

## OHIO UNEMPLOYMENT UPDATE

# Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (The Act), enacted on December 27, 2020, extends many of the unemployment related provisions originally passed in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) through March 14, 2021. Below is a summary of extensions and amendments:

### **Employer Provisions**

The Act continues 100% funding of Short Time Compensation / Shared Work benefits through March 14, 2021. It also extends the federal funding of 50% of benefits paid by reimbursing employers (governmental entities and non-profit organizations) through March 14, 2021. And, the Act reduces the federal funding of the first week of unemployment benefits to 50% of benefits.

### **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)**

PUA provides unemployment benefits to individuals who are not eligible for regular unemployment compensation or extended benefits. It covers individuals that are unable to work due to COVID19 related reasons, self-employed individuals, and individuals with insufficient work history to qualify for regular unemployment benefits. PUA benefits will continue to be funded by the federal government. The Consolidated Appropriations Act extended PUA benefits from 39 weeks to 50 weeks through March 14, 2021. Individuals with remaining weeks of eligibility as of March 14, 2021 can receive benefits through April 10, 2021.

### **Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC)**

PEUC provides federally funded extended benefits to those individuals that have exhausted regular state benefits. The Consolidated Appropriations Act grants an additional 11 weeks of benefits in addition to the 13 weeks that were granted in the CARES Act, for a total 24 weeks of benefits. The eligibility period was extended from December 31, 2020 to March 14, 2021. Individuals with remaining weeks of eligibility as of March 14th can receive benefits through April 10, 2021.

### **Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC)**

FPUC grants individuals that are collecting unemployment benefits an additional \$300 per week. FPUC benefits are fully funded by the federal government and will cover weeks of unemployment beginning after December 26, 2020 and ending on or before March 14, 2021.

### **Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation (MEUC)**

MEUC is a new program that was not included in the original CARES Act. The program provides individuals with a mixture of self-employment and regular employment earnings an additional \$100 per week, which, when combined with FPUC provides a total of \$400 above regular unemployment benefits.

### **Ohio Update**

Since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS) had been mutualizing benefit charges for contributory (taxable) employers, thus relieving tax paying employers of charges. This practice was discontinued for new unemployment claims filed with an effective date on or after November 29, 2020. Therefore, ODJFS has returned to its normal practice of proportionately charging claim costs to base period employers.

Any benefits paid in claims that were filed between the start of the pandemic through November 29, 2020 will continue to be mutualized for the life of the claim.

For more information, visit the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services federal Consolidated Appropriations Act web page at: <https://jfs.ohio.gov/caa/>

### **Ohio Unemployment Fraud**

Fraudulent unemployment claims have become a big issue in Ohio, along with many other states. Nearly half of the 1.4M Federal PUA claims in Ohio have been flagged as potentially fraudulent. During the first week of availability, Ohio's new fraud portal has received over 4,100 claims of ID theft. It appears imposters have acquired Personally Identifying Information (PII) that is sufficient to file a claim for unemployment. It is unclear where this PII was taken from or where the bad actors are located. Sedgwick is providing guidance to each customer around the actions their impacted employees should take when a fraudulent/imposter claim is filed on their behalf. In Ohio we are recommending the impacted employee:

1. File a report of Identity Theft with local law enforcement
2. File a claim on the new Ohio portal: <https://odjfs2.secure.force.com/OUIOFraudReportingPortal>
3. File a claim with the Federal Trade Commission: <https://www.identitytheft.gov/Information>

Additionally, ODJFS has sent 1099-G tax forms to all Ohioans who received unemployment benefits in 2020. If your employee receives a 1099-G tax form and did not receive unemployment compensation benefits, notify ODJFS: <https://unemploymenthelp.ohio.gov/IdentityTheft/>

Questions for Sedgwick? Email us at [unemploymentsecuremail@sedgwickcms.com](mailto:unemploymentsecuremail@sedgwickcms.com)