



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY  
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120

THE SECRETARY

December 17, 2012

Dear Legislator,

Many of you have expressed concern regarding the difficulties your constituents are having in contacting the unemployment compensation service centers (UCSCs). My letter to you dated October 22, 2012 provided some initial information and explanation. Since that time we have been working tirelessly to resolve various issues. This letter is to provide you with an update.

Governor Corbett understands the stressful situation a claimant faces when a job is lost. That is why he has directed the department to work continually to improve the way we administer UC programs to ensure efficient delivery of services. Claimants who are eligible for benefits deserve no less.

In working to rectify the problems claimants are encountering in accessing the UCSCs—problems that seemed to dramatically escalate in September—we noticed a surge of busy signals and abandoned calls that rose to extraordinary and unprecedented numbers compared to previous months. The numbers are startling:

- During the month of September 2011, less than one million (922,643) total toll-free calls were recorded as being placed to UCSCs across the state. However, one year later in September 2012, calls recorded as being placed to UCSCs approached eight million (7,835,486) in number. Call volume increased by 749 percent.
- In October 2011, a total of approximately 1.2 million toll-free phone calls were recorded as being placed to UCSCs statewide. But one year later in October 2012, over 11.6 million calls were recorded as being placed to UCSCs. Call volume between these months increased by over 842 percent.
- Similarly, in November 2011, a total of approximately 3 million toll-free phone calls were recorded as being placed to UCSCs in Pennsylvania. However, in November 2012 over 15.5 million calls were recorded as being placed to UCSCs. Based on our available data and knowledge, UCSCs call volume has never before reached this level.

Even more perplexing is the fact that this dramatic increase in toll-free call volume comes at a time when the workload for UC claims has been steadily decreasing. Since 2010, the workload, as measured by claims and continued claims, has significantly decreased, which is why Pennsylvania has received \$30 million less in federal funds for the administration of the UC programs for the upcoming fiscal year. Claim volume has decreased during the past year for a number of reasons, including reductions in the number of initial claims and the duration of

claims. Our data shows that from September 2010, to September 2012, there has been a 29 percent reduction in workload. From January 2011, to September 2012, there has been 46 percent reduction in workload.

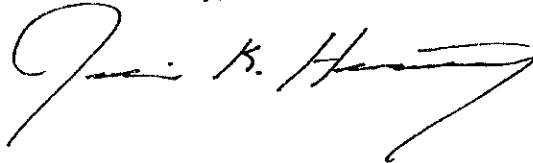
We are looking at all possibilities that may explain this dramatic increase in toll-free call volume during a period when actual claim volume has decreased. The department is committed to utilizing all appropriate and available resources to uncover the causes of this aberration.

Meanwhile, we also will continue our efforts to reach those who truly need our assistance. To overcome this immediate issue, we have instituted an additional communication option for claimants: a dedicated fax line. This method offers the quickest avenue for a citizen to receive assistance. Claimants who fax an inquiry to 717-525-5160 will secure a place in line and receive a call back from our service center in three days or less. Enclosed is a newly created instruction sheet for those needing assistance that you may find helpful; the instruction sheet sets forth specific directions for communicating by fax.

Until the call volume matter is resolved, we ask that you encourage the public not to utilize any system or technology that automatically places calls or redials any UCSC because of the danger that such activity will exacerbate the call volume problem.

The department understands that these matters are of great importance to many of your constituents. Though this is a fluid and evolving situation, we will seek to keep you well-informed as we find definite answers. If you have any further questions do not hesitate to contact me or Legislative Director David Greineder at 717-787-5087.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Julia K. Hearthway". The signature is fluid and extends across the width of the text area.

Julia K. Hearthway  
Secretary

## UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION HELPFUL TIPS

- **How to File Unemployment Compensation Application for Benefits** The fastest and easiest way to file an application for Unemployment Compensation benefits is through our website, [www.uc.pa.gov](http://www.uc.pa.gov). Applications can be filed directly online anytime day or night. If you provide an e-mail address, you will receive an email message confirming receipt of the application.

- **How to Get Answers to Questions** The Internet is the fastest and best way for claimants to seek answers to questions. You can find information on eligibility and appeals, check the status of your claim, view your payments, and change your personal information. Also, there is a Frequently Asked Questions page that covers a wide variety of topics. You can also file an initial claim, a biweekly claim and reopen a claim by using our simple and secure online process. Filing your claim online is the fastest method to receive benefits.

The UC Handbook you received when you filed your initial claim is also an excellent resource. The UC Handbook provides all of the information you need to navigate the UC claims process. Among other information, it thoroughly explains eligibility requirements for benefits, how and when to file biweekly claims, how UC benefits are paid, the work search requirements, your appeal rights and much more. The UC Handbook is also available online at [www.uc.pa.gov](http://www.uc.pa.gov).

- **Dedicated fax line** Another method available for you to obtain an answer to your question is to fax your question to the UC service centers at 717-525-5160. A UC service center representative will call you **within three business days** to resolve your issue. Please be sure to fill in **all** of the information on the attached fax cover sheet. In order to help you we must have the following minimum information: Full name, last four digits of your social security number, telephone number and the time that you will be available to receive our call. You must designate that you will be available at one of the following times: 8 a.m. – 10 a.m., 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. or 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. It is also helpful to have a brief description of the issue.

- **Call the UC Service Center** Please make every effort to obtain an answer to your question using the Internet, UC Handbook or fax so that the phone lines are available for those claimants who truly need human involvement to resolve their issue. If you require the assistance of a UC service center representative, call 888-313-7284. Some **tips to follow** when calling the UC service center:

- a. Best to call in the middle of the afternoon – not early in the morning or late in the day;
- b. Best to call later in the week (Wednesday through Friday);
- c. Best to use a landline rather than a cell phone if possible; and
- d. Do not use automated redial applications which decrease your chance of getting through the phone line to speak to a UC service center representative.

**Send only one fax. If you call or send another fax after you have submitted an initial fax, this could take your question/issue out of the dedicated queue and could potentially delay payment. Please choose one method to contact the UC service center and you will receive a response within three days.**

FAX COVER SHEET to request a call from the UC Service Center

You will receive a response from a UC Service Center representative within three business days.

Do not fax more than this cover sheet and one additional page.

**If you call, submit an email or send another fax within three days after you have submitted an initial fax, this could take your question/issue out of the dedicated fax queue and could potentially delay payment.**

**\* Indicates required field**

Problem with your debit card? The UC Service Center cannot help you. You must call the **debit card company** at **877-406-8257**.

* First name:	<input type="text"/>	* Last name:	<input type="text"/>
* Social Security Number:	<input type="text" value="X"/> <input type="text" value="X"/> <input type="text" value="X"/>	<input type="text" value="X"/> <input type="text" value="X"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
* Email Address:	<input type="text"/>		
* Telephone Number:	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
* Best time to reach you:	8 a.m. - 10 a.m. <input type="checkbox"/>	10 a.m. - 12 p.m. <input type="checkbox"/>	1 p.m. - 4 p.m. <input type="checkbox"/>

How can we help you? Select one or more below.

I need to open a claim for unemployment but I cannot get through on the phone.  
(Suggestion for faster service: file online at [www.uc.pa.gov](http://www.uc.pa.gov)).

I have a claim but have not been filing, so I need to reopen my claim.  
(Suggestion for faster service: reopen your claim online at [www.uc.pa.gov](http://www.uc.pa.gov)).

I cannot file biweekly using PAT/Internet (claim is inactive or other issues).

I filed biweekly and five business days have passed but I still have not been paid.

I received a message (online/phone) that I should call the service center.

I have overpayment questions.

I have questions about appeals.

Other

Provide a brief description of the issue:

*Auxillary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.  
Equal Opportunity Employer/Program*