



Unemployment insurance extensions set to expire

November 9, 2012

Summary

As of November 2, just over 116,000 people in Washington have run out of all unemployment benefits since July 2008. It is anticipated that an additional 45,000 – 60,000 individuals will exhaust at the end of the year when federal extensions expire. The workforce development system remains committed to serving the long-term unemployed and those who have exhausted all the benefits for which they are entitled.

This document details the extension that is about to expire, explains how the Employment Security Department (ESD) will notify individuals about the expiration of the extension, and plans moving forward to serve the long-term unemployed.

Federal extensions scheduled to expire

Federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) provides additional weeks of benefits to people who have used all of their regular unemployment benefits. This federal program is set to expire at the end of 2012. The week ending December 29 is the last payable week of EUC. The weekly benefit amount is the same as a claimant's regular unemployment benefits. As of October 20, 2012, over \$5.6 billion has been paid out in EUC to over 405,000 Washington claimants since the program's inception in 2008.

Since 2008, Congress has extended unemployment insurance benefits 10 times. At the peak of the extensions, an individual in Washington state was eligible for up to 99 weeks of benefits. As of December 30, 2012, individuals in Washington state will only be eligible for 26 weeks of regular unemployment benefits.

Communication plan

Employment Security Department is planning and will execute a significant communication effort targeted toward claimants and the general public. ESD will widely broadcast the ending of this program so claimants can plan accordingly and will not be surprised by the change. The department is seeking to use innovative and cost-effective means to get the word out, such as emailing claimants who have given their email address and permitted the department to contact them through that means.

The department will leave voicemails for claimants who have given consent. The department will also post recorded messages on the phone system indicating the end of the program - these recorded messages will play while claimants are on hold and all claimants that call into the claims centers will hear them. Claimants receiving EUC will also receive information through the mail about the end of EUC if they file a claim between December 17 and January 4. As has been a standard practice since the Retooling initiative, this mailing will include information about how WorkSource can assist individuals find jobs. The mailing will also include referral information should the individual need assistance with housing, food, healthcare, or other social services.

In an effort to inform the general public of this change, the department will post alerts on our webpage, send out a news release, correspond with state and federal legislators, and work closely with the business

and labor communities to make sure the message is heard.

Retooling Washington: Serving the long-term unemployed

Due to the projected increase in the number of exhaustees in Washington State, it is recommended that the Retooling Washington Workgroup 1 continue its work. The Employment Security Department and its partners remain committed to serving the long-term unemployed during these difficult economic times. The Retooling Washington initiative continues to be an effective strategy to collaborate across agencies and organizations to provide service to the long-term unemployed and those who have exhausted all the benefits for which they are entitled.

Local workforce development councils across the state have taken a lead role in raising awareness about the needs of the long-term unemployed and rallying resources in their areas. As members of these councils, Employment Security's 12 area directors are focused on educating local boards on the number of claimants and potential exhaustees in local areas so that they can devise strategies to best meet local needs.

Many areas have organized community response systems to provide access to resources that are available to address various needs. These systems provide direct links to 211 services, job training, financial help, rental assistance, utility assistance, food assistance, medical and dental services, emergency shelters, mental health and counseling support, veteran services, and child-care assistance.

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