployment claimants and existing state and extended benefits claimants are required to self-certify that they are eligible under the federal guidelines. Existing Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) claimants have already self-certified. Federal eligibility guidelines include:

- Recipients of at least \$100 per week, including the dependency allowance, of any of the following benefits for the week they are seeking unemployment benefits;
- Claimants receiving unemployment compensation including state and federal workers and former service members as well as those receiving Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation, Extended Benefits, or High Extended Benefits;
- Claimants who are part of the Shared Work program, and;
- Workers with a Trade Readjustment Allowance.

The agency expects that about 250,000 claimants will be eligible for funding and will mail letters to eligible claimants. CTDOL releases updates as they become available on the CTDOL [Federal Supplements webpage](#) and will send them directly to anyone who signs up for [info to your inbox](#) on the agency website.

APPLICATIONS NUMBERS

Since March 13, 2020, CTDOL:

- Has received 804,000 applications for state benefits and processed 802,000 of them. Current application processing time is 2-3 days; and
- Has received a total of 884,000 applications for federal, state, and extended benefits. This is more than six years of applications in under six months.
- Currently, has about 250,000 claims filed weekly (state and federal programs combined)

The consumer contact center launched on July 15, 2020 has brought application processing time back to a pre-pandemic low of 2-3 days.

All areas of the agency were impacted when staff was moved to assist on the claims side. With the unemployment applications side back on schedule after the pandemic surge, CTDOL is now working to move staff back to their units from their temporary customer service assignments. Adjudications—the predetermination process for claimants' eligibility—has a 10-week waiting period for fact-finding hearings. Currently, there are 22 adjudications specialists hearing 1000-1100 cases per week. Additionally, the Benefits Payment Control Unit that prevents and detects fraud and recovers overpayments currently has more than 55,000 work items, most of which are a result of the pandemic application volume.

TRUST FUND

Since March 13, 2020, CT DOL has paid out a total of \$4.8 B in unemployment benefits:

- \$1.9 B in state unemployment benefits;
- \$221 M in Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) - for anyone who isn't able to collect regular unemployment benefits;
- \$93 M Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) – for individuals who have exhausted regular UI benefits;
- \$856 K in state extended benefits, \$14 M in federal extended benefits; and
- \$2.9 B in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) – The \$600 additional weekly benefit that expired July 25, 2020.

As of August 31, 2020, the Trust Fund balance is \$115 M. As expected, CT DOL has begun borrowing and drew down \$220 M for August. September borrowing is forthcoming.

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