



NASWA Unemployment Insurance Committee

NASWA UI Committee Meeting Notes April 14, 2021 Virtual Meeting

ATTENDANCE

Chair: Beth Townsend (IA) **Vice-Chair:** Jamie Suber (SC)

Members: Patsy Westcott (AK), Cliff Napier (AK), April Dunlap (AZ), Sandra Canez (AZ), Dave Guarino (CA), George Okamoto (CA), Darryl Scott (DE), Karryl Hubbard (DE), Jamie Dattoli (FL), Denise Beckwith (GA), Tanya Lee (HI), Christina Steen (IA), Justin Brissette (IL), Gina Ashley (IN), Laurel Klein Searles (KS), Buddy Hoskinson (KY), Dayne Freeman (MD), Patricia OBrien (ME), Kimberly Berry (MI), Liza Estlund Olson (MI), Antwon Keith (NC), Darren Brostrom (ND), Andi Bridgmon (NE), Richard Prince Jr. (NE), Greg Castellani (NJ), Ron Marino (NJ), Michael Burke (NH), Nancy St. Clair (NV), Marilyn Delmont (NV), Ian St. George (NY), Jim Konicki (NY), Justin Smi (NY), Lars Thompson (NY), Nsungwe Shamatutu (PA), Susan Dickinson (PA), Jim Polly (OK), Julie Smith (OH), Bill True (OR), Lindsy Leahy (OR), Kathy Catanzaro (RI), Pauline Heier (SD), Clay Cole (TX), Chuck Ross (TX), Heather Hall (TX), John Fowler (TX), Jason Stalinsky (TX), Kevin Burt (UT), Bill Walton (VA), Dan Zeitlin (WA), Joy Adams (WA), Mark Reihl (WI), Holly McKamey Simoni (WY), Criss McCauley (WV), Scott Adkins (WV)

Guest: Jim Garner (USDOL), Michelle Beebe (USDOL)

NASWA Staff: Amy Banicki, Ben Peirce, Colin Lennox, Chris Paquette, Cindy Morris, Evan Littrell, Hillary Hewko, Jerry Pectol, John Quichocho, Julie Squire, Judy Mattinson, Kevin Knubel, Maria Noble, Nellie Spangler, Paul Murray, Randy Gillespie

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Beth Townsend, (IA), Chair of the NASWA Unemployment Insurance Committee

Jamie Suber, (SC), Vice-Chair of the NASWA Unemployment Insurance Committee

PRESENTATION

PowerPoint presentations are available to download on the NASWA website.

U. S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Update

Jim Garner, *Acting Administrator, Unemployment Insurance, Employment and Training Administration, USDOL*

Michelle Beebe, *Division Chief, Division of Legislation, Unemployment Insurance, Employment and Training Administration, USDOL*

- **USDOL Staffing Update.** Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh was confirmed in March. Michele Evermore joined USDOL as Special Advisor Unemployment Insurance earlier in the year.
- **American Rescue Plan Act.** ARPA was signed into law on March 11, 2021. USDOL leadership was still determining how to use the \$2 billion funds allocated in provision 9032.

- **USDOL Fraud Website.** On March 22, 2021, USDOL launched new website for people to understand UI identity theft: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/UIIDtheft>
- **UI Integrity Data Hub.** USDOL will continue pursuing efforts to provide account verification services and incarceration data through the Integrity Data Hub.
- **Fake Social Media Accounts.** USDOL worked with law enforcement to remove fake Facebook accounts that replicated social media pages of state workforce agencies. If states experience similar scams on Twitter, members were instructed to share information with Jennifer Garrett at Garrett.Jennifer.L@dol.gov.
- **Recently Released Guidance on Identity Verification.**
 - Members discussed the impact of fraudsters using identity theft victim addresses on multiple accounts and the need to protect PII when states send account notifications.
 - Jim Garner responded additional guidance would be provided to states on the USDOL webinar on Identity Verification for Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claims on April 16, 2021.
- **Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation (MEUC) Implementation Checklist:** USDOL plans to release an implementation checklist for MEUC soon. As of the meeting date, 51 states opted into MEUC program with 16 states currently making payments.
- **CARES Act Administrative Funding.** USDOL reminded states of the significant amount of administrative funding still available for the CARES Act programs. States can reach out to USDOL for state specific information.
- **Audits.** USDOL continues to respond to audit request from OIG and GAO.
- **USDOL Toolkit.** USDOL will provide states with a toolkit with ideas to resolve issues related to adjudication and claimants' erroneous able and available responses. The toolkit will:
 - **Provide states best practices on handling the adjudication workload.** Ideas include outreach (short questionnaire) to individuals who select NOT able and available to identify if the question was responded to in error.
 - **Mitigate instances where the state needs to go back to do retroactive action.** To alleviate the burden of adjudicators to focus on conduct fact finding
- **RESEA State Plans for FY 2021.** USDOL will award \$147 million to 51 states. Some states received conditional approval of their states plan - award letters and technical edit requests. States have until May 21st to respond to the technical edits.
 - **UIPL 07-21: Guidance on Performance Measures**
 - **Upcoming Guidance on outcome payments**
- **Short-term Compensation Program Grants.** Grant funding available for states to implement, improve, and promote the STC program. Grant deadline is December 2023.
- **Upcoming Guidance**
 - Overpayments and Fraud Payments.
 - Return of Fraudulent Payments between Financial Institutions and States.
- **Significant Provisions of State UI Laws.** The January 2021 edition will be released soon.
- **Discussion.**
 - Member raised concern about the long-term costs and funding needed to maintain the new technology. Jim acknowledged the need to address the current funding model.

UI Information Technology Support Center Update

Ben Peirce, NASWA Vice President of Technology Services and Programs

John Quichocho, NASWA Product Manager

- **National View of UI IT Systems Report.** UI ITSC will be updating the 2010 report to analyze the trends in UI IT Systems in the last decade and highlight the new trends states are exploring. Survey will be provided to states to collect information on UI IT Modernization.
- **New UI ITSC Website.** The website launched with NASWA branding and responsive design.
- **Website Demo:** www.itsc.org
 - [Updated UI IT Modernization Status Maps](#)
 - [UI IT Security Resources](#)

UI Modernization Update

Lou Ansaldi, NASWA Technology Director

- **NASWA Services Overview.**
- **Capacity and Scaling Challenges.**
- **Increased use of app performance monitoring tools**
- **UI IT Modernization Tracking.**
 - **Status of UI IT Modernization Projects - UI Benefit Systems:** 24 Complete, 10 development, 9 acquisitions, 10 planning.
 - **Status of UI IT Modernization Projects - UI Tax Systems:** 24 Complete, 10 Development, 9 acquisitions, 10 planning.
 - States can request access to the UI IT Modernization Tracking Excel document.

NASWA Resources

Julie Squire, NASWA Vice-President of Policy & Legal Counsel

- **UI Tax Legislation Smartsheet is posted on the NASWA Website:**
<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/publish?EQBCT=c83d419ad784408f8110fedce3ae9139>
- **Model Claimant Handbook is available on the NASWA website and NASWA Library:**
<https://library.naswa.org/doi/10.5555/20.500.11941/3614>

STATE ROUNDTABLE

Topics discussed:

- **Connecting claimants with other state services.** Buddy Hoskinson (KY) shared that the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet partnered with the Kentucky Health Family Services Cabinet to connect individuals who are receiving UI with other eligible services, like health care coverage, Medicare, and SNAP benefits.

- In California, Employment Development Department conducted a short-term test to better connect UI recipients to SNAP benefits by placing the SNAP application link within the UI portal. The test proved to be effective resulting in a large increase in SNAP applications. The Department will continue to explore different strategies that allow the link to be accessible on a limited basis to assist with current SNAP system capacity.
- **PUA Compliance.** Members discussed the documentation requirement for the PUA program and its impact on the appeals process. States agreed to share additional information on PUA appeals rates with Julie Squire.
- **Staffing.** Members discussed current and future plans to provide additional staff compensation and support - plans which included: bonus, overtime pay, holiday pay, flexible hours. A few states have noticed a trend with eligible staff choosing to retire then come back as contract staff.
- **Adjudication backlog**

UPCOMING MEETING

NASWA UI Committee Virtual Meeting

Wednesday, June 23, 2021

2:00-5:00 PM Eastern Time