
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DWD Expanding Efforts to Directly Assist More Wisconsinites

MADISON – The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) announced that it has secured contracts with outside vendors to expand efforts to directly assist more claimants faster.

From March 15 to May 9, DWD received more than 518,000 unemployment applications and more than 1.8 million weekly claims. Moreover, since April 21, DWD has received more than 72,000 applications for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).

To assist with calls and processing the extraordinary number of claims for unemployment benefits, DWD is working with two call center vendors and a processing and adjudication vendor:

With additional staff on board, DWD will extend its call center hours to 7:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. (hours were previously 7:35 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.). At 5:00 p.m., call center staff will stop accepting new calls, but will answer all calls remaining in the queue.

Call Center Vendors

1. Alorica will answer calls related to unemployment benefits. DWD began offering training to over 55 Alorica staff this week. When fully staffed, the Alorica call center is expected to have up to 500 work-at-home employees answering calls by June 29.
2. Beyond Vision will employ 40 persons handling calls related to PUA applications and is scheduled to open on June 1.

Processing and Adjudication Vendor

1. Nelnet is dedicating approximately 100 people to process claims and at least 100 people to adjudicate claims. Training for Nelnet staff is anticipated to begin June 1.

In addition to the new call centers, DWD is currently recruiting new employees to fill more than 315 positions. Since the onset of COVID-19, the agency has been reassigning its own employees to the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Division and is in the process of receiving additional assistance from other state agencies to help with the enormous workload. Between external vendors, new hires, and transfers into UI, approximately 155 staff started the week of May 11, with approximately 230 more expected to start the week of May 18th.

"I'm incredibly appreciative and excited for the additional assistance our UI Division is getting from other DWD divisions, state agencies, and vendors," DWD Secretary Caleb Frostman said. "We need all hands on

deck to help the people of Wisconsin get the resources and financial support they need during the pandemic."

To further serve people, DWD implemented JARVIS, a chatbot software application for its website. Since the onset of COVID-19, in addition to the hundreds of thousands of calls it receives per day, DWD also receives thousands of emails to its general mailbox. JARVIS assists claimants to locate resources based on the information they provide. With more people using the chatbot to find answers already on DWD's website, DWD will have additional capacity to assist claimants with more complex issues.

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