Labor Department Launches Online Chat Feature To Answer Customers' Unemployment Questions

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 11, 2020

TRENTON – In an ongoing commitment to enhance customer service during a time of historically high volume, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) has launched a chat feature, or "chatbot," on its website to answer customers' unemployment questions.

The feature simulates a human text response to provide real-time responses to the 20 most frequently asked unemployment-related questions. It was developed in partnership with the New Jersey Office of Innovation, and uses Google technology.

"We are investigating every resource we can add to assist our customers at this time of unprecedented unemployment claims," said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo. "Many who are calling or emailing can find the answers to their questions on our website. This new feature points them in the right direction to find the answer quickly."

Besides improving customer service, another goal of the chat feature is to direct customers to self-serve when possible. In its first 3 days of operation, the chat feature engaged with approximately 50,000 user interactions, freeing up time for agents to focus on claims that need intervention rather than answering frequently-asked questions.

Many of the inquiries NJDOL receives are for general information, such as:

- Am I eligible for benefits?
- How do I reset my pin?
- How do I check my claim status?
- What do I do to qualify for federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)?, or
- How do I certify for weekly benefits?

Customers should not enter claim-specific information into the chatbot as there is a not a live agent on the other end.

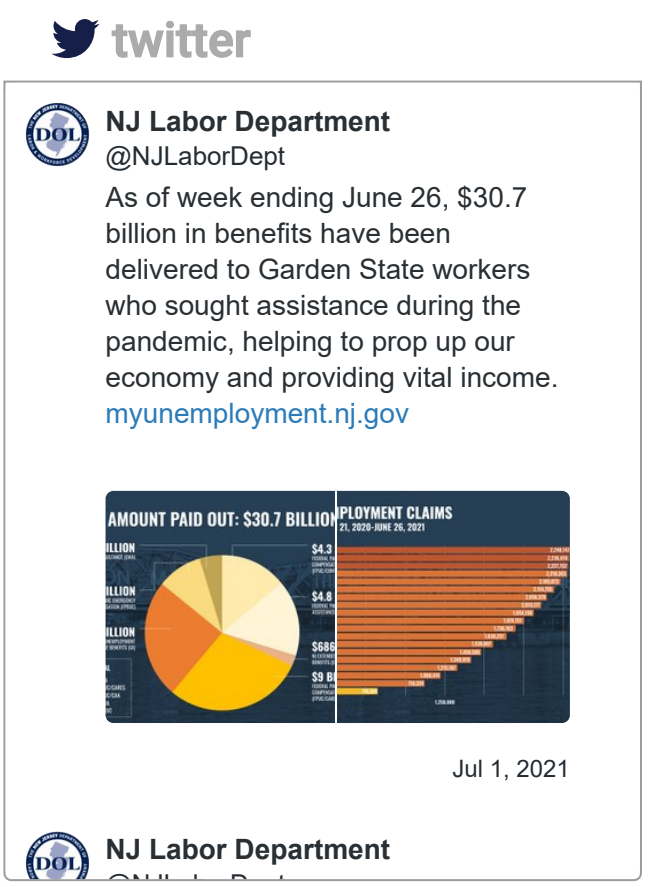
The chatbot is just the latest enhancement the Department has made to service an unprecedented volume of unemployment claims. The improvements include technological upgrades and added personnel.

Here are a few:

- Designated hundreds of employees as essential, trained and temporarily reassigned them to work for the Unemployment Insurance division.
- Ordered hundreds of new laptops so more employees who must remain home for health reasons can work remotely.
- Improved our computer system's capacity to allow it to accept thousands of claims per hour.
- Added more capacity to be able to process regular unemployment payments, along with the additional $600 supplement, and PUA claims.

Additionally, the Department is hiring 130+ new full-time staff and bringing dozens of retirees back to work.

NJDOL has received more than 1 million unemployment claims since mid-March, when COVID-19 hit the labor market hard. The department distributed $1.9 billion in income-supplementing benefits as of May 2 to the more than 700,000 collecting benefits.



For more information or to use this new tool, please visit MyUnemployment.nj.gov.

We continue to urge customers to also read the helpful guides and information at MyUnemployment.nj.gov.

Go back to all press releases

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2021
Department of Labor
1 John Fitch Plz,
Trenton, NJ 08611