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NMDWS begins issuing payments under the Continued Assistance Act

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NMDWS begins issuing payments under the Continued Assistance Act

(Albuquerque, NM) – The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (NMDWS) continues to implement the multiple phases of the Continued Assistance Act (CAA) included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, providing extended benefits for claimants on Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). NMDWS has already begun issuing payments, including the additional $300 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), for those who had not exhausted PUA and PEUC benefits and continued to request weekly payments.

NMDWS received general guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) several weeks ago that did not include specific rules for the PUA program or those who have exhausted all benefits, that guidance letter was not received until Friday, January 8, 2021.

Throughout this week, conference calls have taken place between NMDWS and USDOL to request answers to questions regarding specific parts of the program. Answers to those questions are due back to NMDWS today.

With the guidance letter and answers from USDOL, NMDWS is continuing to develop and implement the system changes needed to allow the Unemployment Insurance Tax & Claims System to issue payments to those eligible for the 11-week extension provided by the CAA. These requirements include additional proof of employment and self-employment verification for PUA claimants, increased identification verification requirements, reporting capabilities for job refusal and failure to return to work, additional fraud detection tools, and additional changes to the PEUC and PUA programs.

“The NMDWS IT and UI teams are working diligently to implement the new guidelines and create new IT solutions for the programs moving forward,” said Bill McCamley, NMDWS Cabinet Secretary. “Code development and testing need to take place to make sure that as the new extensions are integrated with both the previous CARES Act programs and the overall unemployment system and are implemented in a way that follows all the rules and keeps everything functioning.”

The department will release a timeline detailing the program phase-in, including when claimants can expect to start certifying again. When certifications reopen, eligible claimants will be able to certify for previous weeks starting with the week ending January 2, 2021.

The NMDWS continues to update its website and social media platforms with up-to-date information on the implementation of the CAA and next steps for claimants. Today, the department released a PEUC program progression chart for claimants to easily see where they are in the progression of benefits.

To allow claimants the opportunity to reach a Customer Service Agent in the Unemployment Insurance Operations Center regarding regular matters, the department asks that individuals not call to inquire about the federal extension at this time. The department will provide further information to claimants on our website and through all communication channels as soon as it is available.

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