

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 30, 2020**

## **L&I Offers Six Tips to Get Unemployment Compensation Benefits Quicker**

**Harrisburg, PA** – With the historic surge in people seeking [unemployment compensation](#) (UC), Labor & Industry (L&I) Secretary Jerry Oleksiak today offered six tips to help Pennsylvanians more quickly receive the benefits they have earned and deserve.

“A little over a month ago, life changed drastically for all of us due to the difficult but necessary mitigation efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania,” said Secretary Oleksiak. “I know this has been hard for businesses and workers, many of whom have never had to file for UC benefits before. We have made progress in meeting the historic demand for unemployment benefits in Pennsylvania but know more must be done. I share your frustration and want to help you navigate our complex UC system more easily.”

### **Improving customer service**

Since mid-March, nearly 1.7 million Pennsylvanians have filed for regular UC and new federal laws made big changes to increase payments for many people and made other workers eligible for those benefits for the first time.

Over \$3.6 billion in benefits has been paid to claimants – nearly \$2.7 billion from regular UC and \$911 million from the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program (extra \$600 per week).

Before the pandemic, Pennsylvania had low unemployment with a near record number of people working and the UC office was appropriately staffed for those conditions.

Here are a few of the steps we’ve taken so far to improve customer service:

- Nearly 900 L&I staff working on the UC program are teleworking – with 500 of these employees being reassigned from other agencies to help
- 70 experienced UC retirees have returned to work
- More than 250 new hires will bolster the system
- Over 110,000 calls handled by automated virtual phone assistant IBM Watson

### **Tips to Apply for UC**

L&I is receiving extremely high daily call volumes and we know many people are struggling to reach our call centers. Many answers are available on our website. This will allow our staff to focus on people who do not have internet access, require translation services, or have an issue with a claim.

Before calling the UC Service Center, L&I recommends the following:

1. **Review COVID-19-related FAQs** – Answers to many of your UC questions are in the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) section of L&I’s [website](#), as well as on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
2. **Check your claims status online** – If you have your Personal Identification Number (PIN), enter it along with your Social Security number to check your claims status online [here](#).
3. **Know what to do if you haven’t received your debit card** – If you haven’t received your U.S. Bank ReliaCard [debit card](#), log into your UC account online and verify your mailing address. Debit cards are

valid for three years, if you already have a debit card from a previous claim, or reopen an existing claim, you will not receive a new debit card. You will continue to use the original debit card. If your card has been lost or stolen, call [U.S. Bank](#) at 888-233-5916. Contact the [PA Treasury](#) for basic information about the debit card or direct deposit questions at 877-869-1956.

4. **Apply online now** – Need to file a new claim and want to know [if you're eligible](#)? Don't delay by asking us. Submit your claim and let our staff determine your eligibility.
5. **Wait at least three weeks before requesting a new PIN** – If it's been more than three weeks since you filed an initial claim and you haven't yet received your PIN, you may request a new one [here](#).
6. **Other ways to reach us** – If you have a genuine issue with your claim, there are several ways to [contact UC staff](#). We have received nearly 1.7 million new claims in just six weeks, please know that others need our help too. You can also use:
  - **Virtual assistant** – Call 877-978-1295 to have our UC virtual assistant powered by Watson answer your frequently asked questions any time, 24/7. Please note that this system does not connect to our UC Customer Service Center staff and only provides virtual assistance.
  - **LiveChat** – Call 888-313-7284 for a secure 6-digit LiveChat code to reach UC staff Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.
  - **Email** – For claims questions, email [uchelp@pa.gov](mailto:uchelp@pa.gov) and include your full name as it appears on your claim (including suffix used) and the last four digits of your Social Security number. Get email wait response times [here](#). We respond to emails in the order we receive them, so sending duplicates will not result in a quicker response and will actually cause delays for everyone.
  - **General contact form** – To make a general comment on UC services, or if you have questions not covered by information on [www.uc.pa.gov](http://www.uc.pa.gov), use this [form](#).
  - **Pennsylvania Teleclaims (PAT)** – This [automated self-service system](#) can be used to file biweekly UC claims, access specific benefit payment information, or learn about UC without needing to talk to a person. You can also use PAT to request/change federal withholding tax, get UC-1099G information, and change your PIN. For English, call 888-255-4728. For Spanish, call 877-888-8104.
  - **TTY Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing** – Call 888-334-4046 Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.
  - **Videophone service for ASL users** – Call 717-704-8474 Wednesdays from Noon to 4:00 PM. Sign language is the **ONLY** means of communication provided at this number.
  - **IF YOU HAVE TRIED OTHER METHODS TO FIND YOUR ANSWER WITHOUT SUCCESS, try the UC Service Call Center phone** – Call 888-313-7284 Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM to reach UC staff. The best time to try calling the UC service center is Thursdays and Fridays. Be prepared for heavy call volumes, busy signals, and potential delays in getting through.

Visit the commonwealth's [Responding to COVID-19 guide](#) for the latest guidance and resources for Pennsylvanians or the Pennsylvania Department of Health's dedicated coronavirus webpage for the [most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19](#).