



State of Missouri Team:

Greetings from the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DOLIR). Our mission is to promote economic vitality, safety, and fairness for Missouri's businesses and workers. I am sure that many of you have seen DOLIR's motto, which appears in our "Working Better Together" logo. Team DOLIR lives by that motto. We do this by not only working together across Divisions within the Department, but also working with other state agencies and those we serve.

In trying times like these, teams either pull together or pull apart. Team DOLIR continues to pull together during COVID-19 to benefit the many Missourians in need. And, we continue to help businesses reopen safely and cost-effectively to ensure a strong recovery.

In February, our great state was experiencing nearly full employment. And, as we know, by late March, our businesses began shutting down due to the pandemic. Unemployment in Missouri skyrocketed. DOLIR's Division of Employment Security (DES) was staffed appropriately for low unemployment. But it faced historic high unemployment within a couple of weeks. DES typically processes about 3,000 new unemployment claims per week. But within two weeks, the DES saw the number of new claims jump to over 100,000 per week. It continued to break records set during the last recession. In less than a month, the DES received more unemployment claims than it had in the entire prior year.

The DES called on cross-trained staff within the Division to assist with the increased call and claims volume. Early on, the DES recognized that it needed to rapidly move its staff to work remotely. This was to safeguard their health to continue to serve Missourians in need. As claims continued to rise, the DES hired temporary workers, contracted with outside vendors, and enlisted assistance from DHEWD, DED, OA, DCI, DNR, Ag, MODOT, DMH, and DHSS to meet the needs of Missouri's rapidly growing unemployed population. We appreciate the many state employees that exemplified true public service by assisting.

DES has reduced its call volume while helping more individuals. To serve as many citizens as possible, our staff focused on technological solutions like a chatbot, interactive voice recording (IVR) messaging, and scheduled call back times for specialists to assist

individuals. DES has effectively eliminated 15,000-20,000 incoming call deflections per day and reduced the average time to answer calls. This was done by using process improvements and technology. Unemployment remains high. But Missouri is better positioned to handle not only the current claims load but any future claims volume.

Missouri continues to lead the nation in serving the unemployed. Just last week, the DES received two awards for excellence from the US Department of Labor. It was recognized for helping citizens who apply for UI benefits receive prompt, accurate determinations of eligibility and awarding benefit payments to those who qualify in a timely manner. Missouri was also recognized for excellence in program integrity. This was a measure of the program's accuracy and ability to prevent improper payments.

These past six months have been unprecedented for all of us, but they have proven that necessity is the mother of invention. On the brighter side of this pandemic, we have been able to mobilize and push through innovations that may have taken us months or years previously. I believe this time has shown us what is possible in improving processes and services for our citizens.

Director Anna Hui

Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations

