



Perry County Job and Family Services

"PCJFS advocating for Unemployed residents"

In these difficult times, we know that some state government offices are still working to meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic. For the week ending April 4, Ohio had received 700,00 claims in a three-week time period. As of April 15, the state had processed claims for 217,000 individuals.

In Perry County, 1822 residents have been able to file unemployment claims, and a heartbreaking 12% of our workforce.

The Unemployment Insurance system is run by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) in Columbus. This state agency is struggling to enroll the overwhelming numbers of newly unemployed Ohioans and either get their benefits delivered to them or let people know when their benefits will arrive. ODJFS and its unemployment insurance system, is a partner but separate from our own Perry County Job and Family Services agency and its jobs and training partner, OhioMeansJobs (OMJ) of Perry County.

Please know that we are trying to help by:

- Advocating on your behalf to state officials about the many layers of problems with the system, how badly people in our County need solutions, and how solutions with exponential impact have to be found for the exponential scale of sudden, massive unemployment.
- Sharing with the state our staff time whenever ODJFS has called for volunteers to help in responding to unemployment applications and get claims processed. They haven't taken us up on the offer, but we're ready to help at any time.
- We delivered one-time benefit checks, using our limited federal funds reallocated to this program, to eligible families to help tide them over until state and federal funds arrived. Six hundred fifty-six families have applied for the Perry County Pandemic Relief Grant. Our team has quickly processed these applications and has been sending checks out for three weeks now. Unfortunately, our funds have run out and we shut the Relief Grant program down late last week.

Here is advice we can give to Perry County residents trying to claim their unemployment benefits from the state:

- Stay informed. See the new FAQ section on the state's unemployment website: <https://unemploymenthelp.ohio.gov/employee/>.
- Don't give up in contacting the state office; don't be afraid to be persistent in asking questions and getting answers. The state continues to get fixes done that solve different problems.
- Remember that all of your benefits will be retroactive. The delay hurts, we know, but you will be made whole in the coming days.
- Certain payments, those to utilities, to banks and mortgage companies, for example, can be delayed, though not skipped. Utilities are not being shut off and homes aren't being

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foreclosed on. But the important thing to do is to talk to the utility or to the bank about how they are handling the situation.

- Know that another round of help is on its way. The federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program will provide benefits in addition to the state unemployment payments. If you are a self-employed or contracted worker, you'll be included now in both the state and federal unemployment systems. Some benefit payments are still a month away in arriving, but again, you will be made whole as payments will be retroactive.

Most importantly of all, now is the time to start looking to the OhioMeansJobs Perry County office as a partner for you in getting to your next job. Our OMJ staff are ready even now to assist people with creating OMJ accounts and resumes, and for accessing support for training even during your downtime. When we reopen, you'll have access to our labs with their computers, high speed internet, phones and fax machines to help you track down job listings and submit applications. You can reach us right now at (740) 342-3551, Option 4 or at perry64@jfs.ohio.gov.