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CLIENT ALERT: Unemployment Benefits Extension
July 7, 2020

The Maine Dept. of Labor (MDOL) announced in a press release on July 1, 2020, that 13 additional weeks of unemployment benefits are available to Mainers whose initial 26-week benefit period has expired. These additional benefits are available through the federal Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program.

Those whose initial benefits had already expired and who have been receiving temporary payments through the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program will be automatically enrolled in PEUC. The MDOL notes that the weekly payment available under PEUC may be different from the payment under PUA.

Those still receiving initial benefits must file, once these benefits expire, a new initial claim in their ReEmployME account. Before enrolling a claimant in PEUC, the MDOL must determine whether a claimant is eligible for additional state unemployment benefits. If a claimant is denied additional state benefits, the claimant will be required to answer three additional questions in their next weekly certification in order to complete enrollment in PEUC. Commissioner Laura Fortman stated in an MDOL legislative briefing on July 2 that these questions will require claimants to attest that they (a) have no rights to unemployment compensation from any other state; (b) are not receiving unemployment compensation under the unemployment compensation law of Canada; and (c) are able and available to work.

Part-time workers may remain eligible for partial unemployment benefits. In particular, workers who earn less than \$5 over their weekly benefit amount are eligible for partial unemployment benefits, and anyone receiving at least \$1 in benefits will remain eligible for an additional \$600 weekly federal benefit until July 25. Whether this benefit will be extended is the topic of fierce debate, and will likely be influenced by unemployment rates and, of course, whether the pandemic worsens.

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