

Dept. of Workforce Development: Upgrades unemployment claims portal, readies federal benefits for 26,000 Wisconsinites

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Madison, Wisconsin – This week the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) is unveiling an upgraded claims portal for the tens of thousands of Wisconsinites applying for unemployment insurance benefits. The upgrade means better functionality and new features including secure document upload, a message center for direct communication from claims specialists and adjudicators, text notifications, and a mobile friendly design. The new look and upgraded features will go live tonight.

“This is all about making the process easier,” DWD Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek said. “The ability to upload certain documents instead of mailing or faxing, a message center where claims specialists and adjudicators can share and request information directly through the portal—these are critical upgrades.”

DWD is also rolling out another phase of its **plain language project**, an effort to make Wisconsin’s often-complex unemployment insurance application easier to understand and navigate.

“Since the beginning of the pandemic, we know that of the hundreds of thousands of Wisconsinites who applied for unemployment benefits, many had to wait longer than necessary because an incorrectly answered question triggered an investigation into their eligibility,” Pechacek said. “These important updates will not only benefit our customers, but also improve our operations.”

While some plain language updates have been completed, more are on the way as DWD continues its commitment to making the process of filing for benefits as easy to understand as possible.

Federal Benefit Extensions

This week, DWD is making the first payments to Wisconsinites under the federal extensions of **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance or PUA**. The program began last spring and was extended in December through the Continued Assistance Act and again on March 11 under American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). An estimated 17,200 people across Wisconsin have been waiting for the new extension payments to begin. The state's outdated unemployment insurance computer system delayed implementation of the PUA extensions as programmers worked to deploy each new federal program and extension. DWD will begin making new PUA payments on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, DWD will begin making ARPA extension payments under another federal program called **Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation**, also known as PEUC. About 7,400 people are estimated to qualify for additional PEUC benefit payments under the ARPA extension passed earlier this month.