

The Kentucky Office of Unemployment Insurance continues in its mission to provide benefit payments to unemployment insurance claimants who are entitled to receive them. As of this week, the agency has processed more than 2,800,000 UI claims during the pandemic.

The Cabinet has issued determinations on 99.9998% of those claims. To date, only 748 outstanding claims remain, and the Office anticipates issuing determinations on these few outstanding claims in the next few weeks.

Despite the extraordinary number of claims that were filed in such a short timeframe and evolving changes in federal guidance, staff have been resilient in processing those claims due to teamwork and actions taken by agency officials to thwart fraud.

State unemployment systems throughout the U.S. came under attack from perpetrators filing fraudulent UI claims using stolen or compromised personal data, and OUI officials put a number of safeguards and IT system improvements in place to deter them. Among those actions, OUI officials:

- Required claimants to change passwords to include special characters and change Personal Identification Numbers (PIN) from four to eight digits.
- Blocked IP addresses from foreign countries
- Reviewed PUA claims with addresses originating outside Kentucky
- Deployed ID.me to verify a claimant's identity.

All UI claimants must use ID.me, a third-party identity verification service, before accessing the UI system to file a claim for benefits.

Agency officials also took measures to help claimants get assistance, which not only provided relief for claimants, but also helped get claims processed faster.

After Gov. Beshear restored in-person UI assistance at career centers starting in April 2021, the agency launched an online appointment reservation system that allows claimants to schedule an appointment to talk with a UI specialist by phone or in-person at any regional Kentucky Career Center office.

The previous administration had trimmed staff at the agency and in 2017 stopped providing in-person UI claim assistance. Staff at the regional career centers now provide both UI and jobseeker/career counseling assistance, helping to provide temporary support to displaced workers while helping to connect jobseekers with long-term employment opportunities.

Future plans include providing mobile unemployment insurance offices to make the program more accessible, especially in the wake of natural disasters. Workforce officials in Louisiana recently loaned Kentucky a mobile UI center following the severe flooding event that occurred in Eastern Kentucky in late July and early August, which is greatly beneficial to those impacted by the floods.

Through mobile offices, the agency also will have the ability to dispatch the vehicle regularly to underserved communities to help claimants file for benefits, request payments, verify their identity, participate in eligibility reviews, reset PIN numbers and more. The vehicle is being funded through an equity grant from the U.S. Department of Labor.

The agency also has plans to deploy a new, modern computer system. The current system was deployed about 20 years ago and is built on antiquated programming language.

Latest numbers on outstanding unemployment claims since the pandemic began

**Traditional UI + Pandemic programs (individuals)*

Traditional UI

2020 – 133

2021 – 415

Traditional UI Total outstanding: 548

PUA/DUA

2020 – 55

2021 – 145

PUA/DUA Total outstanding: 200

Total outstanding: 748

Claims processed to date (March 2020 through Feb. 14, 2023): 1.38 million (651,261 paid + 735,975 considered invalid or fraud).

*Note that claims considered invalid could have been eligible for and moved to PUA claims that were worked.

Claims under appeal

9,038

How many after appeal have been denied

Claimants	Employer
2020 – 8,248	1,300
2021 – 13,174	619
2022 – 12,409	789

How many approved

Claimants	Employer
2020 – 3,569	528
2021 – 3,961	228
2022 – 2574	207

Number of appeals conducted per week

440-450 hearings scheduled per week.

Number of appeals per month that are pending a hearing

On average 1,500-2,000 appeals per month.

What is the average waiting for an appeal?

- 82% of our decisions are released less than seven days from the final hearing.
- 3% of our decisions are released between seven and 14 days.
- 15% of our decisions are released more than 14 days.

Median case age is currently 112 days. The U.S. Department of Labor core standards state that 60 percent of our cases are heard and decided within 30 days and 80 percent within 45 days. Our average case age should be less than 30 days.

Are appeals prioritized based on how long ago a claim was filed?

Not when the claim was filed, but when the appeal was filed. Appeals are prioritized as first in, first scheduled and first out.