



CT DEPT. OF LABOR LAUNCHES NEW CONSUMER CONTACT CENTER SCHEDULING FEATURE, PROVIDES CARES ACT II AND OTHER UPDATES

(WETHERSFIELD, CT) – Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) Commissioner Kurt Westby today announced that the agency has launched a new Consumer Contact Center tool that will help residents who need unemployment claims assistance. The new feature, accessed through the www.FileCTUI.com page, allows people to schedule a call back up to two weeks out. Additionally, the agency released early application timelines for the new federal Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation program established under CARES Act II.

Commissioner Westby said, “Demand for unemployment assistance continues to be very high and is climbing due to the CARES Act II. In just six months, the Contact Center has fielded nearly 600,000 inquiries. The newest federal program—Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation—will generate additional benefits for some claimants and additional inquiries to the Contact Center. January is when we see a seasonal uptick in claims filing as well, so we are asking people to please be patient when trying to get a hold of us. This new scheduling system will certainly help us connect with our customers and will eliminate some uncertainty for them.”

Over the past several weeks, the Contact Center has handled nearly 30,000 calls per week; it also assists customers through online chat and email. More than 125 claims representatives handle state unemployment benefits questions as well as inquiries about Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation phases I and II; Lost Wages Assistance and the Lost Wages Assistance expansion; Pandemic Unemployment Assistance; Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation; and Extended Benefits programs. Agents also assist with unemployment application questions and filing issues.

Currently, the Contact Center phone system accepts callers for immediate assistance, puts overflow callers on a call back list, and diverts the remaining callers to the online chat platform. With the new scheduling feature, customers can schedule a call back right from the [website](#) and know they have an appointment for a claims specialist.

The scheduled call back feature handles all filers except for PUA claimants. They are directed to a designated unit at the Contact Center and must continue to use the phone numbers or online features.

MIXED EARNER UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Established as part of the newest CARES Act iteration, the Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation program is a new federal resource for residents who have both self-employment earnings as well as W2 earnings. Currently, Connecticut is one of only a handful of states that have announced they are opting into this program, which offers an additional \$100 for eligible filers using many state and federal unemployment programs, however, the law excludes PUA claimants. Over the next few weeks CTDOL will notify claimants who may be eligible to apply.

About the MEUC program:

- Eligible claimants will receive an additional \$100 per week until the program expires March 13, 2021. Eligibility requirements include at least \$5000 in self-employment net earnings in the most recent completed taxable year. Ex. Filers for 2020 will submit 2019 tax documents.
- Claimants must apply for the program. CTDOL expects to open the application process in late February/early March. Eligibility will be retroactive to December 27, 2020.
- State unemployment, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation, extended benefits, and other filers are eligible. The law excludes Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) claimants from MEUC.
- The program is 100% federally funded, employers are not liable for MEUC payments.
- Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation, like all unemployment benefits, is taxable and could impact Medicaid and CHIP eligibility.

AMERICAN JOB CENTERS

Connecticut's American Job Centers remain closed to walk-in traffic due to COVID-19. Some affiliate American Job Centers and all of the American Job Centers in Bridgeport, Hamden, Hartford, Montville, New Haven, and Waterbury are providing virtual assistance to job seekers and employers [by appointment](#).

UNEMPLOYMENT APPLICATIONS UPDATE

- As of 3/13/20, CTDOL has received more than 1.2M state, federal, and extended benefits applications.
- Currently, Connecticut has about 190,000 weekly filers.

TRUST FUND

- To date, the state has borrowed \$542M for the Trust Fund.
- Borrowing requests for: January- \$150M, February- \$100M, and March - \$150M have been approved. A borrowing request does not indicate state spending for the month.
- **Since March 13, 2020, CTDOL has disbursed \$6.4B in unemployment benefits:**
 - \$365M in Lost Wages Assistance,
 - \$3B in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), and
 - \$2.9B in unemployment benefits as follows:
 - \$2B in state unemployment benefits;
 - \$404M in Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA);
 - \$381M Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC);
 - \$5.5M in state extended benefits; and
 - \$82M in federal extended benefits.

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For Immediate Release: January 14, 2021

Media Contact: CTDOL Communications Unit